

London School of Economic and Political Sciences

**LANGUAGE AND THE SOCIAL:  
INVESTIGATIONS TOWARD A  
NEW  
SOCIOLOGY OF LANGUAGE**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates sociological understandings of language in texts deeply resonant for sociology today. It offers a comparative and analytical investigation of social-language projects written before the discipline was established.

Sociologists have struggled to establish a field investigating arguably the most social arena of social life, namely, language as witnessed by insubstantial attempts to sociologically study language and unfulfilled promises in social theories of language or sociologies of communication, culture, media, etc. Chapter 1 critically reviews social scientific research approaches to language. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 examine carefully selected sites in European thought where language and social life interpenetrate too much to be disentangled, wherein there are ‘folk sociologies of language’.

Chapter 2 looks at attempts to rectify a deep confusion pulling society apart and corroding language. Three social-language projects compose language: a gesture language (Bulwer), a philosophical language (Wilkins) and combination of both (Dalgarno). Chapter 3 looks at two critical dictionaries intended to fix language to help the realisation of the ideal society (Johnson’s *Dictionary* and Diderot’s *Encyclopedie*). Chapter 4 explores projects that capture historically changing nationhood: the OED and the work of the Grimm Brothers. These social-language projects are attempts to change something in the social, on a continuum of less to more radical interventions.

These social-language projects are significant, but have been ignored by sociologists. As ‘language’ projects, they are assumed irrelevant in relation to power, knowledge, or nascent nationalism. As ‘social’ projects, they have been considered tangential to an increasingly narrow and technical linguistics. By mining this rich seam of sources, this work draws attention to elements central to sociology (about the nature and roles of collectives and individuals, about agency, structure, the subject, institutions) in light of key questions about language (its aspects, form, roles in relation to knowledge, law, politics). This is a first step towards analysing language events from a sociological perspective.

The intended contribution of this research to current sociology is three-fold. Firstly, it outlines a distinctive approach by using sources from outside the discipline in order to get at problems at its core. Secondly, it shows how language is empirically current in ways that are central to the discipline (e.g. the ‘endangered languages movement’). Finally, it shows that without the distance gained by stepping outside we cannot see that the way we think about language and the social are mutually constitutive, indeed each shapes and conditions the other.

In sum, language is much too sociologically important to be left to linguists.

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In the lives of individuals and of societies, language is a factor of greater importance than any other. For the study of language to remain solely the business of a handful of specialists would be a quite unacceptable state of affairs.

Ferdinand de Saussure (1910 [2000]: 22)

People are fond of saying that nothing else but language interests us today, and that it has become the universal object. Make no mistake: this supremacy is the temporary supremacy of a migrating tribe. It's true that we are interested in language; yet it's not that we come to possess it at last but that, on the contrary, it eludes us more than it has ever eluded us. Its boundaries are collapsing, and its calm universe is starting to melt; and if we are submerged, this is not so much by its timeless rigor as by the present motion of its wave.

Michel Foucault (1967 [1998]: 289)

## INTRODUCTION

In 1875, the ‘leading chiefs of the Blackfoot, Blood, Peigan, and Sarcee tribes gathered at Blackfoot Crossing and...prepared a memorial to Lieutenant-Governor Alexander Morris’ requesting that the Dominion Government meet with them as soon as possible, for the purpose of stopping the ‘invasion of their territory until they are able to make their treaty’ with the Queen (Dempsey, 1987: online, last accessed 30 Dec., 2012). The chiefs made a number of attempts to get the attention of the Dominion Commissioners, including sending religious men and attempting to send messages via other third parties (some of whom were unable to cross the prairies since the main game, buffalo, was now too scarce as a result of the fur trade). Dempsey recounts the overtures made by the First Nations to have a treaty meeting.

...Rev. John McDougall appealed to Lieutenant-Governor Morris for action by stating: “...I cannot too strongly recommend that the Dominion Government should send a Commissioner or Commissioners to negotiate or treat with the various Blackfoot Tribes at as early a date as possible.” He also noted that whites from all parts are flocking into the country which they have called theirs. Their late mortal enemies the Crees and Assiniboines are receiving attention of the Government and being treated with this present summer. Knowing the Indian character it is consistent to believe that if they are neglected by the Government, jealousy and bad feeling arising from various causes in consequence will sooner or later produce mischief.” Father Constantine Scollen also made an appeal on behalf of the Blackfoot, explaining that: They have an awful dread of the future. They think that Police are in the country not only to keep out whiskey traders, but also to protect white people against them, and that this country will be gradually taken away from them without any ceremony. This I can certify, for although they may not say so to others yet they do not hide it from me...The Blackfeet themselves are expecting to have a mutual understanding with the Government, because they have been told of it by several persons, and namely by General Smythe last year. (Dempsey, *ibid*)

In 1877, Commissioners David Laird and James McLeod arrived as requested, in order to carry out the negotiations.

There were tensions involved in where to negotiate. Both sides suggested sites of their own (a fort, an encampment) that posed problems strategically for the other group. ‘...[A]n outbreak is feared at the place where the treaty is to be held. If hostilities should occur, the Indians will have everything their own way, as they will probably be over ten thousand strong, while the whites will hardly number half as many hundreds...’ (Dempsey, *ibid*).<sup>1</sup> Similarly there were tensions involved in when to negotiate. Intra-national discord was superimposed upon the normal difficulties of assigning a time that would not interfere with the regular subsistence activities of the

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<sup>1</sup> ‘...when Crowfoot, one of the two leading chiefs of the Blackfoot tribe, learned of the selection, he objected the meeting in a white man’s fort and requested that the site be changed to Blackfoot Crossing. Reluctantly, the commissioners agreed. The Fort Benton Record, in nearby Montana, observed that: ‘This will cause great dissatisfaction among the Bloods and North Piegan... Probably the only conditions upon which these Indians will treat is that the Police must agree to keep the half-breeds, Crees, Assinaboins [sic], Pend’ Oreilles [sic] and Nez Perces out of the Territory....’ (Dempsey, *ibid*.)

First Nations.<sup>2</sup> These impediments were trifling in contrast to the deeper problem of *how* to negotiate, a problem so fundamental it remains contentious today. It is this problem that I want to draw out in this illustration. It is a failure to communicate on more levels than is first apparent. Showing some of the threads involved in this tangled knot shows how sociology is mute about language.

By September 19, the main bands of Bloods had not yet arrived, but Laird decided to proceed with the negotiations. In the afternoon, the chiefs gathered in front of the large marquee tent where the commissioners and their aides were seated, while forming a semi-circle seven hundred feet back were about four thousand men, women and children. Laird began his address in expressive terms but when he had concluded his first few remarks, he encountered an unexpected problem.

“Having delivered himself of the opening sentences of what he meant to be an historic address,” commented an observer, “he turned to Jerry Potts, Police interpreter, and waited to have his flow of thought translated to the assembled Blackfeet. That was as far as he has got. Jerry stood with his mouth open. He had not understood the words as spoken, and if he had he would have been utterly unable to convey the ideas they expressed in appropriate Blackfeet language. Jerry was a half-breed Blackfoot and knew the language of the Blackfoot people intimately. But he was shy on English, and had not even a remote idea of the form of that language used by Mr. Laird.” (Dempsey, *ibid.*)

On the face of it, this is a simple problem, and requires a simple solution. Potts’ baffled silence could be ended by furnishing a competent interpreter. An interpreter was found, and the negotiation proceeded. However, this moment is a microcosm of a much broader and deeper incomprehension. The political agreement that the commissioner’s speech was intended to introduce was an event, as is the document it produced, that continues to be the site of profound confusion and disagreement. Significantly, this event was, first and foremost, a social-language event. Yet, it would seem that sociologists lack even the most rudimentary tools with which to open the analysis of such events, either as occurred historically, or as they are occurring at this moment.

Canada became a modern nation state, so the official history tells, with the signing of the British North America Act in 1867. Preceding this Act, which brought about Confederation in a few short years, were inter-colonial and intra-colonial wars, commercial colonisations including both organised groups (such as the Hudson’s Bay Company) and disorganised groups (namely, independent entrepreneurs trading liquor, arms, and furs), territorial encroachments by religious agents and settlers, various and many negotiations, and a complex of other activities that belie a tranquil succession of agreements negotiated by agents of the British government and the First

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<sup>2</sup> ‘At Fort Macleod, Laird met a number of Blood chiefs who asked to be treated at the fort; they did not wish to go north to Blackfoot Crossing. This request was refused, as the commissioner said he wanted all the Indians together. During this time, some of the Peigans and Bloods indicated that they would not be attending treaty but, instead, they planned to go buffalo hunting.’ (Dempsey, *ibid.*)



Nations<sup>3</sup> to peaceably share the geographical area that is now called Canada. ‘Treaty Seven’ is the title of one of the final chapters in a series of documents drawn up between the British Crown and First Nations, and it has helped to entrench the image of the amicably negotiated history of Canada. Between the 1760s and the 1920s, more than fifty treaties were signed between First Nations and the British government, and many more between First Nations and the United States government.

Treaty Seven concerned the western and northern parts of Canada.

From the government’s perspective, the need for Treaty Seven was immediate and simple. As part of the terms of bringing British Columbia into Confederation in 1871, the Canadian government had promised to build a trans-continental railway within ten years. Such a line would have to traverse the newly-acquired western territories, through land still nominally in control of Indian tribes. Huge land concessions would need to be offered to the company building the railway and later, the existence of the line would encourage large scale immigration to the western prairies.

Treaty Seven was not a novel political undertaking for the agents of the Crown. While it was the first treaty agreed by the specific Siksikáwa-speaking nations involved, they had detailed knowledge about treaties made by neighbouring nations and the government of Canada. At this point, it is worth pausing to ask what a treaty is, and whether sociology offers a means to grasp such practices. As yet, we have little to work with at the moment, either in terms of concepts or in terms of methods.

The contestation surrounding Treaty Seven invokes distinct and opposing accounts of what the events and the document fundamentally were (and are). These accounts are offered by each of the national groups: the official Canadian print history opposes the unofficial First Nations oral history. The former relies on an archive of documents, and the latter invokes legends to recount what occurred on that early autumn day in 1877 and—importantly—what that occurrence implied. But it is not only that the form of collective memory is different, the content is also. Historians from the First Nations (through the oral histories passed down by the Elders) have continuously asserted that treaties were part of a peace-making process with the European peoples that were coming in increasing numbers to the ‘New Land’ of the Americas.<sup>4</sup> Treaty Seven was no

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<sup>3</sup> The term ‘Indian’ has been discarded in favour of ‘First Nations’, ‘First Peoples’ or ‘Aboriginal peoples’ over the past two decades. Like many other racial, ethnic and gendered names for a particular social group, ‘Indian’ has been reclaimed in the effort to undermine its negative connotations. The government of Canada recently renamed the dedicated bureau from the ‘Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development’ to the ‘Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development’. One of the main pan-national political bodies is the ‘Assembly of First Nations’. In this thesis, ‘First Nations’ is used when speaking of collective groups of nations (i.e. the Siksikáwa [English translation is Blackfeet], Blood, Stoney and Piegan nations together are called ‘First Nations’, or where generally referring to the pre-European peoples of the Americas), and individual national titles are used where describing specific groups or events (i.e. the Siksikáwa). The term ‘First Nations’ does not usually include the Innu nations of the far north, or the Métis nations of mixed European and Aboriginal ancestry.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Hildebrandt et al (1996). Miller provides a succinct description of the *Treaty 7* monograph: ‘This volume represents a synthesis of information gathered by the Treaty 7 Project, a special collaborative

exception, it was one of a series of political meetings expected to demonstrate the goodwill of both groups to commonly and respectfully use the resources of the lands it delineated. Conversely, the officially given history (through legal decisions, reports and the documents of the department handling the treaties) is that treaties were purchases of land from the indigenous peoples. A more sinister account from the (recently renamed) Department of Aboriginal Affairs website describes the political logic of the commissioners. In a report prepared by the (then) Department of Indian Affairs, Dempsey writes the following:

When the British North America Act was passed in 1867, the responsibility for Indians and Indian lands had been vested in the federal government. Further, the government was bound by the terms of the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which recognised Indians as rightful occupiers of their hunting grounds until such time as these were ceded to a government authority. This meant that the railway could not be built until the rights of the Indians along its route had been extinguished. Therefore, during the period from 1871 to 1876, the government of Canada had systematically concluded treaties with all tribes in the arable regions of the North-West Territories, with the exception of those inhabiting some 50,000 square miles of land south of the Red Deer River and adjacent to the Rocky Mountains. (Dempsey, *ibid.*)

Even against this cheerless description of the machinations involved in creating the treaty, of ‘extinguishing the rights’ of the First Nations, the self-same report underscores that the Canadian Government at the time understood the geographical area covered by Treaty Seven to be the property of the Siksikáwa-speaking nations and that the Treaty would afford some level of protection to them. The recent history of these nations had been bleak, and by deputizing the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to enforce law in the area, the conditions of the nations were greatly improved. They had suffered a triple blow: loss of their main livelihood in the form of depleted stocks of buffalo, the introduction of a whiskey and rifle trade by independent profiteers, and the incursion into their hunting lands by enemy First Nations.<sup>5</sup>

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research endeavor of the Treaty 7 Tribal Council and their Elders to gather and review systematically the “collective memory” of the Elders about Treaty 7, and to reconstruct the historical context before and after the treaty signing. Elders were interviewed about their understandings of the treaty’s purposes and intentions derived from the oral traditions taught to them.’ (1998: 281) The research project involved stringent comparative analysis from as great a number of sources as was available. It offers a key resource into the oral understandings of the treaty.

<sup>5</sup> In 1869, the trading firm of Hamilton and Healy moved north from Montana into “British possessions” to establish a fort which was beyond the jurisdiction of American authorities. Located at the confluence of the Belly and St. Mary rivers, near the present city of Lethbridge, the post was originally named Fort Hamilton but soon became notorious as Fort Whoop-Up. Two of its main items of trade were whiskey and repeating rifles. The former caused great havoc with the Blackfoot tribes while the rifles permitted the wholesale slaughter of buffalo for their valuable hides. When the success of Whoop-Up was known, other Americans invaded Blackfoot hunting grounds, establishing several posts which were dubbed “whiskey forts” and glorified in such names as Standoff, Slideout, and Robbers’ Roost. Within a short time, these forts wrought havoc and tragedy among the Blackfoot tribes. A few years later, missionary Constantine Scollen described to the treaty commissioners the effects of the liquor traffic. “The fiery water flowed as freely,” he said, “as the streams running from the Rocky Mountains, and hundreds of the poor Indians fell victims to the white man’s craving for money, some poisoned, some frozen to death whilst in a state of intoxication, and many shot down by American bullets...” He stated that the Blackfoot had drunken quarrels

In the intervening time between then and now, the language artefact—the treaty document—has been the basis of non-stop and varied political domination and political struggle. The paper object remains subject to constant reinterpretations. The events that brought it in to being are also interpreted and re-interpreted in more and less fractious ways by parties that have vested interests in the current status of the promises made in the document.

The silence that followed Laird's preamble symbolises profound misunderstandings on many levels. The different ways of viewing the treaty, the making of the treaty, and the realization of the treaty have not successfully dispensed of the deep incomprehensibility involved in that pregnant silence, nor managed to really clarify it. Understanding, in the first instance, that the treaty is a documentary event wherein two or more parties, which may have two or more languages, cultures, sets of objectives, sets of resources involved in setting out some terms for a common understanding is perhaps a point of departure for trying to start to untangle Treaty Seven. It is possible, with this lay understanding, to look more deeply for patterns in the confusion.

One major lay argument about the problem with the treaties refers it back to the position of the Canadian government, namely, that the treaties were land purchases. This is an argument which states that land and the resources it yields are understood differently by the two different sovereignties.<sup>6</sup> This argument states that land was not conceived in the same way by the two sets of signatories. The Siksikáwa-speaking nations that agreed Treaty Seven did not have an idea of single ownership over land. This is sufficiently common argument to show up in the official archival accounts of Treaty Seven.

The northern Plains Indians...had no recognition of land tenure for the individual and it is questionable whether such ownership was recognized on a tribal basis. When Medicine Calf stated that "the Great Spirit, and not the Great Mother, gave us this land," he was presenting

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amongst themselves, so that in a short time they were separated into small parties, afraid to meet. He noted that although they had been among the wealthiest Indians in the area, they soon were clothed in rags, without horses and without guns. The existence of the American forts virtually destroyed the trade of the Hudson's Bay Company, the Blackfoot tribes remaining out on the plains and disposing of their buffalo robes as soon as they obtained them. As a result, the steadying influence of the British traders was lost as the Blackfoot became caught up in a maelstrom of whiskey, intra-tribal disputes, and a complete breakdown in their social and political systems. The Stoneys, who had come under the influence of Methodist missionaries, were less affected by the liquor traffic and continued to trade with the Hudson's Bay Company. The deteriorating conditions in the far West had not gone unnoticed in Ottawa. In 1872, Col. P. Robertson-Ross, Adjutant-General of the Militia of Canada, was sent to study conditions and to make recommendations for the introduction of law and order. His primary concern was with the Blackfoot tribes, whom he was told totalled 10,092 persons -- 2,523 men, 3,384 women, and 4,245 children. Robertson-Ross travelled through a portion of the future Treaty Seven area and on his return to Ottawa, he indicated the immediate need for a police force in the Blackfoot hunting groups.' (Dempsey, *ibid.*)

<sup>6</sup> 'On several occasions, aboriginal groups indicated that they wanted to continue hunting and fishing. The English negotiators led them to believe they would be able to do so. In reality, the treaty texts only allowed them to hunt on lands that were not occupied by white settlers, and also included regulations that could prohibit these activities during certain periods of the year.' (Montpetit, 2011: online, last accessed 30 Dec., 2012)

a native concept of land occupancy. The Great Spirit had not physically presented a printed land deed to the Indians; rather, Medicine Calf implied that the Great Spirit was the giver of all life and that everything, including the land, had come from him. (Dempsey, 1987: online, last accessed 30 Dec., 2012)

For First Nations, dispossessing land from any group of people forever was as preposterous a notion as trying to sell the air we breathe. A Siksikáwa legend currently circulating supports the idea of two different economic logics involved. It describes the confrontation embodied in Treaty Seven as follows:

The story is told that on that occasion the white man spread many one-dollar bills on the ground and said, “this is what the white man trades with; this is his buffalo robe. Just as you trade skins, we trade with these pieces of paper.”

When the white chief had laid all his money on the ground and had shown how much he would give if the Indians would sign a treaty, Crowfoot took a handful of clay, made a ball out of it and put it on the fire and cooked it. It did not crack.

Then he said to the white man, “Now put your money on the fire and see if it will last as long as the clay.”

The white man said, “No....my money will burn because it is made of paper”.

With an amused gleam in his eyes the old chief said, “Oh your money is not as good as our land, is it? The wind will blow it away; the fire will burn it; water will rot it. Nothing will destroy our land. You don’t make a very good trade.” Then with a smile, Crowfoot picked up a handful of sand from the river bank, handed it to the white man and said, “You count the grains of sand in that while I count the money you give for the land”.

The white man said, “I would not live long enough to count this, but you can count the money in a few minutes”. “Very well”, said the wise Crowfoot, “our land is more valuable than your money. It will last forever. It will not perish as long as the sun shines and the water flows, and through all the years it will give life to men and animals, and therefore we cannot sell the land. It was put there by the Great Spirit and we cannot sell it because it does not really belong to us.

You can count your money and burn it with a nod of a buffalo’s head, but only the Great Spirit can count the grains of sand and the blades of grass on these plains.

As a present we will give you anything you can take with you, but we cannot give you the land.” (Thunder, 1987: 35)

This is an argument that does not seem to turn on language. As sociologists, we have a rich tradition of investigating contesting economic rationalities, historical transformations in how property is understood and the large scale social effects involved in such with no reference to language. Much of the classical sociological canon could be brought to bear on helping to understand how a difference in economic cultures was the root cause of, and remains the main point of friction between, the two groups that signed Treaty Seven.<sup>7</sup> In applying these ideas, we could get a robust account of key aspects of Treaty Seven, but not necessarily a wholly satisfying one. By digging a little deeper, it seems that there were also two different language logics. This is not to be confused with simply the different languages spoken, or even the different ideas that vernaculars might embody (as the linguistic relativism thesis posits). Rather, there were two wholly

<sup>7</sup> Obvious examples are parallels in Marx’s analysis of the end of feudalism and the disenfranchisement of peasants from the land (*Capital*) and Durkheim’s writings on organic and mechanical solidarity (*Division of Labour in Society*).

different constellations of ideas about what language practices like speech-making, verbal negotiation, the use of written documents and the writing of a name *were*. This was a collision between two different social philosophies of language: a drawn out collision in such slow motion that is still in process today. This is hinted at with the phrase earlier that the ‘Government of Canada could draw upon a long history of...[the] use of written documents to formalise a pact in perpetuity’ (Dempsey, *ibid.*). And yet, the phrasing of this gives a sense that since this form of agreement was a feature lacking in First Nations political culture, First Nations political culture was lacking.

This is an unquestionably language (not linguistic) feature of the Treaty Seven knot that brings us to another argument which centres on how legal agreements were forged in the different nations. In reference to the Treaty covering the area to the north of Treaty Seven (signed 22 years later), one First Nations scholar writes that:

Understanding indigenous philosophical and theological concepts of the local indigenous population fundamentally alters the prism through which the treaty should be evaluated. Seen from the perspective of the local indigenous population, Treaty 8 should be seen as an agreement which would protect their religious and spiritual freedom... (Cardinal, 2004: online, last accessed 30 Dec., 2012)

The basic argument is that the ‘legal paper’ culture of the British Crown had no analogue or relevance for the First Nations signatories.<sup>8</sup> Documents were impermanent and secondary. Instead, the spoken words of actual persons and their subsequent actions in context of their community obligations were meaningful.

“The essence of the treaty was to create a nation together that will exist in perpetuity, for as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the waters flow,” Anderson said. “The core concept is to share the traditional land of the First Nations who have entered into a treaty with the Crown and the Canadian settlers, and also to benefit from the Crown’s resources, such as medicine and education.” But the text of the written treaties tells a whole other story. According to these documents, native groups surrendered all of their rights to the land in exchange for small reserves and meagre compensation.’ (Montpetit, 2011: online, last accessed 30 Dec., 2012)

What occurred in September 1877 was one moment in a complex and often fraught relationship between sovereign nations with and without writing embedded in the fabrics of law, economy and life. This direction points to a range of related issues, how governance is involved in different ways of enacting social life. We can ask: what if language is central to the enacting of governance, and what if the different forms it takes matter? Then, perhaps, there were two events superimposed on one another: an oral event and a documentary event. These events were perhaps at odds with

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<sup>8</sup> Again, this issue appears in the archival history of the Canadian government: ‘When the government announced that it would negotiate a treaty, the question arises as to whether or not the Indians were aware of the purpose of the proposed meeting. The Government of Canada could draw upon a long history of individual land ownership, sale of property, and the use of written documents to formalize a pact in perpetuity.’ (Dempsey, *ibid.*)

each other. In fact, this has been judged the case in the ‘Badger Judgment’ made by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1996.

The Supreme Court of Canada has recognized the need to interpret the treaties in light of what was said before they were signed. “The treaties, as written documents, recorded an agreement that had already been reached orally and they did not always record the full extent of the oral agreement,” reads the Badger judgment, handed down in 1996. This judgment states that it is necessary to interpret treaties “in the sense that they would naturally have been understood by the Indians at the time of the signing.” (Montpetit, *ibid.*)

However, the oral event appears, in the case of Treaty Seven, to be rather different from the written text. What, then, did Laird say that Potts was unable to translate? What was said by the agents of the British government in order to open negotiations with the sovereign nation of a territory needed for the cross-continental rail (and the profits that ought to ensue from it)?

The Great Spirit has made all things—the sun, the moon, and the stars, the earth, the forest, and the swift running rivers. It is by the Great White Spirit that the Queen rules over this great country and other great countries. The Great Spirit has made the white man and the red man brothers, and we should take each other by the hand. The Great Mother loves all her children, white man and red man alike; she wishes to do them all good. (Dempsey, 1987: online, last accessed 30 Dec., 2012)

This seems an odd prelude to a land purchase. Dempsey explains that in order to ‘make themselves understood, the British used a language very different from that used in the treaty texts. Queen Victoria was referred to as “the Great White Mother,” and the native people as her “Red Children” (*ibid.*)<sup>9</sup>. However, there is more of social and linguistic importance than the fact that British agents adopted the imagery of the nations that they were bargaining with. Long has made a detailed study of Treaty Nine (to the north and east, signed in 1905), through the diaries of the three commissioners that undertook it. He argues that there was a profound difference between each party’s understanding of what the event involved. He notes that the ‘treaty Commissioners appointed by the Crown...brought pieces of dried animal skin or vellum on which civil servants had written in beautiful calligraphy (and in English) the legalistic terms of an agreement worked out beforehand’ (Long, 2010: online, last accessed 30 Dec., 2012).

Commissioner Samuel Stewart...wrote in his journal that “full explanations” were given, through interpreters of course, and the original peoples willingly agreed to “cede, release, surrender and yield up to the Government of the Dominion of Canada for His Majesty the King and his Successors forever, all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever, to the lands.” Aboriginal title to the land and its resources were duly surrendered. Any confusion about ownership of these lands and resources was resolved...Commissioner Daniel George MacMartin, a miner nominated by Ontario, says in his diary that Treaty No. 9 was explained this way: the commissioners had been sent by the King, the monarch wished his people to be happy and prosperous, and - as soon as they signed their names - everyone would receive gifts in perpetuity. Commissioner Scott seemed to confirm MacMartin’s account when he later wrote: “They were to make certain promises and we were to make certain promises, but our

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<sup>9</sup> Laird is reported to have earned the name from First Nations ‘He Whose Tongue is not Forked’, an impressive title surely. However, records suggest that what he said and what was written were two quite different things. He was also the architect of the Indian Act, a legislative tool that has resulted in a ‘destructive paternalistic relationship’ between First Nations and the Canadian government.

purpose and our reasons were alike unknowable...So there was no basis for argument. The simple facts had to be stated, and the parental idea developed that the King is the great father of the Indians, watchful over their interests, and ever compassionate.” Aboriginal title was not mentioned. Co-ownership of the land and its resources was not resolved.

Montpetit reiterates this idea of two different events, as do the oral histories of the elders.<sup>10</sup> Miller explains the *Treaty 7* research project findings:

Elders consistently report...that they and previous generations comprehended the Treaty as a peace treaty, not a land surrender, although the latter remains the position of the government of Canada. The Elders assert that the issue of land surrender was never mentioned to Indian leaders at the negotiations, nor were copies of the final formal treaty ever supplied to the leaders after the signing, which meant the treaty’s final language was never communicated or translated by any formal process. (Miller, 1998: 281-282)<sup>11</sup>

Implicit in Long’s, Montpetit’s, Anderson’s and the Elders’ version of events is purposiveness. All either state or allude to the idea that the commissioners ‘tricked’ First Nations into signing their documents. Alongside this is the idea that the documents were assumed to hold such power, once signed, that it mattered little what means were used to obtain signatures. As in the many other (perhaps all) signing of treaties across the Americas, there were two utterly different conceptions of language, of what language means, what it does, and what it is, have not been reconciled.

Treaty Seven, as a document and an event, (and the series of events that are cognates to it, sic, treaties broadly), should be central to sociologists. These events are unquestionably social, but more importantly, they are of the social. Questions of means, ends, duplicity and veracity add more threads to the tangled knot of this event. They represent attempts to shape and form social life between groups along specific lines. How shall we begin to analyse them?

### Language events and sociology

All social life is arguably, at some level, made up of language events. In the spectrum of the social, there are events in which language plays a greater or lesser role. Sociologists have tended to look at micro-scale communications or at the technical workings of language with little consideration that language is performed but—like history— not under conditions of our own

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<sup>10</sup> Part of the protocol was to award a medal to the chiefs who signed certain treaties. On one side of the medal was a bust of Queen Victoria; on the other, a British officer and a native chief shaking hands... For Michael Anderson, this handshake symbolizes the profound meaning of historic treaties... For the British Crown, the treaties offered substantial benefits, such as: freeing up land for loyalists who had supported the British during the American War of Independence; advancing colonization in the West; providing agricultural land and natural and mineral resources. (Montpetit, 2011: online, last accessed 30 Dec., 2012)

<sup>11</sup> She continues: ‘The First Nations subject to its terms only learned of the *Indian Act* when it began to be enforced (also unexplained to the signers) and as select Treaty obligations were implemented—epitomizing a much different understanding of “being taken care of” from that which Crown representatives had promised.’ (ibid.)

choosing. The idea of language events could offer a new way of looking at the social, displaying that which is in the foreground but nearly invisible to us: language.

All that led up to Potts' open-mouthed silence, all that occurred during the gathering itself, the discussion, the document that was created for it, was first and foremost a language event. It was also a political event, an economic event, a knowledge event, a religious event and a legal event. Nearly all social events are language events. And so they are also economic events, or political events, and so forth. But what happened with Treaty Seven was that language burst through the surface, exploding expectations and subsequent attempts to act. It may be that there is a series of public 'document events' such as the creation of constitutions, treaties, legislative acts, etc. that share in this destabilising quality. And there may also be ponderous language events, where language is of decisive importance but in a more predictable, expected fashion.

Language events like Treaty Seven are especially interesting because they show the attempt to broker social agreement or new social forms, in ways that are meant to be universal or permanent. This idea could open the field of sociological investigation in a directed, pragmatic and critical way towards a great number of directions. But sociology is still at too preliminary a stage for that. For now, let us suppose that there is a class of language events, moments in social life in which language erupts. The tools we have to investigate such events do not exist yet, either in terms of research methods or concepts. If we are unable to investigate, however clumsily, these more extraordinary language moments, we have little hope indeed of looking at less obvious events, moments where language is seemingly mundane.

### **Social-language projects**

I selected the Treaty Seven event and document as an illustration for two related reasons. Firstly, it is an event which throws language to the forefront, but as a tangle too difficult to describe, too complicated to explain. We cannot begin to tackle Treaty Seven as scholars, until we tackle the fundamentally different understandings of language at work. Secondly, it is fruitful precisely because it shows how it is possible for cultures to have radically different ideas of what language is and does. Such pictures affect the actions of the group. Another way to think about these fundamentally different understandings of language is as 'folk sociologies of language'. That folk sociologies of language may have more to offer to a nascent sociology of language than current social scientific approaches to language is the motivating force of this thesis. This has informed the selection and manner of the analyses of the main chapters that follow. It is the element that unifies a group of seemingly dissimilar materials which I have named 'social-language projects'. This thesis could have been carried out in a more familiar way, one that involved mining social



theory for suggestive perspectives and concepts relating to language. After some time spent looking at that option (frustrating time especially with regard to classical theory), there were so few contenders that it would have become a thesis on a single theorist and no longer on language and the social. Bourdieu is the only obvious candidate for such a work, though there are certainly moments to be further studied in a number of unexpected sources (especially Benjamin, Foucault and Baudrillard).

Emerging from European thought across the past three centuries are works that are most simply described as ‘social-language projects’ because each work tries to ‘do’ something with language. They each also hold a specific and robust conception of how social life and language relate.

### **Substance and structure of chapters**

The materials studied here include philosophical languages, an encyclopaedia, folk tale collections, and two authoritative dictionaries of English. As far as I know, no other sociologist has taken up these sorts of works as a basis for sustained critical examination. The rationale for investigating them is that they contain pictures of language and social life that offer profoundly suggestive materials for sociologists interested in language, although the source materials are historical in character. The methods I have used are a combination of analytical and comparative. Chapter Two focuses on three seventeenth-century projects: a gesture language (Bulwer), a philosophical language (Wilkins) and combination of both (Dalgarno). These three projects each compose language in the attempt to rectify a deep confusion pulling society apart and corroding language. Chapter Three examines two eighteenth-century projects: Johnson’s *Dictionary* and Diderot’s & d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*. These two rational dictionaries were designed to fix language toward the end of the realisation of a good society and a perfected language. Chapter Four investigates nineteenth-century projects: the *New English Dictionary* (OED) and the work of the Grimm brothers. Both projects are historical collations of a people’s language intended to capture historically changing nationhood.

Chapters Two, Three and Four have five main sections. Firstly, I provide reviews of literature specific to each project to the end of demonstrating the utility of lifting works out from their scholarly sites. Wherever possible, useful interpretations or questions are identified in these literatures.<sup>12</sup> The second part is made of an account of the objectives of the works. These were

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<sup>12</sup> These social-language projects are quite outside of mainstream sociology and there are nine separate works, each of which has a greater or lesser literature. I have tried to use the literature reviews both to tease out descriptions of the works as well as note significant ideas.

attempts to do something, thus to properly understand them, it is important to know what they were attempts to do. Thirdly, I present explanations of the main concepts that made each project possible. In the case of the seventeenth-century projects, there was a shared conceptual vocabulary that informed how each project designer went about trying to reach their shared goal. The eighteenth-century projects relied on different analytical bases to meet their aims; whereas the nineteenth-century works have a degree of overlap. The fourth section discusses the methods, how these social-language projects were established. The final, fifth, section combines insights from the four preceding sections to present a broad analytical picture that developed in terms of language and the social and their interrelations. Respectively, these pictures cluster around truth (Chapter 2), authority (Chapter 3) and law (Chapter 4). These examinations take the same general shape, but the materials are different enough in significant ways that it would be extremely difficult to show each without allowing for their individuality to influence the presentation of them. The projects that have been studied were initially grouped according to the time of their production. This grouping yielded analytical similarities that have enabled a developing comparison to emerge.

The investigations contained in this work examine one of the most obvious of social phenomena. Strangely, it is one of the least obvious of sociological phenomena; by this, I mean that sociologists have largely ignored it. The central claim of the thesis is that language is a curious blind spot for sociology. By looking at folk sociologies of language that were a part of the pre-history of the discipline, possible reasons are suggested about why sociology has remained dumb, by and large, on language. I return to this in the conclusion. Chapter One begins these investigations by presenting a discussion of what there is to be found now in sociology if attempting to research language.

# CHAPTER ONE

## TODAY'S SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF LANGUAGE

Because the most commonplace, ubiquitous, and most important of all man's characteristics is undoubtedly his use of language, social scientists of all varieties have long acknowledged its importance and its indispensability. At the same time, they have proceeded to ignore it as an object of study. Therein lies one of the strangest paradoxes in the history of social science.

(Peñalosa, 1981: 114)

Peñalosa's insight, set out several decades ago, has continuing lucidity. It is not only that language has been overlooked, even though it is acknowledged as vitally important. Even when social scientists have lingered long enough to claim it is a central element of their study, it has still somehow slipped their grasp. This chapter consists of an analysis of some key attempts that have been made in social science to bring language into clear view. The review that follows provides accounts of a number of specific conceptual ways that sociologists and anthropologists have become accustomed to language being situated, for them, out of their line of vision. I hope that by showing how language keeps slipping beyond reach of researchers dedicated precisely to looking at language, the utility of stepping outside the discipline (topically and temporally) by investigating social-language projects, becomes clearer. The critical analyses here illustrate that when social researchers have tried to tackle language directly, this attempt—in and of itself—has not helped to keep language firmly in sight. This chapter is composed of several sections which evaluate streams of social research inspired by the propositions that: 'language reflects society'; 'language expresses social life'; and 'language is fundamental to society'. These three propositions can be seen as the orienting principles of the material under analysis. After looking at each of these streams of research within their own terms of reference, they are briefly assessed in light of the Treaty Seven illustration. The first section deals with the idea that 'language reflects society'. Critical commentators apply this description to sociolinguistics and Fishman's version of the sociology of language. These are two major influences within sociology for applied research into language. Sociolinguistics dominates courses on language in Anglo-American universities. The other two propositions, that 'language expresses social life' and 'language is fundamental to society', are phrases that I use to describe the material under discussion in the following two sections. The assertion that 'language expresses social life' is what I identify as the guiding premise of anthropological linguistics and it is explored in the second section of this chapter. This body of work is a rich area of language studies from one of the closest cognate disciplines to sociology. The third section is concerned with the two previous attempts to define a sociology of language (by Hertzler and Luckmann). I explain how these texts were inspired by the proposition that

'language is fundamental in society' and offer an analysis of the different problems that a commitment to this claim yields for attempts to establish a sociology of language. This review of prior attempts sets the basis for turning to works that offer folk sociologies of language instead.

The first premise, that 'language reflects society', is how analysts formulate the central idea of sociolinguistics (Cameron, 1990; Grimshaw, 1987; Irvine, 1989; Williams, 1992). As a description of a relationship between language and social life, this proposition is unclear. Simply stated, sociolinguists work with an image wherein language and society are two separate and independent systems. What this means is that the structure and processes of language are thought to be causally explicable without reference to anything external to language. Similarly, social processes are thought to be amenable to explanation by social variables alone. But sociolinguists concede there may be a limited area of overlap between these two systems. In that limited area, linguistic phenomena and social phenomena correlate. This is why the image of language *reflecting* society may not be an obvious image. The formulation that 'language processes display correlations with social processes to a strictly limited degree' is more accurate. But the description 'reflect' does capture something important. It implies that these two domains are distinct. But it also implies that they have an insubstantial connection. Although it is awkward, another way of describing this is to say that 'language is, to some degree, a reflective substance for society'. This clarifies that what language is reflecting (social processes) does not *change* the basic character of language. Neither is what is reflected (social processes) transformed in a meaningful way. Yet a connection can be seen between the two orders for a brief period. For example, if differences in social class co-vary with differences in the pronunciation of certain words, this is not seen to affect the operation of linguistic laws. Nor is this thought to affect the way that class stratification is constituted and reproduced. Yet there is a predictable correlation that can be found in empirical data between the social and linguistic facts. Section 1.1 contains an examination of how this idea is the basis of Labov's and Fishman's researches.

The next section contains an examination of research that employs the idea that 'language expresses social life'. Most of this material, hailing from anthropological linguistics, would use the more technical term 'index' in place of 'express'. The terms 'index' and 'express' refer to the notion that one order of phenomena (language) provides evidence of the arrangement of another, unobservable, order of phenomena (social structure). This is the view that directs ethnographers of communication to gather and interpret empirical data in the fieldwork setting. Put simply, these researchers 'read' the form that social organisation takes from the way that language is variously used. In this view, quite by contrast to the divided image of language and society held by sociolinguists, language and social life are collapsed into each other. Language may provide

evidence of social organisation, but this does not mean that social structure causes patterns of linguistic use. Such questions about causal primacy are not the focus of anthropological linguistics. This section looks at how the original contributors to the field, Hymes and Gumperz, understand the claim that ‘language expresses society’. It also investigates how one particular sociologist, Bernstein, appropriated this notion for the analysis of social class in an urban environment.

Section 1.3 concerns the claim that ‘language is fundamental in society’. This is how I have expressed the premise that underlies Hertzler’s and Luckmann’s efforts to establish a sociology of language. This premise is a much less precise claim than the others. The idea that something is ‘fundamental to’ something else says very little about either of the terms involved. It could mean that language has a causal role in society. Alternatively, it might mean that society is dependent upon the existence of language. It could simply be referring to the ubiquity of a phenomenon. In fact, the literature that this notion inspired does not adhere to a single interpretation of this claim. I argue that this is the shortcoming of the proposition: it is simply too vague to orient research.

There are other writings in sociology that refer, more or less explicitly, to language. These come from theoretical works, or conceptual works, although research streams derive from them. I discuss future directions suggested by this work the conclusion of this thesis and refer to authors from the sociological canon (such as Durkheim and Simmel) as well as other theoreticians (such as Benjamin, Foucault, Bourdieu, Habermas and Baudrillard).

## **1.1 Language reflects society**

Much of what is currently understood as the sociology of language derives from either the work of Labov or the work of Fishman. Labov has inspired an apparently broad range of on-the-ground studies where specific speech variables (for example, the way that the verb ‘to be’ is used in ‘Black English Vernacular’ to how people in positions of social powerlessness tend to ‘hypercorrect’) are linked with the social positions of speakers. Fishman, in contrast, has brought together studies concerned with dominant and marginal speech variants. Both Labov’s sociolinguistics and Fishman’s sociology of language are subsumed under the name of ‘variationism’ although, on the surface, they appear to be working at radically different levels. Labov draws exclusively from linguistics to develop his research programme, whereas Fishman mixes linguistic and sociological materials.<sup>13</sup> The organising idea of both these schools is that

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<sup>13</sup> Fishman borrows not only from linguistics, but also from demographic research. His inclusion of demographic factors does not constitute a divergence from the theoretical model of Labov, but rather acts more as an addendum to it.

‘language reflects society’.<sup>14</sup> The reason that ‘variationism’ is associated with this claim is that social structure and language structure are conceived as two separate phenomena. These structures are assumed to come into contact at particular moments, and the form of one (social structure) is seen to mimic the form of the other (language structure). But the contact is both brief and limited. The problem with both Labov’s and Fishman’s work is that they are concerned with questions that guide linguistics to the exclusion of questions that guide sociology. This shows up clearly in trying to adapt them to make sense of Treaty Seven.

Labov is universally credited with being the father of sociolinguistics; he writes his work ‘might be called “sociolinguistic analysis”’, which he describes as ‘the examination of the internal structure of the language as it is used in everyday speech. Studies of the social distribution of linguistic variables in time and space fall under this general heading’ (1978: 96). Everyday speech, linguistic variation, the social distribution of linguistic phenomena, and the internal structure of language each come to play important roles in Labov’s version of variationism, and its contemporary derivatives. The broad themes of his research, as well as the sources he drew from, illuminate how these elements come together. He began by studying sound differentiation within spoken English, an interest that was maintained in this topic throughout many subsequent research projects. He wrote his MA thesis on ‘the social motivation of sound change’ (1963) and his PhD thesis on the ‘social stratification of English’ (1966). However, Labov did not restrict himself to phonological variation, as grammatical variations and lexical differences were incorporated into his analyses of Black English Vernacular (1972a). His programme expanded again in a collaborative book that uses discourse analysis to analyse fifteen minutes of a psychotherapeutic session (1977). The number of ‘levels’ in Labov’s work (phonetic, lexical, grammatical and conversational) initially gives the impression that he is neither a purist on the theoretical level, nor a traditionalist on the methodological level. Thus, one of the first things that a survey of his work suggests is that Labov’s sociolinguistics might embody an integrative approach to linguistics that could allow for a distinctively social conception of language. But a nagging question arises when looking at the relative positions of each of these different dimensions. Does Labov’s unwavering interest in how language is heterogeneous—be it in terms of sound change, sound differentiation, lexical

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<sup>14</sup> Grimshaw appears to be the first to apply the description ‘language reflects society’ to the school of social linguistic research called ‘variationism’. He puts Bernstein under this label also whereas I put Bernstein’s work under the notion ‘language expresses society’. Grimshaw splits the different social approaches to language into two categories. Either social structure is believed to determine language behaviour (or the reverse), or the two realms are seen as in a state of ‘mutual embeddedness’ (1971: 98). I divided the material according to the relative emphasis given to linguistic and social factors. Research that relies upon an image of language and society as autonomous structures has been classed under the notion that ‘language reflects society’. ‘Language expresses social life’ covers material that rests on the notion that language is dependent upon social structure.

differentiation or grammatical variation—bear consequences in terms of conceiving of language as a social phenomenon? Labov incorporated a number of sources into his research, and yet with great selectiveness about which parts of linguistics were employed. The tight focus that his studies demonstrate across his career may be attributable to his rebellion against certain ‘fallacies’ of linguistic methodology (Cameron, 1990: 80). In a recollection of his research history, Labov describes his initial reaction to linguistics:

[w]hen I first entered linguistics...in 1961, it was my intention to gather data from the secular world. The early projects that I constructed were “essays in experimental linguistics,” carried out in ordinary social settings. My aim was to avoid the inevitable obscurity of texts, the self-consciousness of formal elicitations, and the self-deception of introspection...A simple review of literature might have convinced me that such empirical principles had no place in linguistics: there were many ideological barriers to the study of language in everyday life (1997: 148).

Koerner argues that Labov’s reaction against the speculative character of the prevailing school of linguistics rendered three older (or more marginal) schools attractive. Koerner traces the different lines that converge in Labov’s sociolinguistics as historical linguistics, dialect geography, and bilingualism-multilingualism (from here called diglossia) research (2001: 22).

When Labov started working in the 1960s, historical linguistics was an abandoned enterprise, having given way to synchronic linguistics (both called structural linguistics and formal linguistics). Throughout the nineteenth-century, linguists saw their task as discerning the ‘law like’ regularities in shifts of speech pronunciation over long periods of time. The role of linguistic change was indispensable to a conception of language as governed—as the rest of nature was believed to be—by certain laws. Labov similarly views *heterogeneity* in language use as not an indication of disorder, but rather as an expression of the orderliness of language at a deeper level. The units that were assumed to undergo lawful change were phonological variables, or sound fragments. Labov used materials from his early work on the ‘social motivation of sound change’ in ‘the first chapter of his *Sociolinguistic Patterns* of 1972, the year he wrote what appears to be his first thorough critique of traditional historical linguistics’ (2001: 14-15). How much of that chapter is a critique is a moot point, for Labov adopted historical linguistics’ central tenets on the nature of language (1963: 275-276; 2001: 9-27). He did not import historical linguistics wholesale into his research because he rejected the evidence that this school relied upon, but not its main premises. ‘Historical linguistics can...be thought of as the art of making the best use of bad data. The art is a highly developed one,’ Labov wrote thirty odd years after his MA critique, ‘but there are some limitations of the data that cannot be compensated for’ (2001: 11). Labov retained the idea that diversity in language is, at a deeper level, an expression of its internal structure. But he worked with a different sort of data: data he regarded as subject to more robust empirical investigations.

Labov borrowed from another school of linguistics, dialect geography, to generate better data. Dialect geography has always been a peripheral field in linguistics whose popularity peaked

in the '*inter bella* period (ca. 1920-1950)' (Malkiel, 1976: 62). Its focus is in mapping speech variation across physical territories using a range of different tactics including collecting folk idioms and tales, constructing etymologies and isolating 'pure' dialect forms through recording the speech of a single person or family (1976: 60-61). According to this perspective, language is seen to be an internally structured system that displays 'organised differentiation' in its specific units. The difference between historical linguistics and dialect geography lies in the medium within which this linguistic variation is seen to occur, long periods of time versus physical territories. Labov's work bears a resemblance to dialect geography in two ways. On the one hand, dialect geographers and Labov shared a common enthusiasm for collecting (more or less) spontaneous instances of everyday speech. On the other hand, dialect geography reinforces Labov's view that heterogeneity in language use offers evidence that language is a fundamentally structured system.<sup>15</sup> Both historical linguistics and dialect geography allowed Labov to search for instances of language heterogeneity under the assumption that this yields evidence of linguistic laws.

Many scholars see Labov's work as a breakthrough for linguistic research for two reasons. Labov's research supports the structuralist theory of language that he rebelled against on methodological grounds. His work reinforced structuralist linguistic theory through the way that he dealt with everyday language use. In Labov's hands, seemingly disorderly data turns out to offer evidence of the autarchy of language (1972b: 23).<sup>16</sup> 'Labov's work demonstrated that variation could be modelled,' points out Cameron, 'and that the analysis of variation provided insight into the mechanism of language change' (1990: 80). The second reason why scholars see Labov's work as innovative is because he includes a new media within which language is seen to change. Not only does his analysis manage to include both time and physical territory, which constitutes a unique synthesis in itself. In addition to this, Labov's research includes the previously uncharted medium of the *social* world. This is why Labov's research is thought to be salient to a sociology of language.

Labov's interest in heterogeneity shaped how he viewed the relationship between language and social life in such a way that it is rendered irrelevant to a sociology of language. From

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<sup>15</sup> The other label that is applied to Labov's work and that of his followers (aside from sociolinguistics) is 'urban dialectology'. His debt to dialect geography is probably more significant than his debt to historical linguistics.

<sup>16</sup> The term 'autarchic' is a more accurate description of Labov's conception of language than the more popularly used 'autonomous'. Both terms mean self-ruling, or independent, or even self-contained. However, 'autarchy' emphasizes the 'rule' side of 'self-rule', whereas 'autonomous' has a stronger emphasis on 'self' and thus strongly connotes 'liberty from' being ruled by something else. Applied to language, the term 'autarchical' stresses that language is an orderly system that has internal laws. It is a system that is rule-bound. 'Autonomous', by contrast, implies that language is free from the causal influence of something else (for example, the laws of chemical reaction, or thermodynamics).



the earliest researches, Labov's conception of speech variation indicates an awareness of differences in social usage. The research that Labov carried out for his doctoral thesis demonstrates this, as he took into account gross sociological categories, such as occupation, age, education, and ethnicity (1972b: 18-38). This meant that Labov utilised these categories to explain the production of regular and predictable differences in patterns of language use. Labov borrowed this descriptive sociological data and incorporated it as a set of variables to explain differentiations in linguistic use. The way that he made use of sociological variables means that the two structures are held to be fundamentally separate. Cameron explains what is seen to be the problem with variationism by most critics:<sup>17</sup>

The account that is usually given—or, worse presupposed—in the quantitative paradigm is some version of the proposition that 'language reflects society'. Thus there exist social categories, structures, divisions, attitudes and identities that are marked or encoded or expressed in language use. By correlating patterns of linguistic variation with these social or demographic features, we have given a sufficient account of them. (1990: 81)

She goes on to say that sociolinguistics has failed to address the central issue of why 'people behave linguistically as they have been found to do' (Cameron, *ibid*). Similarly, Irvine writes that, although there has been a certain amount of descriptive variationist research, 'less common is the attempt to explain the correlation—why a *particular* linguistic variety should mark a *particular* social group...most of these studies either state or imply that the social diversity is formed independently from its linguistic marking: for example, Labov's use of an already existing sociological survey of the Lower East Side that provided a 10-point index of socioeconomic class, based mainly on occupation and income' (1989: 251-2).<sup>18</sup> For both Cameron and Irvine, attempting to do more than describe links between language and social life would constitute an advance for sociolinguistics. They are interested in pushing the analysis to what they understand as the explanatory level. In other words, instead of simply connecting the two variables (a linguistic one, for example hedges such as 'hm' or 'er' and a social one, for example, gender), researchers ought to give reasons for the existence of the connections. But this does not alter the basic conception of two separate orders. Hasan, however, criticises Labov in even stronger terms, terms that challenge the image of two separate realms. She says that 'Labov limits the domain of

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<sup>17</sup> Her article is entitled 'Demythologizing sociolinguistics: why language does not reflect society' (1990), and though the essay is mainly a critique of Labov's work, her points are equally applicable to Fishman's work.

<sup>18</sup> Williams makes a similar criticism: 'The consequence of this position that separates language from the social is that the relationship between them becomes unproblematic; language merely reflects society. It leads to the tendency to analyse language in terms of the social through empirical correlations in which the social is the independent variable, and language the dependent variable. For most sociolinguists, this is sufficient, and there is no awareness of the relationship between correlations and theory' (1992: 39-40) For other critical assessments of the sociological dimension of Labov's work, see Dittmar (1976: 82-84, 192-206, 277-280), Murray (1994: 377-387) and Williams (1992: 67-93).

sociolinguistics, which is reduced to social diagnostics, ignoring the deeper issues in the role of language in the creation, maintenance, and change of social institutions' (quoted in Bernstein, 1997: 45). But the image of two separate realms is precisely what the variationist programme is predicated upon. Labov describes the independence of the social and linguistic orders in a reflection on the history of variationism:

At one point in the development of sociolinguistics, it was not uncommon for scholars to suggest that the social and linguistic aspects of language were coextensive in the sense that each linguistic element had a social aspect or evaluation. Yet the actual situation seems to be quite the reverse. For the most part, linguistic structure and social structure are isolated domains, which do not bear upon each other. (2001: 28)

Labov maintains a narrow focus on heterogeneity across diverse speech levels, and it is this focus that leads him to incorporate social elements in the first place. This restricted interest is why Labov's 'social linguistics' can more accurately be called 'linguistics that, on occasion, uses social variables'.<sup>19</sup> Criticizing Labov for failing to develop a conception of language as a central element of the social world is unfair. Labov has been querulous about accepting the label of 'sociolinguist', more often preferring instead to be described as a linguist (Grimshaw, 1973: 581 n6; Labov, 1997: 147; Murray, 1994: 387; Shuy, 2003: 14). The problem with his work cannot really be described as a problem of language evading the grasp of a sociological thinker. It is, more precisely, a problem of linguistics subsuming the social dimension into a non-social account of language. However, and this is the important point for the objective of this research, it is still accurate to describe Labov as the 'father of sociolinguistics' because the variationist programme is built upon his work. The most prominent sociological work that studies language relies upon Labov's framework. Accepting the variationist model means that language is examined free of the complications from the sorts of questions that arise in sociology: the sorts of questions that cannot be reconciled with the conceptual apparatus of contemporary linguistics.

As Labov has become synonymous with sociolinguistics, Fishman has made great efforts to become synonymous with the term 'the sociology of language'. Although his starting point is a sociological perspective, Fishman's conception of the relationship between the linguistic and social orders has a close resemblance to Labov's. There is less resemblance on the topics that occupy these two researchers. Similarly to Labov's description of sociolinguistics, however Fishman defined the sociology of language as concerned with patterns of 'co-variation' between linguistic and societal phenomena (1972: 223; 1968: 5; 1971: 10). And even though Fishman set out a

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<sup>19</sup> Williams focuses in on this issue in his attempt to demonstrate that sociolinguistics carries an implicit structural functionalist bias. Thus he asserts that, 'the apparent narrowness of his [Labov's] objective is displaced by a closer scrutiny which makes it clear that he views his work as part of a broad view on language and society, a view which encompasses a desire to produce universal statements about the nature of linguistic change in relation to human evolution' (1992: 79). However, Williams offers little evidence to support this assertion.

programme for a sociological specialism on language—his work (and the research that his work has inspired) does not constitute a viable sociology of language.

Fishman's work is focused on policy issues—especially issues surrounding language minorities—and centres on one specific concept: diglossia. Fishman began his efforts to establish a sub-discipline in the 1960s with a few scattered articles. This effort was consolidated with the publication of an edited text entitled *Readings in the Sociology of Language* in 1968. He went on to publish two monographs within the next few years: *Sociolinguistics: A brief introduction* (1970) and *The Sociology of Language* (1972). He followed up the monographs with another collection, *Advances in the Sociology of Language* (1971). Fishman also founded (and continues to edit) an academic periodical called the *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* (from here IJSL). Over the years, Fishman's efforts have been rewarded by a steady (albeit not a voluminous) stream of research that combines an interest in language differentiation with an involvement in social policy. The articles in IJSL are very much in line with the proposition that we are looking at here: they are grouped around the theme that linguistic variables reflect social variables. Fishman (and IJSL contributors) are concerned with policy issues relating to language minorities. Diglossia refers to two language variants sharing the same social space. The concept implies more than the simple co-existence of two language varieties. Fishman borrows the sense of the term from Ferguson, who writes that it refers to 'standardisation where two varieties of a language exist side by side throughout the community, each having a definite role to play' (in Williams, 1992: 95). Fishman interprets the 'definite roles' that different language varieties play in a community as 'unequal roles'. In other words, for Fishman, diglossia necessarily implies dominant and marginal language variants. A host of language policy issues emerge from this (especially in terms of protecting subordinate variants) and language planning and language pedagogy occupy much of Fishman's writings (and the *IJSL* publishes much on these topics). A summary glance would not find a great deal of similarity between Labov's and Fishman's work. Where Labov's main concern is in how seemingly chaotic everyday speech is actually structured, Fishman's main concern is the interactions between, maintenance of, and disappearance of, language variants. This policy focus should not obscure the similarity that Labov and Fishman's work shares at a deeper level.

In *SoL*, Fishman was interested in both setting out an agenda for, and defining the limits of, an unformed subfield. A key distinction presented in the work is between the 'descriptive' and the 'dynamic' sociology of language:

...*descriptive sociology of language* – seeks to answer the question “who speaks (or writes) what language (or what language variety) to whom and when and to what end?”...*dynamic sociology of language* – seeks to answer the question “what accounts for different rates of change in the social organization of language use and behaviour towards language?” (1972: 4; 1968; 1971: 219)

In relation to the descriptive sociology of language, Fishman adopted Labov's interest in connecting patterns of language use with social variables, but adds the clause 'to what end' which potentially has a more sociological than linguistic undertone. However, re-reading this account of the descriptive sociology of language, with Fishman's interest in diglossia in mind, casts a different light on the question. In the diglossia oriented reading, the question shifts to the collective level. It asks about the interrelations of language varieties within a speech community. And this change in the unit that is being put in the foreground (from speakers to varieties) shifts the attention from social processes to language processes. This question does not have to be interpreted with language processes as the focal point, but this is the interpretation Fishman adopted. The second striking thing about the 'descriptive versus dynamic' distinction has to do with the dynamic sociology of language. Fishman followed Labov's interest in language heterogeneity, even though the former seeks to relate this somehow to 'social organization'. This interest derives from the model of language originating in historical linguistics and dialectology. So while it is not obvious on the face of it (because they do not relate to the formal linguistics that has achieved dominance in the past four decades), the two topics singled out by the 'dynamic sociology of language' question are much more in keeping with the programme of linguistics than that of sociology.<sup>20</sup>

The second distinction Fishman made in *SoL* is between the micro- and macro-levels of social linguistic action. The micro-level or 'interactional' side, as he defined it, could encompass ethnomethodological work and the ethnography of speaking. The macro-level or 'societal' side includes research that could be carried out at the aggregate level (similarly to Labov's early dialectological researches).<sup>21</sup> Fishman has shown a longstanding interest the macro-level that has led him to a preference for statistical descriptions of linguistic phenomena. There is not sufficient space here to explore the general question of whether macro- level studies relying upon statistical correlations can avoid falling back onto assumptions about the independence of the linguistic and

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<sup>20</sup> It would be easy to be misled by the inclusion of the issue of 'behaviour towards language' into thinking that this is more allied with a sociological programme than a linguistic one. However, Labov's earliest studies were on the 'social motivation of sound change' and offer much to linguistics and little to sociology. The variationist programme uses notions like 'prestige variant' to describe language variants that speakers unwittingly employ in certain social situations. This concept, and others like it that refer to either attitudes or behaviour toward language, make up a good portion of variationist attempts to model language use. These models demonstrate that 'social variables' can be borrowed from social analyses (for example about social stratification and its signifiers) and incorporated into linguistic models without requiring further involvement with the original social analysis.

<sup>21</sup> At one point, Fishman described the macro-level dimension as the 'sociology of language' and left the micro-level dimension to 'interactional sociolinguistics' (Ervin-Tripp, 1997: 66).

social orders.<sup>22</sup> Rather, what is important to this discussion is to underscore that Fishman's preference for statistical research reinforced his commitment to the variationist perspective.

The linguistic and social phenomena that Fishman incorporated into his analysis are those that were already coming to occupy attention amongst the various schools emerging in the late 1960s and early 1970s.<sup>23</sup> This, in part, explains his use of the micro- versus macro-level distinction. Fishman did not want to exclude the meticulously detailed work that was being carried out on language in specific social settings. However, neither did he want to exclude data that could fit into the more powerful model of linguistics. These aims cannot be unified.<sup>24</sup> Fishman dealt with the incompatibility between them by employing Labov's perspective, to the exclusion of sociological questions. Fishman's central question for his sociology of language is: 'at what points do the linguistic and social orders interact?' Thus, Fishman's work could not yield a sociology of language that works with a conception of language as a resistant and yet distinct element in social life. It is peculiar, then, that Fishman addressed the problem of viewing language as a mere reflection of society in an early review of Hertzler's book. 'Sociolinguistics must take a firm stand on the issue of language as a reflection of society,' he writes. 'Without such a stand, the field abdicates a responsibility that is clearly and centrally its own, if not its *raison d'être*' (1967: 592). But Fishman himself did not meet this responsibility: he goes on to show not only the relative importance he attributes to language and social life, but also the separateness of the two orders:

...[i]n pursuing the relationship between characteristics of language (or language use) and societal characteristics, sociolinguistics makes its greatest contribution by specifying the kinds of language characteristics and of social characteristics that do and that do not enter into the relationship under consideration... Hertzler overlooks the isomorphism between language and culture, the fact that the two have changed at vastly different rates during recorded western history, and the fact that history and culture are often far more useful in explaining language than vice versa. (1967: 592-3)

For Fishman, sociology comes into play as an aide to work on questions set by linguistics. Aside from superficial differences arising from independent areas of interest, Fishman's sociology of language and Labov's sociolinguistics are one and the same project. Fishman complained that: '[a]fter three decades, sociolinguistics has remained just as it was: a province of linguistics and

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<sup>22</sup> Since this programme is based upon discerning independent social variables and dependent linguistic variables it seems unlikely that these two realms could be re-conceptualised as having reciprocal causal relations, for instance. Even so, this pushes the more fundamental question of conceptualising language and society as two separate orders into the margins.

<sup>23</sup> See the 'Introduction' and the table of contents of *Readings* (1968) for an overview of this.

<sup>24</sup> There is no conflict between the detailed analysis of language use in social settings and collecting aggregate language data with a view to analysis under linguistic models. The historical reality of how these two areas were defining their objectives and methods means that the two lines of inquiry simply sail well clear of each other. In the next section, the theoretical commitments of ethnomethodology (and conversational analysis) are discussed briefly in relation to Gumperz's work. This discussion clarifies why there is a conceptual chasm between such work and contemporary linguistics.

anthropology, and a rather provincial province at that' (1992: vii). Anthropology has retained a more robust subfield, one that looks as though it promises a better treatment of language and social life.

## 1.2 Language expresses social life

The next set of researches is committed to the proposition that 'language expresses social life'. In this section, the works of three social scientists are assessed. The first is Hymes, the founder of the current anthropological research programme on language. The second is a social scientist, Bernstein, who synthesised anthropological conceptions of language into a project with distinctly sociological concerns. Gumperz, the father of 'discourse analysis', is the final researcher whose writings are evaluated. The premise that orients these researches seems to posit a deeper relationship between language and social life than the notion that 'language reflects society'. The shared idea of this paradigm is that the specific ways that language use is patterned indicate deeper, or less visible, social forms. Hymes' 'ethnography of communication' and Bernstein's 'deficit thesis' both rest upon the idea that the way that language use varies offers evidence of cultural or social organisation. Hymes and Bernstein hold the view that the way that people speak betrays their social identity, a view that is implicit throughout their many researches. But the ethnography of communication goes further than this, and also assumes that the rules of use organizing speech not only differ between social identities, but also between social events, locations and situations. The cornerstone of this shared perspective is the concept of 'indexicality'. Stated in its simplest form, language indexes social life. In Bernstein's treatment, the notion that language 'expresses' or indexes features of social life is understood in more narrowly than in the ethnography of communication. Bernstein drew on anthropological linguistics to analyse specifically how class differences are marked and shaped by speech differences. According to him, language is seen as a contributing agent in social stratification. His work on the 'deficit thesis' proposes the existence of 'restricted and elaborated codes' (or what others call 'class-based registers') which remains a talking point for discussion of class and language. In Bernstein's view, language indexes patterns of inequality in social life. Moreover, both language and social organisation have some causal influence over each other. Speech variations arise from class stratification. And these speech variations then come to reinforce class inequalities. Gumperz's work is somewhat different than that of Hymes and Bernstein. Gumperz developed another field of anthropological linguistics entitled 'discourse analysis'. This field is concerned with a middle layer thought to exist between language and social life. Discourse obtains continuity and coherence by virtue of 'indexical cues' that help participants to navigate verbal encounters. According to Gumperz, speech is seen to

contain the means to shape the ‘discourse order’. The ‘discourse order’ in turn expresses the major contours of social life.

The connections that Hymes, Bernstein and Gumperz see as obtaining between language and social life involve a much closer unity than is posited by exponents of the variationist programme. For this reason, the idea that ‘language expresses social life’ looks like it *should* offer a corrective to the issue discussed above of conceiving language and society as two fundamentally separate orders. But, at the same time, the unity that these researchers contend language and the social world to have leads to a new difficulty. The specific way that these three social scientists interpret that ‘language expresses social life’ effectively collapses language into society. Two problems emerge from this collapse. One is a problem of circularity in terms of the explanations offered to account for either linguistic or social organisation. There is a lack of clarity as to whether differences in speech maintain and reproduce differences in social identities or whether the reverse is true. Or to be more exact, it is impossible to really distinguish between these causal claims. This circularity may be traceable to the fact that this paradigm is research-led. As programmes, the ethnography of communication and discourse analysis were developed as tools for anthropologists to better study language in the field. They were primarily intended to help with data *collection*, not data *interpretation*. As a result of the practical origins of this programme, questions about whether language forms create or maintain social forms are not fully explored. The second problem that arises from the collapse of language and social life has even more profound ramifications for the sociological study of language. This other difficulty arises when, by virtue of the collapse of language into social life, language itself disappears from sight. For researchers working with the notion that language expresses social life, there really is a problem of language slipping into a blind spot. This renders each of them of no utility to untangle the complex knot of threads that constitutes the Treaty Seven event and document. It is this issue of how language fades into invisibility that is the central topic of this section.

Anthropologists—in striking contrast to sociologists—have maintained a continued interest in language throughout the development of the discipline.<sup>25</sup> One of the reasons for anthropologists’ more sustained interest in language is necessity. This necessity derives from the central position of fieldwork in, more often than not, linguistic contexts that are unfamiliar to the

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<sup>25</sup> Grimshaw reminds us of the difference in how much attention has been paid to language in anthropology by contrast to sociology. Specifically, he offers a description of anthropological linguistics, a field for which sociology boasts no analogue. ‘The strongest intradisciplinary organisation interested in language in use in social contexts is surely the Society for Linguistic Anthropology. The society has about five hundred members; it has its meetings in conjunction with those of the American Anthropological Association...embeddedness in contexts of other work on culture with a strong ethnographic orientation clearly adds to its strength.’ (1997: 109)

anthropologist. Ethnographers have a vested interest in learning new languages (and learning them quickly), which may help explain why the discipline developed a greater sensitivity to the role of language in social life. Nevertheless, language remained a relatively under-examined dimension of anthropological work until the emergence of a new independent research programme. This was the ‘ethnography of communication’ and it was established largely, but not solely, by Hymes’ efforts in the 1960s and 1970s. The range of materials that the ethnography of communication has inspired is too sizeable to properly assess here. There are currently vibrant specialist areas focused on a number of areas of language use. Rather than offering a piecemeal analysis of the ethnography of communication, this discussion focuses on Hymes’ founding vision of the subfield which has laid out the possible directions taken by this field of research.<sup>26</sup>

Hymes’ original framework was published under the title of the ‘ethnography of speaking’ (1962), and later was re-named ‘the ethnography of communication’ (1974). Both of these descriptions individually tells clearly what the target of study is (and is not), but the shift tells more. The research agenda called for ethnographers to collect data about speech events<sup>27</sup> and a model offered intended to help anthropologists take note of key cultural variables in the speech events that they were observing. Hymes’ ethnography of communication was set up with the end of developing a taxonomy of the linguistic repertoires that corresponded to forms of social organisation. In Hymes’ view, every community has a particular shape to its linguistic world and this shape expresses the underlying social organisation. For example, Hymes tells us that the Gbeya in the Western Central African Republic are ‘extremely democratic’ and that they are also ‘relatively unconcerned with speech. There is no-one considered verbally excellent even with regard to traditional folklore’ (1974: 33). He goes on to say that the social structure of groups that are stratified leads to more complex status registers, formality registers and so on. This conception of language involves its collapse into social life. What is not clear is the precise way in which this collapse occurs. Stated otherwise, it is obvious that setting out with the intention of mapping, for example, the level of democracy a group has from the value that is placed on ‘verbal excellence’, or vice versa, involves a fusion of language and social structure. What remains to be explained is

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<sup>26</sup> Hymes collated several volumes of language related materials from classical anthropologists to help guide the newly emerging subfield. He also published various articles that stirred the excitement of, and provided direction for, anthropologists with an interest in language. It is the conceptual frame that Hymes sets out in a few of these key articles that is essential for comprehending how the role language plays in the ethnography of communication.

<sup>27</sup> To aid data collection, Hymes offered a model for language focused fieldwork supplemented by the mnemonic tool SPEAKING. This stands for the following aspects of communicative events: ‘S’ refers to speaker and setting; ‘P’ refers to participants; ‘E’ refers to ends; ‘A’ refers to art characteristics; ‘K’ refers to key; ‘I’ refers to instrumentalities; ‘N’ refers to norms of interaction; and ‘G’ refers to genre.



*how* the ethnography of communication is analytically organised such that this collapse remains, to this day, unquestioned.

‘Speaking’ was the original site of study. Hymes’ emphasis on speech constituted a reaction against formal linguistics and the importance that it placed on texts. By calling attention to verbal language, and in drawing attention away from written language, Hymes seemed to be pointing researchers toward the development of both a fuller and more social conception of language. But this re-direction served to exclude a whole dimension of language. Language is not reducible to its verbal form. In principle, the ‘ethnography of speaking’ could be augmented by an ‘ethnography of writing’ and an ‘ethnography of reading’. Perhaps these three areas could be brought together under the broader programme of the ‘ethnography of language’. That programme might have the potential to conceive of language as having a distinct position in social life. But this is not what transpired. Instead, the ‘ethnography of speaking’ underwent a different transformation when it was replaced by the ‘ethnography of communication’ in the 1970s. This subtle terminological shift from ‘speaking’ to ‘communication’ masks a more radical change in the object of study. The ‘ethnography of communication’ is no longer directed at language practices in themselves (although oral language remains the site of study). The focal point of the new research paradigm is the single function that language is assumed to have: to communicate. Further to this, language is not the only social practice that is seen to carry out this function. Forms of dress, dance, music and a variety of other activities are also believed to be ways of communicating. In being trimmed down to a single function that language was seen to carry out, communication, language recedes from the anthropological view.

In the initial development of the ethnography of communication, the function of language was understood as *direct* communication. But as more ethnographers have entered into debates within the subfield, they have challenged the implicit claim that language functions only to allow direct communication. They have explored the deeper communicative function that is thought to be carried out by the organisation of language use. Language has increasingly come to be viewed as communicating *indirectly* about—as functioning to *index*—an underlying social structure. For instance, the deployment of different registers is presumed to display (and thus re-affirm) the social organisation of the group (such as occurs in ritual events) or variations in genre use are seen as markers of social relationships and positions (for example, the way in which specific kinship relations rely on either a formal or joking speech style).

Hymes intended to isolate the *function* of language: he did so in reaction to the emphasis placed on the *structure* of language by formal linguistics (exemplified through its fixation on

syntax).<sup>28</sup> However, this critical reaction to formal linguistics has served to push the subfield further and further away from language.<sup>29</sup> The initial focus of Hymes' ethnographic programme, on speech rather than texts, was simply a reduction of the object of study. However, the newer focus on the purported function of language (rather than its structure) requires a reconfiguration of the relationship between language and social life. Communication replaces language not only in importance, but also in terms of the level at which these phenomena are assumed to be situated within social life. The consequence of this view is that language cannot be conceived as an entity in its own right. Language is not amenable to study *per se*, since its purpose is now seen to be to display (and reinforce) the contours of social life. Currently, anthropologists have neither the conceptual capacity, nor the field methods, to work with language independently of its indexical function. Meaning can be thought in just one way; that of symbolisation of participants and context in a social event. Language and social life have come to be collapsed in an even more profound way than was the case in Hymes' earliest visions of anthropological linguistics.

There is a more familiarly sociological variant of the perspective that 'language expresses social life' that developed within sociology in the 1970s and 1980s. The pioneer of this orientation is British sociologist, Bernstein. He looked at language because of specific experiences he had while teaching working-class students in a vocational college in East London. The differences between how language was used in the academic world (he was simultaneously a postgraduate at the University of London) and how language was used in the vocational college struck Bernstein's imagination. He drew the conclusion that language was a powerful force not only in marking class identities, but also in entrenching them (1990: 94).

Bernstein struggled to find examples in sociology of how to investigate this proposition. In the introduction to his collected works, he offers an account of how he arrived at the 'deficit thesis' on language.<sup>30</sup> Bernstein describes reading widely in search of a sociological conception of class and language use, and how finding Hymes' version of anthropological linguistics was a major

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<sup>28</sup> Chomsky's focus on syntax bothered Hymes as much as it had Labov. Syntax refers to the rules of grammar that are thought to be deducible from ordinary sentences. Hymes comments that 'I like to say that Chomsky is responsible for the development of sociolinguistics, because of his statement in *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax* (1965), which defined the goal of linguistic theory in such a way as to eliminate people and use' (1997, 122: 122). The concentration of Chomsky's style of linguistics on syntax sweeps the absolutely central element of social (cultural) anthropology, namely fieldwork, into the side-lines.

<sup>29</sup> One early notion that expresses how the 'ethnography of communication' began as a response to formal linguistics is 'communicative competence'. Hymes and Gumperz present this concept in their introductory remarks to a collected volume (1972), describing how it might act as a counter-weight to the Chomskyan concept of 'linguistic competence'. 'Communicative competence' shows that Hymes wanted to facilitate a move away from a linguistic image of speech as merely the actualization of a person's innate grammatical ability.

<sup>30</sup> Volumes 1-4 of *Class, Codes and Control* (Bernstein, 1971, 1973, 1975, 1990)

breakthrough for developing research tools. In addition to the practical problem of how to research language, Bernstein was wrestling with another urgent issue: how to tackle the reproduction of class inequalities through the development of better teaching methods. Bernstein's most fundamental interest is in education policy. Bernstein writes of his use of so many varied sources to as the effort to 'construct a pedagogic *bricolage*' (1990: 68).<sup>31</sup> Over time, Bernstein refined his research techniques for recording the differences in the speech of the working and middle classes. The results of his *bricolage* generated lively debate amongst sociologists and the wider public with regard to its conclusions on the 'restricted' and 'elaborated' codes of British English.<sup>32</sup> Bernstein is no doubt best remembered for his argument that working-class children only have access to a 'restricted code', whereas middle and upper class children can deploy both 'restricted' and 'elaborated' codes. The conceptual picture he developed to study language in its social uses is, for all intents and purposes, forgotten.

Bernstein's work is characterised on all levels by the *inability* (and not simply the *failure*) to squarely address language. This incapacity results from the combination of two elements in Bernstein's work: his commitment to pedagogy policy and his adoption of a conception of language as a 'code'. Stemming from his commitment to education policy, Bernstein's writings show a sustained interest in the causal relations between language use and social organisation.<sup>33</sup> Since he was trying to address the root causes of a specified social problem, he needed to have a clear idea of which phenomena affect that social problem. This explains the scattered attempts to clarify the precise nature of the relationship between language and social class appearing in Bernstein's publications. And yet these clarifications do not offer an increasingly subtle conception of the relations between language and social life. By contrast, they show, from a number of different angles, a basic confusion about these two dimensions that is at the heart of Bernstein's work.<sup>34</sup> Bernstein does not spend much time on first order questions about language, social life

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<sup>31</sup> While anthropological linguistics offered some helpful methodological tactics, the broader policy agenda that Bernstein had also led him to borrow from a range of other sources. For example, Bernstein used material from social psychology to address the relationship between language and cognition. He also included various ideas from areas such as conversational analysis, Labov's sociolinguistics, the sociology of the family and of education, and sociological research on class.

<sup>32</sup> The 'restricted code' of the working-class refers to limitations on grammatical forms and lexicon. Bernstein asserted that this restricted possible understandings of the world. For a highly technical description of the concepts of 'elaborated' and 'restricted' codes, see both the Introduction and Chapter 3 of Volume 4 of the collected works (1990).

<sup>33</sup> Also as a result of this policy commitment, there is a passing similarity between Bernstein's research and the variationist programme discussed above. This cursory resemblance is reinforced by an interest in demography that Bernstein and variationists share (1990: 94), but this ought not detract attention from the differences in their conceptual frameworks.

<sup>34</sup> Volume IV of the collected works has a special concentration of these sorts of re-statements of how language and social life are related (Bernstein, 1990: 13-14, 31, 42, 88-89, 101-102, 113-115, 119, 133-134, 168, 205, 213-215).

and the different possible forms of their relationship. A less pragmatic, and a more studied, attitude would allow that language and social class do not *always* interpenetrate.

Bernstein's analytical picture of language is of a code. Codes are regulative, structured systems that limit possible formulations (in thought and) in speech. It is social class, he says, that shapes these specific regulative principles to a level of extraordinary detail. He writes that his notion of code 'bears some relation to Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*'. The main difference between the two concepts is the level of breadth. *Habitus*, or the 'cultural grammar specialized by class position', covers a wider range of social practices than Bernstein's concept of code (1990: 3). A code, according to Bernstein, is a structured semantic system that determines the way people talk, as well as the cognitive universe that they have access to. Whereas Bourdieu analysed how the *habitus* shapes preferences across the full gamut of social practices, Bernstein was specifically interested in looking at how codes shape what can be said and thought.

One added complexity of how codes shape what is said and thought is that Bernstein's conception of code relates as much to the one used by formal linguistics as it does to Bourdieu's idea of *habitus*. The role that 'code' plays in formal linguistics stems from the main objective of formal linguistics, which is to develop the best possible model of language. Chomsky's understanding of rationalism shaped the criterion for what the 'best' model is: the simplest.<sup>35</sup> Over the past thirty years, the main occupation of formal linguists has been to improve—i.e. to simplify—the model of language set out by Chomsky.<sup>36</sup> This model of language involves two major elements: units of language, and their combination. Linguists have drawn upon certain types of theory in the effort to understand the interaction of these two elements, mostly deriving from logic and mathematics (for example, set theory, propositional logic, and category theory). Inexorably the model of language at the centre of formal linguistics has moved farther and farther away from something that resembles ordinary speech and closer and closer to something resembling a purely abstract code. This model of language focuses on the potentially infinite logical (grammatical) recombination of a very small number of units (lexemes). But this image of language poses serious impediments to the study of language in its social use. In the sections above on Labov and Hymes, it was noted that each reacted strongly against formal linguists' approach to language. Both developed their own perspectives in an effort to foster the study of language as it is actually used by people in social life. Bernstein also is intent on studying language in use. His attempt to synthesise the code understanding of language with the study of language use requires him to make

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Cartesian Linguistics: A chapter in the history of rationalist thought*. (1966).

<sup>36</sup> There are major modifications in Chomsky's model, namely the shift to the 'government and binding' explanation of grammar. However, the version of formal linguistics that Bernstein relied on was the earliest work on syntactic theory. See especially Chapter 2 of Volume 4 (1990).

a very odd claim. This claim is that language (understood abstractly, is in formal linguistics) lies underneath speech. And *between* language and speech is social structure.<sup>37</sup> Language is ‘translated’ through social structure (which is conceived as a structured system of demographic differences) into the observable order of speech. Bernstein describes how he arrived at this conception of the relations that organise verbal language and social life:

I then [in the 1970s] argued that social relations acted selectively on principles and focuses of communication and these in turn created rules of interpretation, relation, and identity for their speakers. In other words, social relations regulate the meanings we create, and issue through roles constituted by these social relations, and that these meanings act selectively on lexical and syntactic choices, metaphor and symbolism. In essence the causal linkage flowed from social relations, roles, meanings, communications. This emphasis has not changed, although the concept of role now has no place in the conceptual language of the thesis. Between language and speech is social structure. (1990: 95)

In this statement, the term ‘language’ refers to a code in the sense of both a *habitus* and the linguists’ abstract structured system of recombination. By proposing the existence of two different variants of the abstract system that governs thought and speech—a restricted and an elaborated code—Bernstein was able to design research that could map demographic factors against variations in speech.

The code notion of language is one of the most fundamental parts of Bernstein’s standpoint. Lifting it away from his writings leaves very little remaining. Not only does Bernstein’s use of a code image of language posit a very unusual character for language, but it also positions language in an odd relation to social life. Sandwiching social life between language and speech is another, most unusual, way of compressing these different dimensions together. Bernstein’s basic understanding of how language and social life relate is not so very different to anthropological linguistics, because it is impossible to envision the social and linguistic realms as having independence. By becoming an unreachable element given its specific characteristics by class inequalities, language—*of itself*—cannot be at the centre of sociological analysis. Hence, Bernstein’s more tightly focused version of the ‘language expresses social life’ perspective involves a basic confusion about how language both *expresses* and *is* social structure.

Hymes and Bernstein *unintentionally* collapse language and social life as a result of being concerned with other objectives. Gumperz, by contrast, has long been aware of the conceptual problems involved in researching language in its social use and he has made efforts to guard against the confusions that plague anthropological linguistics. It is for somewhat different reasons that Gumperz’s work results in this same problem of failing to conceive of language as distinct from social life. Gumperz’s work is especially illuminating to the analysis here because he is sensitive to

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<sup>37</sup> In itself, this is not an unfamiliar idea. Many would argue that Saussure (1983) holds a similar stance with the distinction between *langue* and *parole*. It is the second step, whereby Bernstein positions social structure between these two levels that is quite idiosyncratic.

both of the problems that have been examined so far. He wants to avoid the danger of dividing language and social life too much or, conversely, of collapsing them into one dimension. His work can be described as a series of attempts to simultaneously connect and to still leave distinct these two dimensions. To do so, he proposes a third domain that acts both as a bridge and a wall between language and the social world: the discursive order. Yet this solution does not meet its own aim. Gumperz's work generates a new sort of confusion that also results in pushing language out of sight.

Both technically and conceptually, Gumperz's research bears a close resemblance to ethnomethodology (or the applied version of this school: conversational analysis).<sup>38</sup> It is the conceptual similarity to ethnomethodology that forces language to slip out of sight while, paradoxically, the technical similarity gives the appearance that language is being firmly held in the research sights. The technical convergence between the two perspectives is the focus on extremely detailed analyses of speech events. The conceptual similarity involves positing an internal coherence to every speech event.

The technical side of Gumperz's work has involved the development of not only increasingly precise measures for analysing recorded speech, but also the expansion of a specialist lexicon. Gumperz's vocabulary relies on the key idea of contextualisation cues. He explains what these are (and in the process, the similarity his work has with conversational analysis):

Conversational analysts provide impressive empirical evidence to show how interpretations shift as part of the on-going sequential ordering of an interaction. But I argue that sequential ordering cannot be taken as a structural given. It presupposes active conversational involvement on the part of speakers, listeners and audience members. The ability to create and maintain such involvement rests on shared conversational inferences. I have proposed the notions of contextualization cues and contextualization processes as a way of accounting for the functioning of linguistic signs in these inferential processes. Contextualization cues are a class of what pragmaticians have called indexical signs that serve to retrieve the contextual presuppositions conversationalists rely on in making sense of what they see and hear in interactive encounters. They are pure indexicals in that they have no propositional content. (in Prevignano & Di Luzio, 1997: 8)

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<sup>38</sup> Gumperz has most recently been occupied with the development of an area that he calls 'discourse analysis'. In numerous publications across the decades, however, Gumperz's work has worked on a number of areas within anthropological linguistics. His career path began with detailed analyses of code-switching in diglossic contexts, and this slowly developed into looking at passages of discourse. According to Gumperz himself, his project is primarily intended to help shed light on fundamental issues in social theory. 'Theorists of many persuasions,' he says 'argue that the social environments in which we live and act are dialogically constructed. The main question I pose is: how does verbal communication affect such dialogic processes and to what extent do these processes depend on shared linguistic knowledge?' (in Prevignano & Di Luzio, 1997: 6-7). He describes his own work in relation to ethnomethodology as follows: 'In my approach to interaction, I take a position somewhat between that of Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel. The former looked at encounters from an ethnologists perspective, while the latter was concerned with the interpretive processes that make interaction work.' (in Prevignano & Di Luzio, 1997: 7-8)

The main unit of study for conversational analysis and Gumperz are bounded verbal interactions. And like conversational analysis, Gumperz puts his data through a complicated analysis of the lexical, grammatical and prosodic features. But what this description also shows is that alongside these linguistic elements is another layer of messages assumed to be at work in the interaction. This is what Gumperz is referring to when he uses the phrase ‘pure indexicals...[that] have no propositional content’. Whereas anthropological linguists following Hymes look at indexical features of speech events to make sense of the social organisation of the whole group, or event, Gumperz is more cautious about taking such a step. He follows instead Garfinkel’s idea that interactions constitute their own referential universe. ‘The key insight here,’ he says ‘is that ethnographically-based sociolinguistic analysis, if it is to be empirically viable, must focus on specific speech events, defined as interactively constituted, culturally framed encounters, and not attempt to explain talk as directly reflecting the norms, beliefs, and values of communities seen as disembodied, hypothetically uniform wholes’ (in Previgano and Di Luzio, 1997: 3). Stated more simply, Gumperz works on demonstrating the internal coherence of any given recorded tract of discourse. While Gumperz does not ignore how this coherence is achieved through adherence to interactional norms (i.e. turn-taking), he is more interested in how this coherence is achieved through the use of specifically linguistic markers (i.e. contextualisation cues).

If Gumperz was content with only analysing these linguistic markers, then he would be doing something that is very close to what a school of language philosophers called ‘pragmaticians’ do.<sup>39</sup> Pragmaticians analyse interpretive processes to explain how speakers understand each other and maintain continuity in verbal encounters even though, on the face of it, participants do not have sufficient information to draw the conclusions that they do. These interpretive processes are seen to be reasoning processes whereby people expand and connect the partial information they receive. In other words, pragmaticians analyse the ‘logical grammar’ that is involved in everyday verbal encounters. But Gumperz—as an anthropological linguist—is interested in what he sees as an analogous problem: how a ‘social grammar’ structures speech events. In the introduction to the *Ethnography of Communication*, Gumperz wrote that the objective of the subfield was ‘to present evidence documenting the existence of a level of rule-governed verbal behavior which goes beyond the linguists’ grammar to relate social and linguistic constraints on speech’ (Gumperz & Hymes, 1972: vii). To address how this ‘social grammar’ works, Gumperz has directed much attention toward speech events that *fail*. Stated more precisely, much of what Gumperz has studied has been the verbal encounters of two individuals (or groups) that come from different linguistic cultures.

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<sup>39</sup> Contemporary pragmaticians such as Grice (1975) and Sperber (1986) are extending the boundaries of the earlier work of ‘ordinary language philosophers’ Austin (1962) and Searle (1969) on ‘speech act theory’.

These encounters are assumed to render visible the different social grammars of the respective cultures. This level of social grammar is what Gumperz refers to by the term ‘discourse’. Discourse is the middle layer that Gumperz posits between language and social life. In his analyses, neither linguistic nor social factors alone explain why speech events take the shapes that they do. The combination of social and linguistic factors creates a structured social grammar that governs language in its actual use.

But there is a slide that occurs with the introduction of this middle layer that mediates between social and linguistic structures. By looking at the internal organisation of the discursive order, Gumperz shifts attention away from language *per se*:

I believe that interaction at the level of discursive or communicative practices (as Hanks calls them in his recent important book by that title) must be seen as separate from either linguistic or socio-cultural processes. It is constituted by the interplay of linguistic, social and cultural/ideological forces and governed or constrained by partly universal and partly locally-specific organizational principles. My argument is that systematic investigation of these principles can provide a vantage point for an empirically-based reworking of the established traditions that continue to follow structuralist practices of separating the linguistic from the social. (in Prevignano & Di Luzio, 1997: 8)

It is subtle, but what Gumperz is describing is no longer language. Language, in this view, has become one of a set of contributing factors (language, social structure, culture, ideology) to another arena of social life: interaction. The solution of positing a ‘discourse order’ suffers from a new version of the same problem whereby language, as such, disappears from view.

As well as sharing the premise that language indexes social life, the ethnography of communication, discourse analysis and Bernstein’s research share a focus on researching social differentiation. Hymes and Bernstein scrutinise the ‘indexical’ function of language in social life. Gumperz, by contrast, looks at differentiation between distinct social grammars to explain the mechanics of verbal interaction. In Hymes’ understanding, language is seen as both an expression of social identity and as an integrative force in social organisation. Bernstein, however, examines social life from a more critical perspective. Thus, the fact that language use acts as an indicator of an individual’s social position is placed in a negative light. For Bernstein, language functions *both* to display *and* to maintain social inequality. Notwithstanding this crucial difference, a common problem besets both of these streams of social research. That problem is that language becomes transparent as soon as it is collapsed into the organisational arrangement of social life.

At first glance, the perspective appears to be a corrective to the problems discussed in Section 1.1 that arise from holding language and social life as two independent structures. The ethnography of communication allows for the observation of sociologically salient questions as to how linguistic interactions are social interactions. Researchers can robustly interrogate who speaks to whom and under what social conditions; they can ask in what forms and how these events



occur. But the correction that this perspective offers turns out to be an *over*correction. By seeing language and social life as indissolubly linked, and language as expressing the underlying form of social life, language is available for nothing more than description. What is lacking is a perspective that offers more than a descriptive role for language.

### 1.3 Language is fundamental to society

Both Hertzler's *A Sociology of Language* (1965) and Luckmann's *The Sociology of Language* (1975) rest upon a stronger claim than those that have already been examined. Each of these books rely upon the premise that 'language is fundamental to society'. This proposition appears to be a much more robust, and thus hopeful, starting point for a truly sociological conception of language. However, it turns out that the hope is short-lived. The ambiguity of the idea of something being 'fundamental' to society means that both attempts fall short of their stated aims. These two books constitute attempts to avoid merging language and society together into a single articulated system. Instead, Hertzler and Luckmann are concerned with defending the significance of language to society. They make this defence in very different ways. Hertzler's interpretation of this proposition suffers from confusing the need to defend the claim that 'language is fundamental in society' with the careful search for instances of where this may or may not be the case (and if it is the case, how so). By contrast, Luckmann sees language as the source through which society is constructed, and thus proposes a subfield based on very carefully chosen materials that reflect this view. Luckmann's highest goal is for conceptual precision but an unintended result in his search for it is that language is actually changed into something else in his analysis. Luckmann's attempt to found the 'sociology of language' proves, on careful examination, much closer to an attempt to found the 'sociology of communication'. His orientation would give some foothold to start unpicking one or two threads of Treaty Seven event, but it poses a danger of oversimplifying what happened and is continuing to happen. Unlike the propositions examined above—that 'language reflects society' or 'language expresses social life'—the idea that 'language is fundamental in society' yields diverse problems. It is possible that if this claim were treated as a research question, rather than as an *a priori* claim, then it might yield a viable beginning for a sociology of language. Thus far, no scholar has made an attempt to handle the proposition in this fashion.

Hertzler's 1965 book provides an account of how language is of paramount importance to society. He introduces his work with a description of the analytical position of sub-disciplines within sociology. This description is appealing by contrast to the other material we have looked at.

The "sociology" of a sociocultural phenomenon has two aspects, which are in continual and unavoidable interplay and interdependence with each other. There is, first, the significance of the particular order or system of phenomena as a causal, contributory, or otherwise effective factor in society...The second aspect is the converse of the first, being concerned with the

effect of the given society or culture area and epoch upon the particular order of phenomena...In brief, the special sociologies are concerned with the reciprocal relations of society and its notable operational feature; each is at once the cause and effect of the other. (1965: 6)

Hertzler claims that the role of language in society is more complex than it is seen to be in the perspectives examined earlier. Language, he says, is efficacious in the social world. It has ‘causal or contributory’ power in shaping the social world. Not only does language shape society, but society also shapes language. Thus this stance is quite different to the variationist programme because language and society are more than incidental to one another. But neither is Hertzler collapsing language into social structure. Language is not merely an external manifestation of social reality. From the outset, Hertzler seems to be setting out a standpoint that is immune to the problems that beset the various works already discussed.

Although it avoids the various pitfalls of the earlier perspectives, Hertzler’s project is not immune to the problem of language slipping out of reach. Difficulties arise from the means he employs to establish this ‘special sociology’. The discussion below is concerned with the 1965 monograph, but Hertzler also set out his thinking on this topic in an article astutely titled ‘Toward a sociology of language’, which was published a decade before the book (1953). The article opens with this sweeping claim:

One of the most distinctive characteristics of man is the fact that he is the language-inventing and language-using animal. Many of his most inimitable forms of expression, all of his objective thinking, most of his daily communication, most of his storage of culture and its transmission in space and time, almost all of his environmental adjustment, socialization, societal organization and social action, rest upon language. (1953: 109)

In the book, these few lines are expanded into several pages of discussion on the centrality of language in human life. Hertzler concludes the book’s preamble by saying that language is ‘the primordial kit of tools, which enables men to act like human beings. As Révész has succinctly put it: “Man made language, and language fashioned man and made him human”’ (1965: 21).

After defending the primacy of language, the article goes on to present ‘a sort of aerial reconnaissance’ of the sub-discipline’s projected topics (1953: 110). This overview offers two lists. One list concerns the ‘conceptual components’ of a sociology of language and the other list enumerates its ‘areas of examination’. The list of ‘conceptual components’ is made up of conjecture as to the (causal, not chronological) origins of language. Hertzler posits a chain of connections that establish a picture of the social nature of language, starting with individual experience and concluding with the broad ‘physical, cultural and social situation’ (1953: 111). According to Hertzler’s reasoning, the next step after individual experience is conceptualisation. Conceptualisation, in turn, develops into language as a symbol system that represents experience.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> In fact, Hertzler’s description of language and conceptualization bears superficial resemblance to that suggested by Durkheim’s writings. Hertzler writes that the ‘language structure (vocabulary, grammar,

Symbols are understood as the basic unit, a 'media of exchange' in something Hertzler describes as 'a universe of discourse' (1953: 110). Discourse evolves into the language community and from this Hertzler arrives at the general context noted above. After building up this picture of the levels of language, Hertzler goes on to offer a summary of the topics that a sociology of language ought to investigate. In this first section, the important point being made is that language is a tool of social behaviour. We use this symbol system to refer to the world and its objects and this is the basis for communities to 'interact, communicate, and to some extent cohere' (1953: 111). The 'tool of communication' image of language that is set out in the article is also replicated at length in the book.

A section on 'areas of examination' follows the discussion of the 'conceptual components' which is separated into two parts. Part A addresses the functions, uses and effects of language. Part B deals with how cultural worldviews affect the content of languages. In the section on 'areas of examination' as a whole, it is exceedingly difficult to grasp the organising rationale of the material. Hertzler's overview of 'areas' does not consist of a tight taxonomy of interconnected topics. Rather, it consists of a variety of different ways to describe language mixed in with a variety of empirical curiosities. For example, there are four separate headings for the cohesive dimension of language, jostling together with such things as argots, the languages of secret societies, 'taboo words' and the 'spell-creating' effect of the 'magic of words' (1953: 112). Murray notes that the book 'expanded upon a miscellany of possible topics in an article he had published in 1953' (1994: 424). In a similar vein, Fishman described the book as a tiring index of unrelated subjects (1967: 589). After setting up the 'basic concepts' of a sociology of language, the book goes on to present the 'major general functions' of language. Fifteen lengthy chapters that skate across a great many unrelated topics appear after the chapter on the functions of language. The way that Hertzler formulates these chapter titles is striking. We learn about 'language as': 'a social phenomena and social agency'; 'a social institution'; 'sociocultural index, record and determinant'; 'a centripetal factor in human societies' and 'a centrifugal factor in human societies'. In addition to these many faces of language, are topics such as: 'sociocultural change and change in language'; 'language and social control'; and 'language and the individual' amongst other things. That language can occupy so many different (often contradictory, on closer inspection) characters ('as social agency' or 'as sociocultural index', etc.) reveals Hertzler's approach to his task. The organisation and treatment of topics in the book shows he understands the most pressing task for the project of establishing

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semantics) as it stands at any given time operates as a ready-made metaphysical framework, by means of which we do all our perceiving and conceptualizing...the language system and the metaphysical and sociocultural texture and context of a society or even a group cannot be separated. Each reflects the other; each is operationally related to the other; each is both the cause and effect of the other.' (1965: 35-36)

a sociology of language to be persuading other sociologists that language is ‘fundamental’ to social life...somehow.

Fishman takes exception to Hertzler’s approach and describes the book in less than glowing terms:

...these first hundred pages constitute little more than redundant, argumentative, exhortative pleading that language is important, nay, very important in human affairs. The presentation is at the level of an after-dinner speech to an alert but uninformed lay audience. The argument as such is tiresome and unnecessary. Hertzler himself makes scant use of the terms and concepts of his first hundred pages in the remaining 450 pages of his volume. (1967: 589)

Others that have taken the time to assess the work come to similar conclusions.<sup>41</sup> Hertzler’s treatment of the subjects that he has selected is not sophisticated by any measure. But there is a deeper flaw in this work. That flaw is evidenced less by the treatment that Hertzler gives to the many topics, than it is by the fact that the book offers an impossibly chaotic assemblage of topics.

As mentioned earlier, the vision that guides Hertzler’s work is to draw attention to the importance of language. But this must not be confused with a different objective, namely one that works with the question: ‘*is* language important in society?’. If Hertzler had employed a question rather than a claim to guide his work, he might have provided himself with a method for sifting and analysing his material. But he has no such method. Thus *any* material that presents itself as relevant to his topic is included in the work. And all the material that presents itself as relevant is given *equal merit*. Hertzler is truly egalitarian in his inclusion and evaluation of subject matter. This is why it is difficult to discern the organising rationale of the work. For all intents and purposes, there is none.

Murray’s critical comments are closer to the problem:

...Fishman...and Grimshaw...attacked the book for its lack of organization, lack of familiarity with sociolinguistic work, and misunderstanding or misuse of such linguistic concepts as he deployed...I agree with Fishman and Grimshaw (contra Koen) that Hertzler’s book provided a very misleading picture of the emerging field(s), and I see no followers, no Hertzlerians. For all the statements about language and its importance, Hertzler’s book neither identifies variables to study nor exemplifies how to measure or otherwise explain them. (1994: 424-425)

Murray is correct: there are no Hertzlerians. One needs to be only a little resourceful to find variables that could orient a sociological investigation of language. For example, there is no reason that empirical studies could not be designed to investigate such topics as language change and conflict, or language and social assimilation or language and social control.<sup>42</sup> The problem is not that Hertzler fails to offer topics for empirical work. The problem is that he deals with them in a

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<sup>41</sup> Joseph notes that: ‘Hertzler’s study is thorough, but riddled with inaccuracies...Over a decade later he would finally bring out a vast book-length survey (Hertzler 1965) of many of the traditions connected with the sociology of language (omitting however Furfey), which perhaps because of its vastness, the well-established disciplinary boundaries, and a negative review by Joshua A. Fishman (1967) did not make a great impact upon sociolinguists of the time (though, cf. Shuy 1990: 188-189).’ (1992: 129-130 n21)

<sup>42</sup> Hertzler discusses these topics in Chapters VIII, IX and XI respectively.

way that is no more analytically compelling for someone designing research than if they had simply chosen those topics completely at random. In sum, in Hertzler's hands, the importance of language in society is what is pushing it out of reach of a rigorous and sustained sociological investigation.

A decade after Hertzler's work came out, another book appeared with a very similar title: *The Sociology of Language*. To be more precise, Luckmann's piece is a booklet that was published as part of a 'Studies in Sociology' series. In keeping with such works, it presents an overview of the current field and a discussion of how the field might be developed. Luckmann's approach, unlike Hertzler's, demonstrates from the outset a very tight method. In fact, Luckmann's analytical method is so strict as to be restrictive.

Luckmann offers a brief survey of the material that ought to be relevant to the fledgling subfield, opening by remarking on the significance of language in social life and conversely, the significance of social life to language. He suggests a few reasons as to why the sociology of language has failed to 'gain the status of a major sociological discipline' (1975: 9).<sup>43</sup> Following this, contemporary material that could be developed upon is noted, but not in great detail. Luckmann takes his first real pause to mine three rather more prestigious seams of scholarly thought in a discussion called the 'historical evolution of the problem'. There, he picks out the Humboldtian tradition of historical linguistics, the Durkheimian heritage, and social psychology as germane to the development of the sociology of language. This section of the pamphlet is not, on the face of it, offering an evaluation of these areas. An analytical appraisal follows in the next section of the piece. However, this is a highly strategic choice of materials to include for the discussion that follows. Examining the 'nature of the problem' makes up half of the rest of the text. The other half consists of looking at the 'social functions of language'. So far, Luckmann appears to be offering a more focused plan for a sociology of language than Hertzler. Luckmann methodically develops upon one specific set of fruitful source materials. But the work goes amiss precisely because of this logical rigour. The problem is that in his desire to keep language within the purview of the established discipline, Luckmann ends up relying upon the much more familiar notion of 'communication'. Language and communication, although they may be closely related, are not reducible to one another.

Although the first explicit step that leads to Luckmann's transformation of language into communication occurs in the section on the nature of the problem, the first implicit steps are taken with his choice of what material is relevant to the 'historical evolution of the problem'. The sources

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<sup>43</sup> 'This is due in part to the fact that neither general nor social problems (as in the case of family sociology), nor immediate institutional needs (as in industrial sociology or the sociology of religion and the churches) add pragmatic relevance to theoretical interest. In part, the reason for this is the fact that the pertinent theoretical questions were relegated to linguistics.' (1975: 9)

that Luckmann singles out are clustered around the social analysis of culture, language and thought. They provide the basis for conceiving of language as a facilitating agent of social interaction. Stated otherwise, drawing from these sources leads to the view that communicative interaction is the basis upon which social institutions are built. And language (as a symbolic system that expresses cultural cognitive systems) is the medium of communicative interaction. Concluding his survey of these three essential sources, Luckmann synthesises them as follows:

[o]ne can hardly conceive of human society, individual sociality and the existence of social structures without language...A specific cognitive “style” of a society and of a social stratum is transmitted in the process of socialization by means of language. In the course of an individual’s biography it becomes a strongly habitualized subjective style of thought and experience, a kind of “inner language”...Linguistic communications and interchanges trigger nonlinguistic interactions or substitute for them. In view of the interdependence of social structure, culture and language that was brought out by this preliminary outline, it comes as a surprise to discover how superficial sociology’s interest in language has been until the recent past. (1975: 7-8)

The easiest way to see how Luckmann’s selection of works positions the analysis in a particular way is to change one or other of the sources. For example, if we substitute Marx’s work for Durkheim’s, then the picture is rather different. The unifying shared cognitive system Luckmann reads in Durkheim’s late writings would be replaced with the notion of language as ‘shared practical consciousness’ arising from our need to enter into relations with the world of nature, fellow man and our own labouring being. In such a view, language may indeed facilitate communication, but it is also both entrenching and masking the current distorted form of human relations. It may be at the beginning of human relations, but from a Marxist standpoint, the meaning given to the primacy of communicative interaction in social institutions would be thrown into question.<sup>44</sup> Luckmann’s tactical selection of materials has consequences for the specific character that he gives to language.

Luckmann’s subsequent discussion is on ‘the nature of the problem’, and he describes it as tracing the connections that the central questions of a sociology of language ‘have with general social theory’ (1975: 19). The section consists of a skilful demonstration of how some dimensions of general linguistic theory can enter into a conception of social life as built upon communicative interaction. In fact, social life, midway through the discussion, starts to refer specifically to

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<sup>44</sup> ‘Only now, after having considered four moments, four aspects of the primary historical relationships, do we find that man also possesses ‘consciousness’, but, even so, not inherent, not ‘pure’ consciousness. From the start the ‘spirit’ is afflicted with the curse of being ‘burdened’ with matter, which here makes its appearance in the form of agitated layers of air, sounds, in short, language. Language is as old as consciousness, language is practical consciousness that exists also for other men, and for that reason alone it really exists for me personally as well; language, like consciousness, only arises from the need, the necessity, of intercourse with other men.’ (Marx in McLellan, 2000: 166)

‘communication’.<sup>45</sup> Once Luckmann has worked through an attempt to conceive of communicative interaction at the aggregate level, he offers an account of the role of language in face-to-face interaction. The slip into communication at this level is too smooth for most readers to notice. And it serves to make the earlier, more strained arguments somewhat easier to digest. The final section of the pamphlet treats ‘the social functions of language’. The title gives away the substance of this section, in which Luckmann’s vision of social reality is expressed most clearly in its elegance and narrowness. ‘Language,’ he writes, ‘is a sign system. This determines its basic function. The linguistic sign system is a “mediating” structure’ (1975: 47).

A reduction of language to communication fails to do justice to either language or communication. Certainly it is possible to communicate without language. At this stage of the explorations, we must assume it is possible to have language without communication. There may be close relations between the two phenomena, or at times one phenomenon may appear a subcategory of the other. This does not make them one and the same entity. In fact, Luckmann was not in a minority in holding this confusion. In sociology, it is an unwritten maxim that social life involves communication. In some sociological perspectives (similarly to Luckmann), there is a moderately stronger view that social life is mediated by communicative practices. According to both viewpoints, some forms of communication are seen to be of linguistic form, whereas others are of ‘extra-linguistic’ form. Thus, communication is understood as the wider sphere of social activity within which language is contained. This taxonomic hierarchy, where language plays the lesser role, may make research appear more manageable. But it is at the cost of putting a broad range of social reality beyond the reach of research. Thus Luckmann’s work presents a different sort of failure, a different way in which language escapes sociological investigation.

There are related insights to be gained from looking at Hertzler and Luckmann’s approach to the task of starting work in the sociology of language. To claim that language is fundamental, or significant or even primary in society tells us either too much, or too little, about both language and society. In short, these are profoundly ambiguous propositions. In Hertzler’s case, holding this opinion served to undermine the campaign he set out upon. This point is that setting out to prove the importance of language in society does not yield a programme that enables further research. Hertzler’s inability to exclude material renders the main claim that he wants to make a truism: true, but trivially so. This brings us to Luckmann’s work, which begins with a much

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<sup>45</sup> The shift occurs on pages 33 and 34. ‘The communicative networks of social institutions and of entire institutional domains are evidently determined, among other factors, by the functional requirements of the institution. The functionally oriented complementary social roles establish the direction and the “feed-back” requirements of communication.’ (1975: 34)

sharper focus. However, Luckmann actually short-circuits the object of study. He relies upon an established area of sociology and allows it to eclipse language.

These two texts have instructed the way in which this work was carried out in several respects. The lesson that was drawn from looking at the shortcomings in Hertzler's work is that the idea that 'language is fundamental to society' is too broad of a claim to furnish a viable starting point. Luckmann's work is instructive in that it illustrates the danger of stepping *through* language to something else: its assumed function, or its deep structure, or its position as an intermediary phenomenon in social relations.

#### 1.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed a number of relatively recent social scientific inquiries into language from a range of different perspectives. Each has its own uses, but they are not well adapted to investigating language and the social, after all. I wrote in the Introduction that it would be useful to begin with the idea of language events to draw attention to moments wherein language plays a prominent role, and Treaty Seven was used to illustrate this. It seems worth asking how these perspectives cohere with that language event.

One of the first things that stands out about Treaty Seven, in relation to the approaches outlined above, is that the variationist paradigms (Labov and Fishman) focus on verbal language to the exclusion of written language. This poses insurmountable problems for looking at an instance like Treaty Seven, where the two forms of language seem to be colliding. From Labov's perspective, the social event disappears from view as the focus narrows to specific sound patterns in specific speakers of specific languages. The significance of this for Treaty Seven seems limited at best. His research questions, no matter how appealing for early career sociologists interested in language, cannot approach most of language in social life. Fishman's questions, while drawing attention to inequality between different groups and marginalised languages, inches closer to tackling the commissioners' and Siksikáwa attempt to negotiate Treaty Seven. However, it would take enormous labour to adapt Fishman's concepts and tools to be of use for beginning to untangle one of the threads of that event. The effort needed would be great enough that it poses the danger is that there is no longer a resemblance between his work or research objectives and the tools borrowed from it. The group of researches that focuses on discourse and its performance may have some concepts to offer understanding specific prosodic features in the negotiation meeting of Treaty Seven, most promisingly from Hymes. Yet there are so many assumptions imported with the ideas of how social life is read off from linguistic forms that the graininess of the event is likely to be lost. By graininess, I mean the agency involved, the departures from any script that might be



expected, the subversions, missed communiques, the irony and duplicity. Instead it becomes difficult to avoid interpreting those speaking and listening as cultural puppets. The research tools of Gumperz and Bernstein are largely irrelevant. The trouble with Gumperz's work stems from the brackets placed around a discourse event. Treaty Seven, as an historical event and document, with its partial and competing records does not offer singular packaged up data to analyse. Bernstein's work also lacks tools to undertake multi-linguistic, historical work. Finally, the writings of Hertzler and Luckmann offer even scantier help for investigating Treaty Seven. Hertzler's chaotic assortment of ideas offers no conceptual tools to help work out how such an investigation might be carried out. The confusion of topics he produced only tightens the knot of Treaty Seven, rather than helping to loosen it. Luckmann's sign system and communication focus are interesting because they are emblematic of much (and there is much) writing on language in the humanities (social sciences) that is loosely described as the linguistic turn. Yet it offers scant foothold: what is being mediated, and how do signs manifest in this event? In turning attention to communication and away from language, Treaty Seven changes in character, becomes less problematic. But at the cost of most of the event slipping away from the researchers' gaze. These perspectives do not help us to get our hands into the guts of Treaty Seven.

I turn now to the main sites of this investigation. The works that are examined in the chapters that follow are seven social-language projects, wherein there is a clear attempt to 'do' something with, or to, social life via language. Each project is an intervention upon social life, society or social relations. They are so within a spectrum how radical the intervention is. Each project or cluster of projects offers a folk sociology of knowledge. These folk sociologies of knowledge are incomplete, unexpected and sometimes, unpalatable. However, they offer us a far richer starting point for thinking through questions about language and the social. These languages, dictionaries, encyclopaedias and folklore collections do not yield total pictures of social relations, nor elegant linguistics. However, in the assumption that key elements of the social to be inseparable from language, they force us to look directly and seriously at language.

## CHAPTER TWO

### COMPOSING LANGUAGE AS AN END TO WAR

The first set of social-language projects is from the farthest reach historically, and also contains the most powerful intervention examined in this thesis. Or so these projects were intended. The projects analysed below are unknown now except by the most erudite scholars. This is a contrast to the projects studied in the chapters that follow, such as the Grimm's folktales or the OED. These had less totalising visions of transforming their worlds and yet have become landmarks of culture and of science. This chapter offers an analysis of three interrelated social-language projects that were intended to radically transform language and social life, in a single movement. The image of 'composing' language encapsulates these three projects although it does not do justice to the breadth of vision that motivated them. The double meaning of composition helps identify the social aim and the language characters of these projects.

The meaning of the English word 'compose' as to 'put something together' is cited by the OED as the oldest sense, dating from the twelfth-century. The second meaning, of calming something or someone, followed much later in the seventeenth-century, during one of the most turbulent social and political periods in English history. The OED suggests that 'compose' merged with the cognate 'repose', where '*to compose* is to adjust to a state of *repose*' and 'repose' means to return to an original state, to *restore* something (Simpson, online: last accessed 30 Dec., 2012). These two distinct meanings as 'to create' a work, and 'to restore composure' capture two equally salient qualities of the materials discussed here. In this chapter, the focus is on several language projects published during a particularly turbulent social and political period of English history. Perhaps it should not be surprising that the second sense of 'compose' emerged in the seventeenth-century in England, a period that was the antithesis of calm repose. In comprehending this period, historians use the term 'century of crisis'.<sup>46</sup>

These projects each compose a language, and in so doing, attempt to bring composure back to social life. They compose language in the sense of designing a complex and systematic work, like a symphony or opera. They also aim to help bring order and tranquillity to something that is in disarray: in this way, they are intended to help compose social life. There is a singular

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<sup>46</sup> Stillman writes: "This is a century marked by economic upheaval, religious conflict, warfare, constitutional debate and revolt, and the consequent ferment of intellectual exchange. At every level, seventeenth-century culture experiences fundamental challenges to the structure of its institutions and to the dominant cultural codes that support them. As a result of their foundational character and the severity of the disruptions that they produce, such challenges have led contemporary historians, both Anglo-American and continental, from Charles Webster to Lawrence Stone, from Jean-Christophe Agnew to Jose Antonio Maravall, to describe the century as an age of crisis." (1995b: 71)

motivation in the four works studied here, published in three turbulent decades (between 1654 and 1680) which is that language and social life urgently need to be ordered. Below I investigate how four seemingly distinct works, specifically Wilkins' *An Essay Towards a Real Character and a Philosophical Language* (2002 [1668]), Dalgarno's two works, *The Art of Signs or A Universal Character and Philosophical Language* (2001 [1661] hereafter *Art*) and *Didascalocophus, or, The deaf and dumb man's* (2011 [1680] hereafter *Tutor*<sup>47</sup>) and Bulwer's *Chirologia: Or the natural language of the hand and Chironomia: Or the art of manual rhetoric* (1974 [1654]) attempt to compose language and the social. These efforts are inspired by a distinctive understanding of how man lives in confusion. They each depended on a notion of nature that gave them license to not simply manipulate, but to create language. The methods for composing language are various but the objective of a true language is shared.

These projects look extraordinary in the sense that they seem hugely optimistic about the power of man to shape his world. Wilkins, Dalgarno and Bulwer drafted languages wholly anew with the vision that a calm, peaceable society would follow. It may be that the sense of power perhaps is borne of desperation, and not the will to mastery. These languages were created in the midst of civil war, bloodshed and discord. The marginalia surrounding them points to the unifying factor in stimulating them as the chaos from which they emerged. These gesture languages and philosophical languages were composed, it would seem, not to bring peace as much as to end war. Thus these three compositions must also perhaps be seen as attempts to regain control of man's collective life in an age of crisis.

## 2.1 Philosophy and gesture

In the analysis that follows, I look at three intersecting social-language projects that originate in the writings of John Bulwer, George Dalgarno, and John Wilkins. Bulwer's project is best shown in a double publication on gesture, *Chironomia-Chirologia* (1644), and incorporates two other texts on gesture, *Pathomyotomia* (1649) and *Philosophicus* (1648) on the 'translation of the senses'. It is supported by two further associated texts (the unpublished *Vultispex Criticus* on physiognomy and *Anthropometamorphosis* [1650/1653] on bodily alteration and adornment). Bulwer drafted a gestural language, directed toward use in public life as a means to clear away dissimulation and thus facilitate social harmony.<sup>48</sup> Dalgarno's project is laid out in two major and seemingly

<sup>47</sup> The full title is *Didascalocophus, or, The deaf and dumb man's tutor to which is added a discourse of the nature and number of double consonants, both which tracts being the first (for what the author knows) that have been published upon either of the subjects.*

<sup>48</sup> His project is centred in the *Chirologia* but his ideas about physical expression continue across five texts, and are convincingly seen as continuous by modern interpreters. (Smith 2010, Wollock 2002, 2011)

distinct texts: *Ars Signorum* ('The Art of Signs', 1661) and *Didascalophicus* ('The Deaf and Dumb Man's Tutor', 1688). Dalgarno developed a 'philosophical language' and also a gestural language as part of a single effort to create perfectible language. This effort is embellished through a number of unpublished papers written between the early 1650s to the late 1680s. Wilkins' project is largely contained in one text, the *Essay* (1668), but some of his early thoughts on the topic which clarify significant elements can be found in *Mercury (or the Secret and Swift Messenger: Shewing, How a Man May with Privacy and Speed Communicate His Thoughts to a Friend at any Distance, 1641)*. In the *Essay*, Wilkins produced a complex 'philosophical language and real character' intended as a perfectible universal language. These three projects are unique insofar as they present whole new languages aimed at rectifying the confusion of social life.<sup>49</sup> These projects have a symmetrical relation: Bulwer offers a gesture language, Dalgarno a philosophical language that can apply as much to gesture as spoken or written language (and a treatise on its application in gesture), and Wilkins offers a philosophical language.

Wilkins' *Essay* houses a philosophical language in the shape of a taxonomy of the universe. This is woven together by a 'rational grammar' and supported by a number of aids to learning, glossaries and translations. It is a laborious work in its creation, appraisal and any attempt to make use of the language it contains. It offers a new script and phonetic system alongside the 'philosophical language' (or 400 pages of tables of things and their relations). In the much earlier *Mercury*, Wilkins explores a variety of communicative experiments under the main idea of the work which is 'secret' communication. Emblems, hieroglyphics, gestures, and real characters are all discussed, but there are reversals and rejections between *Mercury* and the *Essay*. The *Essay* looks a work of a scholar for scholars, but it is much more. It is perhaps the most radical of all the social-language projects that figures into this thesis. What it offers, if it were implemented, should dissolve social tensions, fractures that at the time were held responsible for civil war. This philosophical language was painstakingly created with the hope of ending bloody conflict.

Bulwer's gesture language is presented in a text that is divided into two parts: a 'Natural Language of the Hand' and an 'Art of Manual Rhetoric'. On first approach, the text looks like simply a guide for orators, based on both the form and content of the text. Gestures are described with their associated meaning and support for Bulwer's interpretation of the meaning, (sometimes including illustrations) is given through reference to Biblical, Classical, and contemporary sources.

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<sup>49</sup> Francis Lodwick was another social-language project designer that created a 'real character', followed by an attempt at philosophical language. However, Dalgarno's project is better suited to the analysis here because his attempt to render a perfect language incorporates both a philosophical language and a gesture language. Cave Beck's numerological language is interesting in its own right, but would have provided much less to the discussion because it is a full real character by numbers, but has no explanation of the system within the work, nor about what the project is for.

Part One, the ‘natural language of the hand’ is followed by Part Two, on the ‘art of manual rhetoric’. Part Two is a practical guide, helping users of Bulwer’s gesture language to implement it to best effect. Similarly to Wilkins’ *Essay*, Bulwer’s language was offered as a defence against the violence that was erupting across England and Scotland. Truth in public speech should return civil relations to purer state, a state free once more of the disorder of man’s lot post-Eden. One of the poems recommending Bulwer’s work makes direct reference to this violence:

Another summer has now passed in civil wars,  
And the sad earth luxuriates with new blood:  
Yet you are safe, nor does the enemy’s sword terrify you;  
Your measured hand of hands defends you. (1974 [1654]: 148-9)

Dalgarno’s *Art* presents a ‘universal character’ and a ‘philosophical language’. It appears similar to Wilkins’ *Essay*, only it is much slimmer, trimmer and more judicious in its approach to ‘natural philosophy’. It offers chapters on signs, predicamental series of things, grammar, mnemonic aids, syntax, particles and praxis. Noticeably absent are the four hundred pages of tables describing the ‘things and notions’ of the world in their orderly interrelations. Dalgarno continued his forays into language projects by publishing the *Tutor* or ‘the deaf and dumb man’s tutor’. The gesture language that is outlined there derives from the *Art*: for Dalgarno, the art of signs is threefold, of the ears, eyes and touch. This work provides a sign system for the eyes that can be physically enacted rather than a system that works on paper, i.e. writing. It develops out of the same principles as the *Art*, offering a philosophical lexicon and grammar. Both are part of the broader ‘art of interpretation’ that is intended to correct the deep philosophical and resultant social confusions that crack apart life in the seventeenth-century. This art of interpretation is hoped to ameliorate social divisions and by facilitating better, truer, communication.

### 2.1.1 Marginal readings

Men of influence, scholars, public figures responded to the chaotic state of social life in seventeenth-century Europe by concluding that language needed to be regulated. The argument ran that if language was ordered, civil life would also become orderly. Slaughter describes the first level, the epistemological level, of the language project designers’ obsession with order. ‘The focal point in the language schemes is, clearly, *order* of some sort. The early universal languages attempt to bring order into the linguistic code; the more developed, philosophical languages tackle the order in and of nature’ (1982: 3).<sup>50</sup> The reason that language was seen as fundamental to ‘the good society’ is that language formed the basis of knowledge, and true knowledge was the foundation of social life. Current and ancient languages were in a mess, and as a result the inherited library of

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<sup>50</sup> She invokes the term ‘nature’ but does not interrogate what this meant and how it was interwoven with the understanding of social life. I explore this vital dimension of these projects shortly.

knowledge as well as the capacity to improve on or gain new knowledge was crippled. Language projects to the end of regulated, orderly language—or discussions of the need for such projects—were prolific.<sup>51</sup> Learned discussion of how to rectify disordered language unfolded in various directions. Shorthand systems, new writing systems, code languages, phonetic notation systems, musical languages, gesture languages and pictographic languages are some of the sorts of language projects either proposed or actually designed. From roughly the mid-1640s to the mid-1680s, the spectrum of language experiments ranged from satire, such as Godwin’s musical lunar language (1671 [1638]), to multifaceted philosophical languages, such as Wilkins’ *Essay*.<sup>52</sup>

Modern studies of seventeenth-century language projects tend to follow a classification laid out by Salmon as to whether they seek to offer a new universal writing system (real character) or a whole new language (philosophical language).<sup>53</sup> ‘Real characters’ were symbolic systems (phonetic, visual or both) that were intended to be universally operable as a translation device, or universal key<sup>54</sup> (similar to the newly emerging algebraic notation system, Knowlson, 1975: 21-22 or the astronomic system, Ricci in Salmon, 1992b: 139). Philosophical languages were intended as full languages, but importantly it was hoped they could bridge the chasm between words and what words represented. In short, they were hoped to regain metaphysical truth. Seventeenth-century language projects are better understood without this binary classification of ‘real characters’ versus ‘philosophical languages’. This is so because there were quite different sorts of projects, such as the gesture languages drafted by Dalgarno and Bulwer which, while still aimed at rectifying the confusion of language, cannot be subsumed under Salmon’s dichotomy. Instead of looking at the

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<sup>51</sup> A greater number of language schemes were published in English than in French or German. French and German scholars, in contrast to their English counterparts, tended to debate about the problems inherent in language and possible solutions to these problems, rather than crafting language projects. Most were published in Latin, then translated into vernaculars although for Wilkins’ *Essay*, the reverse was the case. England was in upheaval, English schemes proliferated.

<sup>52</sup> According to Knowlson’s research, over twenty language projects were published between 1640-1690, a particularly high number in ratio to the total number of publications by decade in the mid-seventeenth century. See ‘Appendix B: Checklist of schemes of universal writing and language in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries’ (1975: 224-232) for the titles of these and associated writings. Descartes considered the possibility for a philosophical language in a letter to a peer, writing that it would have an ‘ordered relation among all the ideas that can be entertained by the human mind, in the same way as there is a naturally established order among numbers’ (quoted in Clauss, 1982: 539). Of the more notable scholars who made actual starts on ordering language are Newton and Leibniz (Leibniz, 1956; Newton, 1957).

<sup>53</sup> Salmon describes two ‘separate currents...one leading towards the creation of a colloquial medium of intercourse, and the other towards a medium which would reflect accurately in its notation the facts of nature as discovered by ‘true philosophy’, and would act as an instrument of scientific discovery as well as a means of communication’ (1972: 12).

<sup>54</sup> Smith writes: ‘...Bacon, in his 1605 work *The Proficiency and Advancement of Learning*, argued for a ‘real character’ or artificial language that would be able to communicate intended meanings from one person to another with perfect transparency. This is a project that would be important throughout the rest of the century, with thinkers such as Samuel Hartlib, John Wilkins and G. W. Leibniz all making significant contributions to the study of artificial and formal languages.’ (2010: 170)

purported use of the project, it makes better sense to look at the analytical matrix they emerge from. The core of this matrix is the ideas of confusion and nature. Seventeenth-century language projects coalesce around the idea that language and social life are confused, as understood through theology (including all specific languages, i.e. Latin, vernacular languages and historical languages). Adjacent to this theologically based understanding of ‘confusion’ is the figure of ‘nature’ and how a materialist metaphysics proceeds from orderly nature into ‘nature bound’ or ‘nature vexed’, in other words, art. The way art is comprehended and translated into various methods proved vital to the belief that new language could be composed. Salmon’s classification has been useful in both helping draw attention to these works and to make basic assessments about how various projects were intended to operate. However this *functional* way of classifying them has had a—perhaps unintended—consequence of reinforcing a problem that dogs the reception of these language projects.

These works, so profuse, so deeply and closely connected to other branches of contemporaneous learning, so broad in their scope and with such pivotal aims, have a curiously meagre literature dedicated to them. Modern specialists approach these language projects as not only unique in the ‘history of the language sciences’, but incomprehensibly so. Specialists in the ‘history of the language sciences’ pass these projects over as they do not fit into stories of the advancement of reflections on the nature of grammar, or alternatively the narrative of a *scientific* historical conception of language. Salmon’s analytical classification of real characters as opposed to philosophical languages tends to reinforce the sorting of these works into whether the projects are nonsense or authentic works of ‘proto-science’.<sup>55</sup> The question of whether to take these schemes seriously underpins twentieth-century analyses of them, invariably at work in the analyses of those scholars who do delve into the works with more than a passing interest, as much as those which dismiss them.<sup>56</sup> Borges’ story on the missing encyclopaedia entry on Wilkins nicely captures

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<sup>55</sup> There is a literature surrounding the emergence of the ‘new science’ or new philosophy which tends to exclude the language projects. Slaughter describes the main tenets of this and aligns the language project designers with them although she rejects the ‘scientificity’ of these works in terms of their language elements. ‘When the seventeenth century is described as the age of the new philosophy, this term usually refers to the atomistic-mechanistic theories held by Copernicus, Galileo, Bacon, Descartes, Huygens, Gassendi, Boyle, Newton, to name a few. It is a philosophy deemed to be ‘new’ precisely because it is said to supplant the philosophy of the Aristotelian tradition (which, ultimately, it did). But while it is true that these scientific revolutionaries depart from the old model in significant ways, we should not overlook the fact that, in the early days of science, certain traditional lines of thought were shared by all, be they new philosophers or not. One such notion was that of systematicity and orderliness of creation, inherited from tradition and mandated by Christian belief in a rational and beneficent deity. Along with this belief went the concomitant conviction that the system of nature and its ordered principles not only existed but could be known, and known with certainty.’ (Slaughter, 1982: 4)

<sup>56</sup> For works defending the significance of language designers’ work, see Cohen (1977, *Sensible Words: Linguistic practice in England 1640–1785*), Knowlson (1975, *Universal Language Schemes in England and France 1600–1800*), Lewis (2003, *John Wilkins’s Essay (1668) and the Context of Seventeenth-Century Artificial Languages*)

the scepticism shared by many twentieth-century scholars when trying to assess them. Borges' short story "The Analytical Language of John Wilkins" brought Wilkins' *Essay* to attention, in which he parodies Wilkins' efforts (and those of his scientific colleagues at the nascent Royal Society such as Hooke and Boyle who also contributed their efforts to specific areas of the *Essay*) when Borges looks for the beauty, and finds it as a living oblong brood fish (1964: 103). This scepticism arises from the sense that these projects are—fundamentally—ludicrous. They are viewed as the results of an incredible hubris: obviously language is beyond our power to create, let alone a perfect language.

There are a few contemporary scholars who try to find something of value in seventeenth-century language projects even in the face of this marginalisation. Such redemptive attempts are usually organised with one work or author the focus, often against a contemporaneous work or author. These scholars are on the back foot, working from the position of trying to establish that these language projects are not complete nonsense.<sup>57</sup> Slaughter captures the general assessment: 'As linguistic enterprises, we know the schemes to be nonsense. Neither man nor language works in ways compatible with artificial language.' (1982: 3).<sup>58</sup> Stillman suggests that seventeenth-century language projects have been brought into mainstream scholarship. However his description of the extant work on these projects and how they are no longer treated as 'curious alphabets' and the dabbling of 'esoteric' minds is thin. Stillman states that in the:

...last two decades...cultural historians [have] given extended study to seventeenth-century England's universal language movement. Because of the work of Vivian Salmon, James Knowlson and M. M. Slaughter, all of those curious languages and exotic alphabets designed by Lodwick, Urquhart, Beck, Dalgarno and Wilkins—once dismissed as the dabbings of esoteric minds unworthy of the work of "the new science"—have been reexamined and accorded their rightful status as elements in a language movement essential to the emerging culture of natural philosophies. The bulk of their scholarly labours has gone into clarifying the complex history of the movement, the relationship among its participants, and its ties to other cultural interests, from Egyptian hieroglyphs to Chinese ideograms, from Aristotelian taxonomy to Hebraic cabalism. Only because the groundwork has been laid by Salmon, Knowlson, and Slaughter is it possible to address new and broader questions about the

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*in England*); Salmon (1979, *The Study of Language in 17th-Century England*, 2nd ed., 1988.); Slaughter (1982, *Universal Languages and Scientific Taxonomy in the Seventeenth Century*) and Subbiondo (ed., 1992, *John Wilkins and 17th-Century British Linguistics*).

<sup>57</sup> The most prominent examples are Cram and Maat (2001) on Dalgarno, Slaughter (1982) and Knowlson (1975) on Wilkins, Salmon (1972) on Lodwick and more recently, Kendon (2004) and Wollock (2002, 2011) on Bulwer. Within this group of scholars, the criteria for assessing the projects are mixed. Some focus on the linguistics, some on philosophy.

<sup>58</sup> Everything about this claim hangs on the idea of 'artificial' language in contrast to 'natural' language. If we step away from this dichotomy and look instead through the lens of nature and decay that these project designers worked with, then it is possible to grasp why these projects were not seen as nonsense linguistically at their inception.



relationship of the universal language movement to the cultural politics of seventeenth-century England. (1995a: 9)<sup>59</sup>

A few scholars have broadened the range of sources and are looking to unearth connections between different areas of interest. However, these projects retain their position as peripheral to the emergence of the ‘new science’ to England’s scientific revolution. These projects are usually accepted as having disappeared with no direct influence on any of the above areas of thought.<sup>60</sup>

My approach is different. I am interested in how these projects work within the system of thought from which they originate. This approach allows the folk sociologies of language to come forward in sharp relief. My analysis shares with scholars that are defending that these works were not the products of madmen. However, rather than exploring how the works make sense internally or offer something of value to contemporary disciplines, I am interested in how they work within the parameters of learning in the seventeenth-century and what they were intended to be. This, instead of looking to the external context of religious factionalism, restoration politics, or the economy of ‘interest’,<sup>61</sup> I look how a specific cluster of ideas shapes distinctive and overlapping attempts to redeem truth, and thus, to bring order both linguistically and socially. By focusing on this cluster, it becomes possible to grasp how these social-language projects are attempts to compose language and social life. And on this basis, we can step back from an overly narrow linguistic assessment and think about these as folk sociologies of language.

## 2.2 Confusion

The objectives of Wilkins, Dalgarno and Bulwer come from their negative view of language as it was in current use. They saw the language of use around them as completely broken, not merely as less than perfect and repairable. This extreme view was given support by the Bible. Thus language, in the mid-seventeenth-century, was understood as disorderly in a very specific way. It was confused in a theological sense – it was corrupted. Language project designers drew the causes of man’s broken language, and thus his disorderly society, from Gospel. Linguistic corruption was the result of punishments in two separate incidents: firstly, Adam’s expulsion from

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<sup>59</sup> The first half of Stillman’s point is correct: they have been overlooked. However, it is an optimistic reading to say they have been placed squarely in the study of ‘legitimate’ ‘emerging culture of natural philosophies’. Note the list of what has been studied in terms of the ‘other cultural interests’ – these areas are not the mainstay of the story of the new empiricism and birth of the modern sciences of chemistry, or physics.

<sup>60</sup> At best, the fact the fact that Boyle worked on some of Wilkins’ tables shows some connection to the emerging discipline of ‘modern chemistry’.

<sup>61</sup> Markley reads Wilkins’ *Essay* within the broader social political context, but characterizes the debate through distinctly modern ideas about realism and mystical associationism (1993).

Eden, and secondly, the penalty for building the tower of Babel.<sup>62</sup> Or, as Wilkins describes them, the ‘first and second confusions’ can be simplistically understood as the loss of a *perfect* language, and the loss of a *universal* language (1641: 105).<sup>63</sup>

### 2.2.1 First confusion: the loss of Adam’s language

The ‘first confusion’ played an important utopian role in seventeenth-century social-language projects: it allowed designers to work out their understanding of what perfect language *was* and therefore what they were working towards. Adam’s language offered a *desideratum*, however, this is interpreted somewhat differently for each project. They each started with the idea that Adam’s language was perfect in its truth: representations in the original tongue have a special unity with what they represent. Bulwer, who drew inspiration from Bacon, took post-Adamic verbal language to be hopelessly corrupted, but held that gesture (and emblems) had escaped corruption. Bulwer is concerned with what is affectively true, and his *Chirologia* is dedicated to purging language of dissimulation. Wilkins and Dalgarno instead focused on the knowledge of nature and how Adam’s verbal language expressed this knowledge: the first language, for them, constituted a true metaphysics. Dalgarno’s writings offer a bridge between Bulwer’s gesture language and Wilkins’ philosophical language, Dalgarno found true language in Adam’s linguistic *faculty*: a faculty that enables verbal and physical communication. Wilkins and Dalgarno, in contrast to Bulwer, focused on the poverty of knowledge that results from imperfect corrupted language and designed languages intended to exhibit (and not inhibit) pure knowledge.

Bulwer’s language project concentrated on gesture because gesture is not only primary but true in a way that verbal language is not. Bulwer drew support for this view from Bacon’s writings.<sup>64</sup> Bulwer focuses on a paragraph from his early work (1605) *The Proficiency and Advancement*

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<sup>62</sup> ‘...seventeenth-century theorizing about language was largely determined by a biblical framework...the nature of this [Adamic] language was controversial. Some believed that it was irrecoverably lost, others assumed that one of the languages currently in existence could be identified with, or at least be considered as the most direct descendant of the Adamic language, most scholars opting for Hebrew. Further, many believed that the names given by Adam were not arbitrarily chosen, but somehow expressed the essence of the things named. Although it was a matter of speculation and debate how this could have been done, the Adamic language was thus viewed not only as the first and universal, but also the best possible language. Secondly, the diversity of languages was accounted for by the confusion of tongues at Babel. Accordingly, the existence of language barriers was seen as a curse inflicted on human kind.’ (Cram and Maat, 2001: 12-13) Wollock writes that: ‘A religious motivation in Bacon and Wilkins is seen in their reference to the double curse of mankind: expulsion from Eden and the confusion of tongues at Babel (cf. Lewis 2007: 16–20; Matthews 2008: 71–74; Poole 2003).’ (2011: 45)

<sup>63</sup> Poole notes that in fact the language project designers did not observe such a clear, clean distinction and often used Babel to represent both problems (Poole, 2003: 274). Eco makes a similar point (1975: 73).

<sup>64</sup> Bulwer refers to Bacon’s interest in gesture in the preface of *Chirologia*, ‘The consideration in general, and at large of human nature, that a great light of learning [Bacon] hath adjudged worthy to be emancipated and made a knowledge of itself. In which continent of humanity, he hath noted (as a main deficiency) one

of *Learning* on hieroglyphics and gesture, and from this recovers ‘natural language’, a form of communication which in his estimation escaped the punishments and thus the confused state of verbal language.<sup>65</sup> The core of Bulwer’s image of a perfect language<sup>66</sup> is the difference between visible and audible language. ‘For both Bulwer and Bacon the contents of the mind can mirror the real world, but the *historical spoken languages have an inherent tendency to create their own artificial, distorted version of reality*; both men envision a universal language that would avoid this by symbolizing things directly; and for both, this language is primarily visible rather than audible...’ (Wollock, 2002: 239). In the passage of Bacon’s work that directed Bulwer to gesture, Bacon lines gestural expression up with hieroglyphics. They both have a unique relationship of similitude between the idea and its expression.<sup>67</sup> Bacon states that verbal language has no truth because words come from mere passive agreement.

Notes of cogitations are of twoo sorts: The one when the Note hath some Similitude, or Congruitie with the Notion; the other Ad Placitum, having force onely by Contract or Acception. Of the former sort are Hieroglyphicks, and Gesture. For as to Hieroglyphicks, (things of ancient use, and embraced chiefly by the Aegyptians, one of the most ancient Nations) they are but continued Impreases and Emblemes. *And as for Gestures, they are as transitory Hieroglyphicks*, and are to Hieroglyphicks as Words spoken are to Words written, in that they abide not. [Bacon, 2000: 120 italics added]<sup>68</sup>

What otherwise presents a truly peculiar work, Bulwer’s gesture language for all to use—not just for those without hearing—becomes comprehensible in this frame of gesture as ‘transitory hieroglyphics’. Bulwer held that visible language which had escaped the curse that ruined Adam’s spoken language. Therefore, gesture remained a perfect language, one in which the truth of what

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province not to have been visited, and that is gesture.’ (1974 [1644]: 5) Bacon indicated that gesture ought to be made a special study, but he wrote little more on it. It does not follow from the scantiness of Bacon’s writings on gesture that it was regarded as trivial by him. Smith writes: ‘In some fashion or other, it is the first kind of ‘Hieroglyphicks’, in the sense Bacon describes here, that will dominate in the seventeenth-century efforts to develop an ideal, artificial writing system, one that would not be based on mere convention, but would instead serve transparently for producing ‘Emblemes’ of the things one wishes to denote. The second variety Bacon identifies, gesture, will in contrast gain little attention. Yet little attention is not none at all. Over the course of the 1640s, the obscure Baconian natural philosopher John Bulwer would develop his predecessor’s notion of transitory hieroglyphics into an elaborate system, one that would indeed serve as the starting point for the later sciences of, sign language and sociolinguistics.’ (2010: 170)

<sup>65</sup> Poole also makes reference to Bacon on Adam’s language: ‘Francis Bacon (1561–1626) had written in *Valerius Terminus* that true restitution will occur only when man can once again call the creatures by their true names (Bacon 1857–74 III: 222; see Webster 1975: 22–23).’ (Poole, 2003: 275)

<sup>66</sup> Bulwer writes that gesture escaped the curse of Babel, but does not make note of Adam’s language (cf. Knowlson, 1965: 497). While following Bacon on the virtues of gesture, Bulwer ignores the rest of Bacon’s philosophy of nature, see below.

<sup>67</sup> It is questionable whether Bulwer’s primary interest in gesture is as being universal language, the issue is more importantly the truth or purity of the language.

<sup>68</sup> Wollock asserts that Bacon did not see the similitude relationship as strong, but rather where ‘...in the Renaissance hieroglyphic was often linked to the analogical view of nature; Bacon considered gesture a moving or transient form of hieroglyph; he rejected the analogical view of nature and regarded the hieroglyph as a primitive form of communication, metaphoric like a fable rather than symbolic of a real analogy of being’. (2002: 236)

is expressed shines through. The distinction between visible and audible language in Bulwer's treatment becomes true versus obfuscating language. His social-language project is the only one of those studied here which attempts to compose language by *recovering* a perfect uncorrupted language.

Wilkins and Dalgarno did not share with Bulwer's estimation of the merit of gesture or emblems and hieroglyphs. Wilkins discusses hieroglyphs, emblems and gestures in *Mercury*, (Chapters 12, 13 and 14). He holds that there is a relation of similitude with all. Gesture, in particular, can be either '*Ex Congruo*' or '*Ex Placito*', the former including 'all those outward gestures', whereby 'not only dumbe creatures, but men also doe expresse their outward passions, whether of joy, anger, feare, &c.' (1641: 111). While there is both a brutish and a sacred quality to gesture (we pray and orate, but animals also express their internal states through movement), Wilkins holds that gesture can carry secret similitude. Gesture is neither universal, nor inclusive. Twenty years later, Wilkins rules these three elements of language out as having a relation of true similitude between that which is expressed and its expression. Both Wilkins and Dalgarno accept that with the first confusion, humanity lost a perfect language wherein things and names had a special signifying relationship. Genesis recounts Adam naming the 'beasts of the field' and the 'birds of the air', and 'whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name' (Genesis, 2: 19). Wilkins took this to mean that Adam named nature according to its *essential* properties but that that original language, however, was lost. Scholars at the time—some quietly, some vociferously—took positions on whether Hebrew or another lost language was the original tongue. Most agreed that no extant language had the purity or even enough residue of the original pure language to be a remedy to the corruption of current language.<sup>69</sup> There was not much at stake in the question of the original tongue, as it was thought so permanently damaged as to be irrecoverable.<sup>70</sup> In other words, neither Wilkins nor Dalgarno were interested in identifying fragments of Adam's names (2002 [1668]: 2). The first language, used in the Garden of Eden by our 'parents', is so far distant as to be irrecoverable and so the question of which language was the original language was important only insofar as it pointed to which language had been the 'true' language and thus might offer clues to how a new 'true' language should operate (Cram & Maat, 2001: 3).<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> For a very specific and contextually detailed account of this, see Poole (2003).

<sup>70</sup> For a broader and analytical account, see Eco (1995) chapter 5.

<sup>71</sup> According to Poole, the issue is not academic but political: 'Nevertheless, talk of Adamic language made many feel uneasy, associated as it was with various (though by no means all) radical speculations of the decades of civil war and Protectorate. Ward's slur on Cabalists and Rosicrucians derives from this unease, as well it might: the anonymous Rosicrucian narrating the notorious pamphlet *The Fame and Confession of the Fraternity of RC*, for instance, claimed that the Rosicrucians have their own magical language and dictionary written in the language of Adam and Enoch.' (Poole, 2003: 275)

Adam's language, the perfect lost language of man, is a central point from which Wilkins and Dalgarno began their social-language projects. However, Wilkins (2002[1668] Book 1, Chapters 1-5) and Dalgarno (2001[1684]: 396-7) discussed the loss of Adam's language with different ends in view. Wilkins used his account of the problems of contemporary historical corrupted language as a means to shield his language from decay; Dalgarno develops the philosophical basis of his project through an indirect engagement with Wilkins' approach to Adamic language. He discusses the perfect language of Adam in order to show how it is the system and not the specific signs in the system that should be the focus of a new philosophical language.

In the *Essay*, Wilkins dispenses quickly with arguments that the original tongue might be recovered, and the idea that problems in the current multitude of languages might be repaired (2002[1668]: xx). Much more drastic measures are needed than mere repair, according to the *Essay*'s section on the history of language.<sup>72</sup> The measures that Wilkins outlined relate to his conception of nature. For Wilkins, the term 'nature' has a double meaning. There is 'nature' in the sense of all of existence, in other words, that which has been created by God. But some of nature is corrupted. That which relates to mankind is no longer 'nature' in the sense of unmediated essences. We can no longer know the essence of things or have a 'natural' language. A knowledge of 'pure nature' would stay with us, but after Adam's fall and the curse of Babel such a knowledge has given way (Wilkins 2002 [1668]: 2). For Wilkins, rectifying the damage incurred by the expulsion from Eden implies designing a system in which names could once again have a relationship of truth with what they signify. It would not be a natural language with natural knowledge.

This is no simple task, and in order to do it right Wilkins deliberated at some length on the conventional names of corrupt languages. To open the *Essay*, he offers a studious account of the 'originals of mother tongues' to the end of showing how the names of language are corrupted and do corrupt. According to him, decay is inherent in human language, because of the fall of man. Language—all current and historic languages—since Adam's first lost tongue, has been instituted by tradition (Wilkins 2002 [1668]: 19).<sup>73</sup> This section on history of language—instead of offering a genealogy of languages in order to get closer to Adamic language—gives an overview of the types of distortions that accumulate in 'instituted' languages. It also shows a way forward by introducing a distinction between instituted and rational language. Our languages may be imperfect and decayed, but by trying a novel means we could get perfect language once again. By making a

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<sup>72</sup> Book I, chapters 1-5 offers a 'Praecognita, concerning such Tongues and Letters as are already in being, particularly concerning those various *defects* and *imperfections* in them, which ought to be *supplied* and *provided against*, in any such Language or Character, as is to be invented according to the rules of Art,' (Wilkins 2002 [1668]: 1)

<sup>73</sup> Wilkins explores the suggestions that Chinese is a language made by 'art' and not tradition, and discards it (Wilkins 2002 [1668]: 10).

language which would, for the first time, be a rational language, the problems of confused language ought to be overcome. Wilkins' system, with its contrast between rational and instituted language sets the groundwork for a completely new language. He gives a very specific account of how he can strengthen the defences against the tendency of human things to degrade over time. Outlining the ways that the 'originals of mother tongues' have weakened and decayed, Wilkins develops guidelines for a true, rationally arranged language. Significantly, Wilkins' focus on the corruptions of post-Babel language (as against the search to recover fragments of Adam's perfect language) opens the space for *the* perfect language, not *a* perfect language.

Dalgarno had a complex position on the first confusion of language, which is laid out in an unpublished paper, *On Interpretation*, (2001[1684]). This paper is a reply to Wilkins, and elliptically relates key elements of their dispute. The two language designers met after they had both spent some time wrestling with how to develop their social-language projects. They were initially excited by their connection, but disagreed on the method of the core philosophical part. They parted ways without agreeing and mentioned each other indirectly, but not without acrimony after (cf. Cram & Maat, 2001). Dalgarno writes, without explicitly naming Wilkins, but clearly in reference to him, "Thoe many have pretended to treat of the Philosophy of Language abstractedly, ... the principal scope of these discourses, is either to modell a more Artificiall Systeme of Rules for some instituted Language or to make some Philosophical reflexions and observations upon the nature of Language in general, by instances taken from several particulare Languages' (2001[1684]: 401).

One way to grasp the difference between Dalgarno's and Wilkins' philosophical languages is by looking at the distinction between the contents and the faculty of language (although it borders on caricaturing both). Where Wilkins wanted to set out true names for all creation and took pains to develop the philosophical taxonomy to this end, Dalgarno spent his energy on the predicamental series, the metaphysical substances, and how these articulate within the frame of expression. Both designers argue that they are developing perfectible language. For Wilkins, this meant that language matches our many 'conceits', in other words, the contents of our reason (these appear as archetypes of the things of being, see section below on nature). For Dalgarno, this implied that the silhouette of language reflects the silhouette of nature. Consequently, for him, the question of Adam's language is developed around the idea of a natural language *faculty*, rather than a natural language *per se*.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Poole explains the difference: 'Wilkins, who, as we have seen, opened his *Essay* with a crucial paragraph rejecting the heathen belief that languages were both eternal and multiple in origin, stating instead that language was "con-created" with man (Wilkins, 1668: 2). Dalgarno, unlike Wilkins, is anxious to draw a distinction between Adamic and divinely-given language. Wilkins' comment that language was 'con-created'

It is my opinion then that Adam by the strength and excellency of his natural faculties did himself invent the Language which he and Eve did then speake without any supernatural assistance, which therefore to them was truly and properly a natural Language. (2001[1684]: 397)

Dalgarno refers to vocal and graphical signs, but neither alone is the crux of the perfect language for him.<sup>75</sup> His attention is upon the way that signs are derived rather than on the interrelations of each sign. As a result, the arbitrariness of representations of individual things became the decisive issue for Dalgarno.

This position is warranted both by Scripture Authority, right reason and antient tradition of all civilized nations. From scripture, every thing that God made was good and perfect in its own kinde, wee have one of the greatest arguments of the perfection of his [Adam's] intellectuals that could be brought, for first it is clear he was Master of a Language and wee may suppose a perfect one too, and from thence we may infer the excellency of his knowledge in those notions which we term Metaphysical, Logical and Grammatical, for without this he could never have bin able to have done that which is further recorded of him to wit the giving of names to all living creatures, which is another argument of his perfection, that without studying he understood the book of Nature. (2001[1684]: 398)

In order to hold that it is possible to create perfect language, Dalgarno needed to argue that all signs are equally arbitrary and instituted, that there was nothing special about the signs that Adam chose.<sup>76</sup> Dalgarno relied on the account of Adam's language to argue that grammarians and logicians who asserted that verbs were the mainstay of language were erroneous, but rather nouns were the key component (see Cram & Maat, 2001: 4). This is one major difference between Wilkins

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with man is the likely target of Dalgarno's insistence that Adam invented his language himself. Dalgarno does not, however, rebut Wilkins' biblical proof of his position. Wilkins had noted that Adam and Eve understood God in Eden, and so had been created with, rather than with the capacity to create, language. Indeed, Dalgarno has a slight problem here: in Genesis, God tells man what he can and cannot eat *before* he brings the beasts to Adam (Gen. 2: 15–20). Presumably Adam takes the hint from God, as it were. Dalgarno's next problem, though, is what to do with the fall. Wilkins pays little attention to this: for him, the moments of importance for biblically-situated linguistics are the creation and the dispersal of language, both, for Wilkins at least, relatively unproblematic events.' (Poole, 2003: 386)

<sup>75</sup> 'Beside that instance of the excellency of his reason in giving names to all things <by such an excel[ent] Inst[itution] that it deserves the name of a natural and Rational Language and> which can never be done by any of his degenerate posterity in this life, there are two points of Art more in this Great Art of interpretation which justly deserve our admiration. 1. The distinction and articulation of humane voice by which it is resolved into so many simple and indivisible sounds which wee commonly call Alphabetical, and first elements of Speech, and 2. the inventing and appropriating distinct Characters for representing these first vocal elements, so that adding only the charge of learning to know the figure and power of a few single letters the whole business of Interpretation becomes as easily performable by the hand as by the Tongue.' (2001 [1684]: 399)

<sup>76</sup> 'Seeing it is clear from revelation that Adam in the state of innocency was Master of a Language, This may give just cause of doubting whether this hability was a supernaturally inspired gift or a faculty proper to humane nature in its first perfection. If at first, then it will follow that man of all creatures is the most imperfect in his kinde for herby he is utterly incapable of society which notwithstanding is one of the great ends for which he was deseigned. Secondly it seems probable that seeing Adams natural abilities were much weakened by the fall that supernatural assistances should quite cease, and so Adam left mute. On the other side if it be said that Language in Adam was a natural faculty, then it will follow that there is such a thing as a Language of Nature, and has bin *de facto* in the world, and consequently all Languages consist not [of] arbitrary signs as the commone opinion is. I will safe myself by getting between them as near as I can.' (2001 [1684]: 396–397)

and Dalgarno.<sup>77</sup> For Wilkins, nouns are equally pre-eminent in designing a perfect, true, language. But Wilkins wanted *all* nouns set out in a metaphysically accurate system, or as many as possible to begin with, in hopes that the next generation of scientists could improve and increase the names of nature as knowledge improved. The knowledge inherited from the Aristotelian tradition begins with a predicamental series: this is the most fundamental list of essences, or being. This is where Wilkins began, and where Dalgarno ended. To be more precise, the *Art* continues many other aspects that in combination constitute what he viewed as the perfect language. But with respect to the *names* of nature, the predicamental series is all that Dalgarno ventured as he was more concerned with signs than with giving a comprehensive account of each thing that signs represented. Somewhat surprisingly then, Dalgarno is wedded to the idea of ‘the’ perfect language and simultaneously holds it is possible to have multiple perfect signs for a single ‘conceit’.<sup>78</sup> Adam “had more ways than one of expressing the same thing, as there are many ways to get over a river, by bridge, by boat, by horse, &c” (2001 [1684]: 397).

Genesis II, 19 plays an important role for seventeenth-century projects. The key issue is the idea that there once was, and could be again, a perfect language. Each social-language project designer had their own debate over what was involved with a perfect language. For Bulwer, this led to recovering gesture. For Wilkins, it led to reflections on what made our ‘customary languages’ imperfect and the development of a vital distinction between natural and instituted languages. For Dalgarno, the idea of Adam’s tongue yielded a productive challenge that led him to struggle between what otherwise was thought of as an incompatibility between the rational and arbitrary qualities of signs. For all, though, the perfect language that they were attempting to create would overcome the conflicts they saw as tearing their society apart. These conflicts were part of man’s punishment, but in the eyes of these writers, no longer needed to be suffered vainly. The image of a perfect language comes out distinctively in each project. For Bulwer, it came through in the truth

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<sup>77</sup> Poole notes some nuances of the differences between them: ‘While Lodwick was undermining the Bible and Wilkins was trying to effect a more tactful dislocation of biblicism from his more wontedly theoretical, Aristotelian linguistics, Dalgarno, conversely, was struggling to reunite these projects. Again, while Wilkins proposed a divine, and Lodwick a non-Adamic, arbitrary origin of speech, Dalgarno was working out a complex, middle path of the arbitrary signification of language, but still ratified by its divinely Adamic credentials.’ (Poole, 2003: 293)

<sup>78</sup> ‘Adam’s language was ‘perfect’ and we would not be able to understand it today; but, due to the essentially arbitrary nature of *all* language, we can have a good try at constructing a similar, albeit inferior version. Or, to put it differently, an Adamic *facility* of language may have been lost, but not utterly so. Adam’s language worked by compounding, which God himself endorsed by naming Adam himself using “a derivative not a primitive word”, as Adam’s name derives from the name of the substance from which he was created. Likewise, an artificial language should follow suit (2001 [1684]: 388). In this way, on the one hand Adam’s “degenerated posterity” cannot reach their forefather’s linguistic heights (2001 [1684]: 397); on the other hand, vestiges survive, as does the underlying structure of language itself, a structure based on the compounding of simple notions.’ (2001 [1684]: 386)



of physical communication. For Wilkins, the desiderata of a perfect language led him to devise a rational system for all that he took language to be, including the philosophical skeleton, the taxonomy of being, the new phonology, script and grammar. It focused Dalgarno to restrict his efforts into signs, their system and their sites of expression (oral, gestural and scribal).

### 2.2.2 Second confusion: Loss of a single language after Babel

It was not only the loss of Adam's perfect language that constituted the trouble of contemporary language for seventeenth-century scholars. Language was complicated and complicating, damaged by the Babelian multiplicity of tongues. The story of the second confusion appears to have been powerfully resonant for crystallising the aims of Wilkins, Dalgarno and Bulwer in light of the changing linguistic and political situation in Europe. Latin, the language that once dominated the learned world, was slipping in its influence among the educated and powerful as vernacular languages became more dominant (Knowlson, 1965: 28; Waquet, 2001: 122). The philosophy that Latin was once thought to embody in its structure was also coming under scrutiny and argued to be unfit for purpose or, intimately connected to this, for social life.<sup>79</sup> The laboured and disordered metaphysics that Latin was burdening young intellects with had a politically pernicious counterweight in the rise of 'elegancies' and 'ornamented' talk. Wilkins intended his essay to contribute to the:

...clearing of Some of our Modern differences in *Religion*, by unmasking many wild errors, that shelter themselves under the disguise of affected phrases; which being Philosophically unfolded, and rendered according to the genuine and natural importance of Words, will appear to be inconsistencies and contradictions. And several of those mysterious, pretended, profound notions, expressed in great swelling words, whereby some men set up for reputation, being this way examined, will appear to be, either nonsense, or very flat and jejune. (2001 [1668]: Epistle Dedicatory)

The Babelian multitude of tongues was becoming a more acute problem over time. In *Mercury*, Wilkins had written that:

After the fall of Adam, there were two general curses inflicted on Mankind: The one upon their *labours*, and the other upon their *language*....Against the other [language], the best help, that wee can yet boast of, is the Latine tongue, and the other learned languages, which by reason of their generalitie, do somewhat restore us from the first confusion. But now, if there were such an universall character, to expresse things and notions, as might be legible to all people and countries, so that men of severall Nations, might with the same ease, both write and read it; this invention would be a farre greater advantage in this particular, and mightily conduce to the spreading and promoting of all Arts and Sciences: Because that great part of our time, which is now required to the Learning of words, might then be employed in the study of things. (1641: 105-6)

<sup>79</sup> Beck writes: 'Such a Character being to be Learned in as few weeks, as the Latin tongue usually requireth years to be perfect in, which is the only Language many ages have in vain laboured to make common, but hath proved attainable to few, save such as have dedicated a great part of their lives to the study of it. For the remedy of which evil, the Invention of some easie Character hath been judged necessary, which might be as a Clew to direct us out of this Laborinth of Languages.' (1981: B2, ii)

In the *Essay*, Wilkins discusses the second confusion as a branching off into more and more, nearly countless, vernacular languages (2002[1668]: 10). Explorations to the east and south, as well as across the Atlantic yielded an even greater number of languages than could be learned by even the best minds of the day. This gave some impetus to the attempts to design a universal key, a system of writing that speakers of different tongues could all learn and read through their mother tongue, and through which they could communicate with speakers of other tongues. But, as indicated above with reference to Adam's lost language, a universal key alone was judged inferior to the task of destroying the communicative barriers imposed in the punishment of Babel by Wilkins, Dalgarno and Bulwer.<sup>80</sup>

In his writings on peoples of the world *Anthropometamorphosis*, Bulwer was also troubled by the multiplicity of languages. Bulwer contrasts the terms 'natural' and 'nationall' expressions.<sup>81</sup> Smith explains:

This is not to say that all gestures are universal. In his *Anthropometamorphosis*...Bulwer distinguishes between the 'native' and the 'naturall': The latter is what comes directly from nature, the former what may accompany one from birth, but only as a result of one's cultural environment. The 'native' is the 'nationall', and while there are many gestures that might be native in this sense, these are the object of the special domain of study Bulwer calls "Chirethnicalogia, or the Nationall expression of the Hand." Yet there are also many gestures that are in fact natural, in contrast with the sense just described. (2010: 172-3)

'Natural' language *is* universal for Bulwer, but not all gesture need be such. We have physical vernaculars, but still for him gesture retains its innocence. Wollock reminds us that Bulwer saw 'gesture is the "universal character of Reason" — not only a natural, but a universal language' (2011: 43). The gesture language of the *Chironomia* outlines both natural and rational gestures. These are equally true and can be recovered through authorised sources (the Bible, Greek and Roman writers, and hand-picked recent English authors). The array of natural gestures should dissipate the confusion of the spoken multitude of tongues.

Bulwer, Dalgarno and Wilkins agreed that vernaculars and learned language (Latin) were slowly decomposing into confusion in terms of knowledge (Cram & Maat, 2001: 2; Knowlson, 1975: 33). However, language was suffering a special sort of confusion: it was corrupted (Wilkins,

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<sup>80</sup> Babel was a secondary issue for Dalgarno, the real issues being handled in his discussions of Adamic language. Dalgarno asserted that Adam's degraded, post-lapsarian tongue was the only one still in use at the time of Babel. Mankind spoke one language that slowly corrupted, until 'by miracle' at Babel, this language was 'multiplied...not into Dialects but independent and mother tongues' (2001 [1684]: 403).

<sup>81</sup> Smith writes: 'According to William H. Sherman, in contrast to Wollock, Bulwer's work was in fact a continuation of the seventeenth-century, and in part Baconian, project of developing a universal language, "one that would not only allow people from different places to communicate with each other but would, more importantly, recover the integrity of language before the Tower of Babel and even before the Fall itself." [Sherman 2004] In the *Chirologia*, Bulwer explicitly cites Bacon as the inspiration for his own philosophy of gesture, and in the prefatory poem even describes his own work as a sort of completion of what Bacon did not live long enough to do.' (Smith, 2010: 171)

2002 [1668]: 2, 17; Dalgarno, 2001[1684]: 402). It was morally degraded. In describing his philosophical language, Dalgarno writes:

The following difference (among many others) between this language and the vulgar languages is worth noting. In vulgar languages there are what are called rules of *elegance* and *adornment*, which in many respects should rather be called rules of *absurdity*. Thus we fallen men are inclined towards every evil and rush towards what is forbidden. So that not only do we consider as being for the greatest adornments of our bodies things that are in conflict with the body's health and often with its very nature, but we also corrupt our minds by absurd fictions rather than the true gifts of knowledge. (Dalgarno, 2001[1661]: 231)

Corruption of the form and substance of language was seen to result in corruption in its effects. Obstructed development within the realm of learning, immorality in economic and religious life, factionalism, war—these and worse—were laid at the feet of corrupted language. Disorder in all levels of social life was seen to be deepening as languages degraded into new forms of irrationality and became increasingly susceptible to the diseases of ‘canting’ or ‘empty ornamented phrases’ used not to better man’s lot, but to take advantage of others, to persuade others to go against what was good for them and for society.

And though the varieties of Phrases in Language may seem to contribute to the elegance and ornament of Speech; yet, like other affected ornaments, they prejudice the native simplicity of it, and contribute to the disguising of it with false appearances. Besides that, like other hinge of fashion, they are very changeable, every generation producing new ones; witness the present Age, especially the late times, wherein this grand imposture of Phrases hath almost eaten out solid Knowledge in all professions; such men generally being of most esteem who are skilled in these Canting forms of speech, though nothing else. (Wilkins, 2002 [1668]: 18)

While the Bible offered descriptions of perfect and imperfect language and accounts of why this had happened, it did not offer solutions for the state of corruption that language and social life were in. In the attempts to find solutions, various means were tried and discarded. Character systems or alternatively re-creations of Adam’s true language from the distorted fragments left in Hebrew by which speakers of the many post-Babel languages could communicate were rejected as falling short of the aims to compose language and social life. While Wilkins’, Dalgarno’s and Bulwer’s projects derive specific images of confused (perfect versus corrupted) language from the Bible, their distinct appropriations of how language was confused set them in different directions in order to rectify the problem. Bulwer looked to literary sources for examples of gestures to collate. Wilkins laboured for years with the help of his scientific colleagues to itemise the universe and set out a true catalogue of being. Dalgarno, by contrast, became focused on signs and worked to develop an art of signs that covered all forms of human communication rationally and elegantly. However, to carry out these language projects, these men utilised a different set of intellectual tools, ones that take direction from the Baconian-Aristotelian conceptions of nature, in their attempts to set right the disorder that ensued from the two confusions.

## 2.3 Nature

The general directions of the seventeenth-century social-language projects emerged through a reading of the Bible. Nowhere in the Bible is to be found a suggestion that man has either the power or means to reverse God's punishments. Wilkins, Dalgarno and Bulwer took this from Francis Bacon, most significantly, from Bacon's writings on nature.<sup>82</sup> Without Bacon's understanding of nature bound (or nature vexed)—the idea that nature can be changed through man's active interventions—these projects look, stated simply, absurd. With a grasp of this idea, however, it is possible to make sense of the drive behind, and techniques used in, these projects. Thus, language designers found an analytical—as opposed to a theological—explanation for the problems besetting their societies in Bacon's writings, and vitally a clarion call to rectify these problems.<sup>83</sup>

There are several themes in Bacon's writings which underlie seventeenth-century language projects. Many language projects begin with reference to his petition to tackle the intellectual disorder, and also importantly, to his identification of the gap between words and things as standing at the root of the problems. Language project designers took both elements in hand. The issue of confused language was their common starting point: however, many also attempted to follow Bacon's methodological precepts. The role of nature and how it can be manipulated, in Bacon's work, is essential to understanding the divergent techniques that the language projects employed.

### 2.3.1 Bacon's statement of the fundamental problem

Bacon argues that words are responsible for deep faults in ancient and modern thought. He writes that '[t]here is a great difference between the Idols of the human mind and the Ideas of the divine. That is to say, between certain empty dogmas, and the true signatures and marks set upon the works of creation as they are found in nature' (in 'Aphorisms' in *The New Organon*, 2000

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<sup>82</sup> Bacon's influence stretches over seventeenth century science: nearly all the language project designers place his name above all others as the inspiration for their own work. Many designers were founding members of the Royal Society which took Bacon as its great inspiration. His unfinished project included a vision of novel methods of collective research, and underscored a form of empiricism that is heralded as the birth of modern science. His approach to natural philosophy stripped away some—but not all—of inherited science. The question at hand is not the length of Bacon's shadow onto current science, but rather in what way his writings on natural philosophy and how to investigate nature are a vital element in making seventeenth century social-language projects possible.

<sup>83</sup> 'Scholars agree that the universal language movement in mid-17th-century England took its hint largely from Francis Bacon's (1611–1685), *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (hereafter: *DA*) VI.1 (Lewis, 2007: 6).' (Wollock, 2011: 39) cf. Knowlson (1975: 15-16, 36). Cleary (editor of the *Chirologia*): 'Like so many seventeenth-century English scholars, John Bulwer fell within the compass of pervasive influence cast by the Veralum sage, Francis Bacon. In Bacon, Bulwer found the very impetus for his first literary endeavour, the *Chirologia...Chironomia*' (1974: xiii)

[1620]: 72) Unlike the language project designers, Bacon's discussion of the gulf between things and their names spares little ink on relating this back to Gospel. What Bacon calls 'Ideas of the Divine', Wilkins describes as 'notions' and Dalgarno refers to as 'conceits': these are the true images of things that our shared faculty of reason has, under perfect conditions. But conditions are not perfect, these 'Ideas' are obscured. It is not only that the things themselves are obscured, but our images or the true signs of them are clouded in particular ways by current language.

Specifically with reference to language, Bacon writes on the 'idols of the marketplace'. The words that we use for things do not represent their nature, but instead they 'arise by agreement and from men's association with each other' (2000 [1620]: 78). The names of things in contemporary languages could not be farther from Adam's sacred language, they emerged from profane, simple, unlettered community needs and are riddled with error and distortion.<sup>84</sup> This vulgar origin of words has led to sophisticated confusions.

Nor do the definitions or explanations wherewith in some things learned men are wont to guard and defend themselves, by any means set the matter right. But words plainly force and overrule the understanding, and throw all into confusion, and lead men away into numberless empty controversies and idle fancies. (2000 [1620]: 78)

There are two specific ways that words muddle our understanding of the world. Our languages have names for non-existent entities and we do not have names for that which does exist. The two-fold way that words conceal the true nature of things is something that many language project designers explicitly refer to in their prefaces and introductions. For Wilkins and Dalgarno, the gap arising from the 'idols' and their particular ways of misrepresenting nature and nature itself was the fundamental problem from which all social problems consequent to faulty knowledge stemmed. For this reason, it required a studied response. In both cases, the attempt to tackle this problem was decades-long and spanned multiple publication projects. Wilkins and Dalgarno confronted both dimensions of this ailment: on the one hand, attempting to free language of misleading or multiple names for things and on the other hand, attempting to purify natural philosophy of empty names. Quite importantly, Wilkins and Dalgarno made these endeavours with a sophisticated agreement with Bacon's understanding of things, in short, of Bacon's idea of 'nature'.

### 2.3.2 Bacon and the language project designers on nature

Bacon's grasp of nature is important to the investigation here in two ways. Wilkins and Dalgarno were creating philosophical languages and they both rely upon and deviate from the natural philosophy that Bacon held to, called the 'Great Chain of Being'. There is a second

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<sup>84</sup> Bacon writes that '...words are imposed according to the apprehension of the vulgar. And therefore the ill and unfit choice of words wonderfully obstructs the understanding.' (Aphorisms, 1620: 78)

important role that Bacon's writings on nature play for the social-language projects. This is the idea that man has the power to 'shake the folds of nature', to manipulate nature along certain lines. Each of these authors holds an efficacious vision of man in relation to nature and each works out their individual methods for composing language within this vision.

Bacon's grasp of nature is both steeped in, and in important ways departs from, the classical Aristotelian understanding of the metaphysics of his day. Bacon is variously described as empiricist or materialist, both of these are terms that attempt to capture the 'thing' emphasis in his approach to knowledge. Indeed, he carried out experiments and advocated his version of induction. Yet the division between empirical and speculative science was not so clear cut at the time of his writing. Central to his induction was the framework of the predicaments, a framework deriving from the Aristotelian tradition. Slaughter represents Bacon as, more precisely, focused on *living* things. This is due to his thought being structured by the Great Chain of Being conception:

Behind Bacon's simple suggestion that a universal language be created from a real character lay a whole episteme – one founded on an Aristotelian notion that the basic elements of nature are essences, that these sort themselves into kinds, that the proper study of nature amounts to an arrangement or classification of these kinds, that these basic essences or units can be ideally represented by a set of radical names and these graphically by a set of ideographic characters, that in the current state of language this ideal did not obtain, that there was no isomorphism between words and things, that this is the result of the advancement of learning which necessitated an overhaul in the old taxonomy of the Great Chain and the creation of a new vocabulary. The evolution of artificial languages, beginning with Bacon, is the making explicit of the totality of the episteme. (1982: 89)<sup>85</sup>

Wilkins and Dalgarno individually deliberated on, and debated about, how to overhaul the 'Great Chain'. Their attention focused on the 'predicamental series' and what to do with radicals. The predicamental series consists of a list or table of the basic essences of being (some are 'things' in the sense of matter, some are processes of existence) laid out in their hierarchical order. Essences are derived as 'radicals'.

Slaughter's description of the episteme captures Wilkins' *Essay* well (which is no mean feat). After some preliminary chapters on the history of the corruptions of language, Wilkins sets out a fundamental list of essences, the predicamental series, with associated symbols. Each essence is expanded into tables and sub-tables, neatly arranged with analogues and contraries. The bulk of Wilkins' philosophical language is not a simple translation of what we now find in alphabetical dictionaries or even encyclopaedias. Rather, it is a metaphysical taxonomy, a natural philosophy of all being. This has produced another caricature, from a reader a little closer in time and geography than Borges.

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<sup>85</sup> Slaughter wryly notes that: 'The *Advancement of Learning* might have been alternatively entitled the anatomy of learning... In the early stages, the projectors considered nature as a living discourse and ordinary language as a discourse discursively representing it. The first universal language projects were simply projects for a new written representation of this ordinary, discursive language.' (1982: 89, 85)

Swift portrays a language founded on ‘things’ rather than ‘words’ as ridiculous, when he tells of a universal language scheme that Gulliver encountered on his fantastic voyage.

An Expedient was therefore offered, that since Words are only Names for *Things*, it would be more convenient for all Men to carry about them, such *Things* as were necessary to express the particular Business they are to discourse on...many of the most Learned and Wise adhere to the New Scheme of expressing themselves by *Things*, which hath only this Inconvenience attending it, that if a Man’s Business be very great, and of various kinds, he must be obliged in Proportion to carry a greater bundle of *Things* upon his Back, unless he can afford one or two strong Servants to attend him. I have often beheld two of those Sages almost sinking under the Weight of their Packs, like Pedlars among us; who, when they met in the Streets, would lay down their Loads, open their Sacks, and hold Conversation for an Hour together; then put up their Implements, help each other to resume their Burthens, and take their Leave. But for short Conversations a Man may carry Implements in his Pockets and under his Arms, enough to supply him, and in his House he cannot be at a loss... (2001 [1726]: III, Ch. 5)<sup>86</sup>

As potent an image as Swift offers, Wilkins’ universal language is not as straightforward as this. The integrals that appear in the universal philosophy are not ‘things’ in the brute physical sense that Swift parodies. (Even in the parts of the *Essay* dedicated to ‘being’ and not ‘knowing’, angels and other ‘non-corporeal’ entities are included, so this is not a taxa of *physical objects* only (2002 [1668]: 51).<sup>87</sup>) Much more important to the discussion here is the fact that Wilkins’ language is designed to exclude unreal – *empty or confused* - words and expressions. Exclusion is an important counterweight to the precise selection of what ends up in the universal taxonomy. Wilkins’ language is one that is abstract (constructed according to ‘natural’ grammar and ‘real’ terms) and yet is centrally concerned with ‘things’.

Dalgarno’s *Ars Signorum* is the work in his social-language project that is most clearly an attempt to realise Bacon’s natural philosophy with a rational language. Dalgarno’s emphasis, and the main struggles he encountered, involve the question of whether the predicamental series of the *Art of Signs* cohered with reason or with nature. Since the confusion, the two—nature and reason—have been divided. He writes of Adam’s tongue that:

...wee may suppose [it] a perfect one too, and from thence we may infer the excellency of his knowledge in those notions which we term Metaphysical, Logical and Grammatical, for without this he could never have bin able to have done that which is further recorded of him to wit the giving of names to all living creatures, which is another argument of his perfection, that without studying he understood the book of Nature. (2001[1684]: 398)

<sup>86</sup> ‘Therefore the Room where Company meet who practise this Art, is full of all Things ready at Hand, requisite to furnish Matter for this kind of artificial Converse. Another great Advantage proposed by this Invention, was that it would serve as a Universal Language to be understood in all civilized Nations, whose Goods and Utensils are generally of the same kind, or nearly resembling, so that their Uses might easily be comprehended. And thus Embassadors would be qualified to treat with foreign Princes or Ministers of State to whose Tongues they were utter Strangers’ (ibid.).

<sup>87</sup> More obvious are the many tables on accidents which designate a range of *properties* of things. For example, attributes appearing in the ‘general > transcendental > mixed > quality > more strictly considered’ are: absoluteness/dependency, order/confusion, publickness/privateness, purity/defilement. ‘Transcendental > relations of action > simple’ includes actions such as: put/alter, appropriate/alienate, claim/abdicate, take/leave, design/undertake, endeavour/essay. The number of such properties is much too great to list here.

By focusing on signs, rather than things, Dalgarno extricates himself from the problem that Wilkins struggled with in finding a correct location for all things.

...I call Adams Language a Natural and Rational Language... it was natural to this great Philosopher to impress such distinct images of his conceits upon any arbitrary signs...but with this difference, that images of things that we impress upon material objects of sounds or Characters by compact and so carry them in our memories and learn them by Art and industry, all this he did by the natural strength of his faculties without compact or study (2001 [1684]: 401)

By shifting attention to signs and away from what it is that signs represent, Dalgarno can move towards a reasoned, artificial language. Knowledge of the Great Chain of Being is of secondary importance.

How did these social-language project designers conclude that they had the means to make a true language, a wholly new true language, at that? They arrived at this conclusion because of how Bacon conceived of nature and its malleability. Scholars debate whether Bacon conflated nature and art. Weeks notes that ‘scholars invariably point to the same passage in his works: “artificial things differ from natural things not in form or essence, but only in the efficient.” [Bacon, *Descriptio globi intellectualis*, *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, vol. 6, 103]’ (2007: 101-102). This is an equivocal statement and can be interpreted either as Bacon collapsing or establishing an art-nature distinction.<sup>88</sup> Weeks arbitrates between Rossi and Newman on whether or not Bacon conflated the Aristotelian distinction between art and nature by directing attention to Bacon’s ‘cosmogony’ and his position on matter.<sup>89</sup> She argues that the ‘focus on efficient cause as the crucial determinant in the debate misses the most significant feature of Bacon’s programme, namely, access to the source of productive power and the means to utilise it systematically,’ (2007: 105). By drawing attention to the role of matter and more specifically the idea of ‘shaking out the folds of nature’,<sup>90</sup> Weeks captures a dimension of the seventeenth-century science—and although it is not her focus—

<sup>88</sup> Weeks: ‘Recently, William Newman has outlined these positions, arguing for the latter against Paolo Rossi’s support for the former.’ (2007: 102-103)

<sup>89</sup> ‘Neither Rossi’s nor Newman’s account—although excellent in other ways—has advanced our understanding of what precisely Bacon meant by the terms “art” and “nature.” These *concepts* have an obvious central role in Bacon’s programme, notwithstanding his dismissal of the terms. Both commentators focus on Bacon’s concept of art, ignoring his profound reflections on the concept of nature. In contrast, I argue that any discussion of Bacon’s position on the art-nature distinction must begin with a detailed exposition of the Baconian concept of nature. This is necessary because Bacon defines art in relation to nature. However, both concepts rest on the ultimate foundation of Baconian matter.’ (2007: 106)

<sup>90</sup> ‘For Bacon, artificial bodies are simply bodies produced by nature bound, that is, nature constrained by art. His operative science of magic (Bacon’s designation) is a science of deviation. This science engages in the systematic production of heteroclites or marvels through the precise application of impediments resulting in things outside nature’s habitual paths. In *Novum organum*, he says, “nature of herself supplies these sparingly, but what she may do when her folds have been shaken out...time will show.” [Bacon, *Novum organum*, *The Works of Francis Bacon*, vol. 4, 245; cf. *The Oxford Francis Bacon*, vol. 11, 442]



language projects that most authors have failed to translate: efficacy.<sup>91</sup> Bacon's science is a science of active intervention upon nature and manipulation of nature; not merely of passive observation, and recording of nature.

'Nature' is understood by Bacon as existing in one of three possible states: *cursu*, *errans*, or *vexata* (normal, monstrous, art).<sup>92</sup> Where nature *apart* from man's exertions comes into and passes from existence as self-contained and either regular (*cursu*) or irregular (*errans*) in form, nature 'vexed' (*vexata*) has a product and is subject to manipulation by man. Weeks calls this latter 'nature bound' (2007: 101).<sup>93</sup> Newman argues that Bacon criticises philosophers that looked at the art-nature distinction for failing to focus on nature. 'Indeed, it is *natura vexata* (nature vexed) that corresponds to Bacon's call for an interventionist experimental science, and this will form a central focus of his reformed natural history.' (2004: 259) And Newman picks this passage from two of Bacon's texts:

Natural history therefore treats either of the *liberty* of nature or her *errors* or her *bonds*. And if any one dislikes that arts should be called bonds of nature, thinking they should rather be counted as her deliverers and champions, because in some cases they enable her to fulfil her own intention by reducing obstacles to order; for my part I do not care about these refinements and elegancies of speech; all I mean is, that nature, like Proteus, is forced by art to do that which without art would not be done; call it what you will,—force and bonds, or help and perfection. [fn 47. Francis Bacon, *Descriptio globi intellectualis*, in Bacon, *Works*, 5: 506. The same passage appears almost verbatim in Bacon, *De augmentis scientiarum*, in Bacon, *Works*, 4: 294-295.] (2004: 258)<sup>94</sup>

The third state of nature, 'nature vexed' is the one that is of special interest to the language projects, and to science more broadly. Not only does it mean that we can experiment with language, but it means we can create language.

Weeks write that: '(f)or Bacon, art is nothing other than a goading and a holding in restraint of sums of motions. The phrase "incentives and restraints" is an apt and succinct description of Cupid's appetitive power...Hence Bacon describes, "the transformations or

<sup>91</sup> Even such otherwise careful scholars as Cram & Maat pass over this dimension without explanation: 'Although this curse was a punishment for human pride, it is characteristic of seventeenth-century secularisation and optimism that it was generally believed to be both legitimate and feasible to remedy the curse of Babel by inventing a new universal language.' (Cram and Maat, 2001: 12-13)

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Newman on Bacon's Aristotelianism.

<sup>93</sup> Newman, who looks in some detail at the idea of 'nature' in his history of alchemy, is specifically interested in the relationship of the category of 'perfective arts' (2004: 259) in Bacon's work, which he connects to Bacon's understanding of 'vexing nature'. Another scholar that tackles Bacon on nature is Rossi, who instead focuses on the term 'magic' in Bacon's writings. Newman describes Rossi's position thus: '...Rossi promotes the view that Francis Bacon was the major figure in overthrowing an age-old division between art and nature...According to Rossi, it was the early modern ascendancy of the mechanical arts, not the art-nature debate and the role of alchemy in it, that led Bacon to this new position.' (2004: 257)

<sup>94</sup> Newman takes this to mean that Bacon is following Aristotle's understanding of the perfective arts. 'In a sense, Bacon is saying little more here than Aristotle did at *Physics* II 8 199a15-17: that art can "carry things further than nature can." And yet,...Bacon goes beyond...in seeing the concept of perfective arts as a license for focusing at great length on experimental intervention in nature.' (2004: 258-259)

metamorphosis of bodies” as “a really noble and rare sum [of simple motions]...a most powerful effect in nature and one by which human power is...raised to the highest degree.”<sup>95</sup> (2007: 122).

It is worth taking note, in relation to the close connection seventeenth-century scholars held to exist between social life and language, of the ease with which Bacon shifts from a discussion of the motions of matter, to those of government in *Royal or Political Motion* (2007: 123). Weeks points out that ‘Bacon’s notion of man as a second creator derives from his concept of a plenipotentiary matter, and his materialism should be recognised as a fundamental constituent of his natural philosophy, notwithstanding the theological issues this raises.’ (2007: 126).<sup>95</sup> Social life is understood as sliding deeper into chaos, but importantly, as still something that can be ordered by ‘vexing’ it, or modifying it. Language, of course, is similarly conceived as subject to composure, within our power to shape into an orderly form.<sup>96</sup>

## 2.4 Method

Bacon argued that because of the arbitrary and often misleading way that words represented things, language was standing in the way of gaining new knowledge. Bacon described how following the—better—method of the mathematicians by beginning with definitions is not a solution, as these would be based on words and thus the fundamental problems remain.

...men believe that their reason governs words; but it is also true that words react on the understanding; and this it is that has rendered philosophy and the sciences sophisticated and inactive. Now words, being commonly framed and applied according to the capacity of the vulgar, follow those lines of division which are most obvious to the vulgar understanding. And whenever an understanding of greater acuteness or a more diligent observation would alter those lines to suit the true divisions of nature, words stand in the way and resist the change. Whence it comes to pass that the high and formal discussions of learned men end oftentimes in disputes about words and names; with which (according to the use and wisdom or the mathematicians) it would be more prudent to begin, and so by means of definitions reduce them to order. Yet even definitions cannot cure this evil in dealing with natural and material things: since the definitions themselves consist of words, and those words beget others... (Aphorisms, 2000 [1620]:92)

These three projects share a Baconian commitment to find order and a consciousness of how to do this, as Slaughter defines it, of method.<sup>97</sup> But the technical approach to the idea of method

<sup>95</sup> Rossi also brings forth this active domination of nature reading of Bacon (1968: 164).

<sup>96</sup> Each approach is guided by a vision of the universe as three-fold: a world divided into things of nature things of nature *vexed* (or nature modified through man’s craft), and the unreachable realm of the supernatural.

<sup>97</sup> Slaughter argues that the interest in method was a part of the episteme: ‘...the desire for a certain knowledge of nature, which inspired Francis Bacon’s work on method...was the principle notion behind all 17<sup>th</sup> century science; it is what made the seventeenth century so conscious of method...The same emphasis on method is seen in all science, whether in the numerous ‘methods’ put forward by botanists in search of a ‘natural’ as opposed to a merely artificial system of classification, or in the experimental method and mathematical method of chemists and physicists. As Foucault describes it, this universal search for order results in a search for a science of order (mathesis); it is this idea of order that defines seventeenth-century science.’ (1982: 5)

varies. Wilkins and Dalgarno share in their hope that a philosophical language—a language true to the essences of things—was possible by ‘vexing nature’. In its own way, language was seen as first among the arts by Dalgarno and Wilkins (2001[1684]: 399) and their complex projects show that. Still there is a profound difference of approach between the two works, resting on the understanding of what the art of language is. For Wilkins, it is the art of grammar whereas for Dalgarno, it is the art of signs.<sup>98</sup> For Dalgarno, vexing nature becomes interpretation; Wilkins absorbs Bacon’s approach to induction with a focus on separating and combining, or classing, nature. Bulwer thought a true language could be discerned from natural language—and his method for ordering language and social life reflects this—and he made an art of language, a discipline, whereby true language could be used. His method can be described as recovery. Bulwer had a unique way of ordering language and social life.

Language is described by Dalgarno as the ‘first of all Arts’, (2001[1684]: 398). Artificial language, in this perspective, consists of properly arranged signs. Dalgarno focused on things, and their representation, and not on their interconnections. Dalgarno took seriously the idea of vexing nature in the sense of distilling it to its elements. Thus the communication derived from the *Ars* would be a rational analysis of ideas. ‘Speaking is in itself a logical analysis of concepts’ (2001 [1684]: 231). Dalgarno explains that his project aims for *signa rerum*, not *signa signorum* as are all extant attempts (including Wilkins) in his view (2001 [1684]: 381). He attempted to derive only the most primitive signs (radicals). His position on the distinction between a language that expresses nature in contrast to one expressing reason becomes clearer here as, for Dalgarno, the order of concepts should be the same as the order in the mind, not the same as in nature (2001 [1684]: 394).

Wilkins agreed with Bacon that thus far further scholarly efforts have confounded the problems of the gap between language and nature, of knowledge broadly.<sup>99</sup> Wilkins writes that his *Essay* will address how: ‘And several of those mysterious, pretended, profound notions, expressed

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<sup>98</sup> Poole summarises the usual portrayal of the difference between Wilkins and Dalgarno before offering a different understanding based on a reading of the Dalgarno’s late text *On Interpretation*. ‘Dalgarno envisaged his language as based on a collection of radicals, arranged mnemonically, and then used to generate, by combination, more complex terms. Wilkins, in contrast, advocated arrangement along the lines of the Aristotelian predicaments. For Dalgarno, Wilkins’ predicamental method was impractical; for Wilkins, Dalgarno’s mnemonics were unphilosophical (Cram & Maat 2001: 8–11, 26–29; Poole 2003).’ (2003: 283)

<sup>99</sup> Rossi offered an overview of Bacon’s position: ‘...notions should be correctly derived from things and respond to them, since names are the symbols of notions and where a notion is faulty so also is the name. But conversely, the names given to things, or words, influence the mind: ‘those faulty meanings of words cast their rays or stamp their impression on the mind itself, and they do not only make discourse tedious, but they impair judgment and understanding’. If by careful observation we try to correct vulgar notions derived from superficial distinctions, so that they become better suited to reality ‘words rebel’ and endless controversies arise respecting, not reality, but names and words. And ‘that which is the remedy for this evil (namely definitions) is in most cases unable to cure it, for definitions consist of words, and words beget words.’ (2000 [1620]: 171)

in great swelling words, whereby some men set up for reputation, being this way examined, will appear to be, either nonsense, or very flat and jejune' (2002[1668] *Epistle Dedicatory*). Bacon's solution to the confusion that arises from inherited, unphilosophical words is to use a mixed method of logic and sense experience, described as induction.

The syllogism consists of propositions, propositions consist of words, words are symbols of notions. Therefore if the notions themselves (which is the root of the matter) are confused and over-hastily abstracted from the facts, there can be no firmness in the super-structure.

Our only hope therefore lies in a true induction. (Aphorisms, 2000 [1620]: 70)

A 'true induction' is one that walks between the excesses of narrow deduction on the one side, and narrow induction on the other.<sup>100</sup> If one veers too much on the side of deduction, this results in the problems that Bacon sees in Aristotle's work, his logic constrains his observations of nature. On the other hand, excess on the side of induction results in the problems plaguing some natural philosophers who have become overly focused on the results of too few experiments.

His method is to proceed "regularly and gradually from one axiom to another, so that the most general are not reached till the last." In other words, each axiom – i.e., each step up "the ladder of intellect" – is thoroughly tested by observation and experimentation before the next step is taken. In effect, each confirmed axiom becomes a foothold to a higher truth, with the most general axioms representing the last stage of the process.' (IEP: online, last accessed 30 Dec., 2012)

Bacon's discussion of the importance of dividing and combining as all that we can do to nature is notable, especially in relation to Wilkins (Cram & Maat, 2001: 48).<sup>101</sup> Newman notes that: 'After Bacon finishes his complaint about writers on natural history ignoring the arts, he proceeds:

...and not only that, but another and more subtle error finds its way into men's minds; that of looking upon art as merely a kind of supplement to nature; which has power enough to finish what nature has begun or correct her when going aside, but no power to make radical changes, and shake her in the foundations; an opinion which has brought a great deal of despair into human concerns. Whereas men ought on the contrary, to have a settled conviction, that things artificial differ from things natural, not in form or essence, but only in the efficient; *that man has in truth no power over nature, except that of motion—the power, I say, of putting natural bodies together or separating them—and that the rest is done by nature working within.* [fn.48. Bacon, *Descriptio globi intellectualis*, 506.]' (2004, italics added: 259)

It is the final line of this (much used) quote which is of interest, as it points precisely to one significant method used by the language project designers. Weeks writes that 'Bacon considers that

<sup>100</sup> Slaughter: 'Language, as Bacon claimed, should rest on our proper understanding of nature, and that understanding came, not through books or from authority, but through scientific observation.' (1982: 90)

<sup>101</sup> 'Language, too, must function as a device of containment. Consider for a moment questions about words as they enter into Bacon's project to construct a reformed natural philosophy. A passage from the *Cogitationes* illustrates remarkably well, in short compass, how such questions emerge in conjunction with Bacon's project to regulate the motions of things. He begins his discussion about the enormous difficulties of regulating natural motions by making one of his many complaints about the inadequacy of "spirited disputes, probable arguments, vague speculations, or specious opinions"- all instances of merely verbal learning—for rendering certain knowledge about nature (5.426). As Bacon never tires of repeating, the motions of nature are too subtle for words. What he proposes next, in an effort to bypass such verbal difficulties, is the discovery of a "course of application suitable to nature, to acquire the power of exciting, restraining, increasing, remitting, multiplying, and calming and stopping any motion whatever in a matter susceptible of it" (5.426).' (Stillman, 1995b: 90)

art consists principally in associating and dissociating natural bodies' (2007: 121) (although she is reading his work in light of matter).<sup>102</sup> The language project designers have been described as language creators by some, but what they were doing with language is not creation *ex nihilo*. They were artfully designing language: they were putting together and separating—by force—within the limits given by nature herself. Slaughter looks at this through the lens of Aristotle and Foucault; invoking first order, then essences:

For the non-mechanists, particularly for those who studied living things, the belief in Aristotelian essences persisted through the seventeenth-century. When they ask what differentiates a plant from an animal, a tree from a shrub, a cucumber from a marigold, they are asking what is the essence or nature of these things such that it is similar to or different from the essence of those other things. (A linguist like Lodowick is doing the same when he puts *moisture, to besprinkle, to baptize, to wet* into the same semantic paradigm.) (1982: 5)

The language of Wilkins' *Essay* was based on the representation of metaphysics, but the emphasis was on representing the world.<sup>103</sup> Art, for Wilkins, is equivalent to grammar, but for him any grammar is reliant on a proper inventory of the universe.<sup>104</sup> Names are arbitrarily given, but they are truthfully located. Hence, for Wilkins, speech cannot help but be logical because things that exist have been laid properly upon a map representing existence. Wilkins tolerates linguistic arbitrariness, because he believed that his system could alleviate the untruth of extant arbitrary—instituted—manmade language. Still, his taxonomy dictates less than might be assumed in terms of representing the order of 'things and notions'. The interest in producing an accurate metaphysics outweighs that of creating a tidy set of tables. Apologies and extra explanations abound as regularity in the tables is observed only where possible. The tables generally rely on a system of six species per genus. 'Unless it be in those numerous tribes, of *Herbs, Trees, Exanguious Animals, Fishes*

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<sup>102</sup> Bacon writes: 'Towards the effecting of works, all that man can do is to put together or put asunder natural bodies. The rest is done by nature working within. (2000 [1620]: 68)

<sup>103</sup> Wilkins' main opposition is between 'natural' things and 'instituted' things. 'Instituted' things are those made by men: but things made by men can be fashioned by custom (or tradition) *or* can be fashioned by reason (or method). Beginning with this distinction he can ask: what if—for the first time—language is fashioned by reason? Reason has not been corrupted, only the products of knowledge have. A perfect language would be language that properly expresses our shared ideas (notions/conceits). Regarding the problem of rationally assigning true names, Wilkins and Dalgarno deliberate on the question of a real character.

<sup>104</sup> Slaughter: 'The universal grammarians are concerned with the analogy between words and things or the nature of words and the nature of things, a concern which shows itself primarily in their discussions of the parts of speech. But they were also and more especially concerned with the way words and notions are joined together, a concern which leads them more into considerations of word derivation, morphology, and syntax (grammar). There is no question that the universal language projectors were influenced by these theories both generally and specifically and that they were concerned with universal grammar. Bacon discussed it; Dalgarno and particularly Wilkins devoted large sections of their language projects to formulating principles of universal grammar (Wilkins explicitly on the model of Campanella). But those grammars dealt with complex notions and their combinations in propositions and sentences. Those complex notions and propositions, however, in turn rest on the identification of the simple, common notions, elements, or things of nature. The identification of those is the point of taxonomy.' (1982: 88)

and *Birds*; which are of too great a variety to be comprehended in so narrow a compass' (2002 [1668]: 22). In the same passage, Wilkins goes on to apologise, 'tho it must be acknowledged that these Affinities are sometimes less proper and more remote, there being several things shifted into these places, because I knew not how to provide for them better' (2002: 22). Blaming the poor state of the then current metaphysics, he writes that rectifying its errors '...may afford some excuse as to several of those things which may seem to be less conveniently disposed of in the following Tables, or Schemes proposed in the next part' (2002 [1668]: 21). Describing the 'Table of Genus's', he points out that some of the 'transcendental' notions are 'exceedingly comprehensive' and others 'extremely subtle' increasing the difficulties in positioning them accurately (2002 [1668]: 24). The universal philosophy concludes with an 'Explication of the Foregoing Tables' that discusses things which neither follow the schematic, nor should be included in a universal language (2002 [1668]: 289-96). It is clear that the tables are designed with accuracy rather than tidiness of exposition as the main criterion.

Wilkins' understanding of method rests on separating the homogeneous and the heterogeneous. The art of language is understood by Wilkins as grammar, *but* current grammar has come after language so the extant art of grammar is a mess.<sup>105</sup> He defines grammar as 'classing things', and not classifying as such. Classing refers to finding that which is similar and that which is different and presenting opposing things. The evidence is in the work itself, in the mechanics of the tables. The *Essay* is, admittedly, a surprise. It resembles an encyclopaedia, rather than an artificial language as we expect based on vocabularies and grammars. It is an attempt to establish names that correspond to the essences of things. And, further to this, ideally there would be a correspondence between sounds and signs. These correspondences, this form of 'truth' should be possible by vexing nature.

Bulwer's conception of a *natural* language relies on the idea that convention corrupts meaning. Bulwer's double text *Chironomia, Chirologia* presents a collation of natural gestures followed by rules to use these gestures to best effect (art).<sup>106</sup> Bulwer focuses on what he describes

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<sup>105</sup> 'From what hath been already said it may appear, that there are no Letters or Languages that have been at once invented and established according to the Rules of Art; but that all, except the first, (of which we know nothing so certain as, that it was not made by human Art upon Experience) have been either taken up from that first, and derived by way of Imitation; or else, in a long tract of time, have, upon several emergencies, admitted various and casual alterations; by which means they must needs be liable to manifold defects and imperfections, that in a Language at once invented and according to the rules of Art might be easily avoided. Nor could this otherwise be, because that very Art by which Language should be regulated, viz. Grammar, is of much later invention then Languages themselves, being adapted to what was already in being, Rather then the Rule of making it so.' (2002 [1668]: 19)

<sup>106</sup> Smith writes on Bulwer, gesture and nature/artifice: 'According to Jeffrey Wollock, Bulwer would entirely ignore Bacon's interest in an ideal language, focusing instead exclusively on Bacon's characterisation of gesture, indeed turning this into the centrepiece of his chirollogical project. According to Wollock, "this

as natural language in contrast to ‘affectation’ (1974 [1644]: 244).<sup>107</sup> ‘The end of ‘art’ is to know; to understand ‘nature’. Therefore, for Bulwer, natural language can be rendered rational by practice.

Most early modern theories of a primordial Adamic language held that it was not spoken language as such that compromised true meanings in favour of their mere approximation in the sounds that humans agree by convention will stand in for them. But Bulwer appears to want to argue that speaking, whether pre- or post-lapsarian, corrupts meanings precisely because sounds can only ever be conventional. For this reason, the true primordial embodiment of meaning is only to be found in the body itself, which is to say, in gesture. (Smith, 2010: 172)

This focus leads Bulwer to try and recover the ‘natural language of reason’ by a system of looking to sources found in the body of accumulated knowledge at Bulwer’s disposal: the Bible and religious texts, Classical sources, and modern orators.

## 2.5 Truth

What was lost in the corruption of language, or in the case of Bulwer, by the use of verbal speech? For all of these projectors, what is lost is truth. The loss of truth meant a loss of the good society. Each of these projects was aimed, in their own ways, toward truth and away from confusion. As confusion has a language and a social connotation for the project designers, so does truth.

The search for those unifying laws that organize nature and culture eventuates in disputes about philosophy and politics, but it begins, characteristically of Bacon, in disputes about words. (Stillman, 1995b: 90)

Cave Beck, creator of a numerical character, set out an oft-repeated formula. Purify language and important social benefits would follow:

This last century of years, much hath been the discourse and expectation of learned men, concerning the finding out of an *Universal Character*, which if happily contrived, so as to avoid all Equivocal words, Anomalous variations, and Superfluous Synonomas (with which all Languages are encumbred, and rendred difficult to the learner) would much advantage mankind in their civil commerce, and be a singular means of propagating all sorts of Learning and true Religion in the world (1981: B2, i)<sup>108</sup>

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was in part because [Bulwer] retained older views about the inherent ontological harmony between man and the universe, but also because for Bulwer the physician, the underlying neurophysiological basis of gesture confirmed it as the universal ‘language’ of humanity.” It would be more correct to say, however, that Bulwer does not abandon the search for an ideal language, but indeed believes he has already found one in gesture. In examining why he believes this, we might be able to discern an important rift in seventeenth-century debates about the universal character, between those who believe this can be nothing other than an artificial language, and those that believe precisely artifice that obscures meanings, and that any universally comprehensible system of communication will be perfectly natural as opposed to artificial.’ (Smith, 2010: 170)

<sup>107</sup> Wollock writes: ‘Bulwer sees the universal language as *natural*, something that can be *recovered*. Ward and Wilkins, on the other hand, deny that any such language ever existed...For the later Baconians “The true natural language is not that of primordial man; if anything, it will be the final product of science, the outcome of an analysis of the contents of the mind’s contents”.’ (Wollock, 2002: 239).

<sup>108</sup> Beck: ‘I refer the Consideration of these things, to the Judicious, & the successe to God, whose Gospel, if by this means it be more propagated in the world, by an oportunity of discovering the Glorious. Truthe

A true language, for Wilkins, is something to work towards, but probably lies just over the horizon of possibility. It would be a rational language that represented the form of being—the network of things and states—with metaphysical accuracy. And for Wilkins, the standard by which to judge the accuracy of this language is not on paper, not in books, but in the tangible improvements to humanity that would come of its employment. It would facilitate better science, leading to better knowledge, and thus help to lessen conflicts over religious, political, and economic relations. It is possible, the *Essay* being a testament to this view, to begin with the art of language—grammar—and compose a language that is regular and methodical. And if it does not exactly ‘sute the nature of things’, as Bacon hoped, at least it would offer a more true philosophy and thereby a more true system of knowledge. Rossi summarises Bacon’s view to scientific reforms, ‘Thus from discussing methods of communication Bacon came back full circle to the solution of problems that, to him, were vital. Which in fact confirms our theory that, for Bacon, the discovery of new scientific methods and the problems of penetrating the minds of men and organising scientific research are only three facets of a single, constant preoccupation: the reform of knowledge’ (1968: 177). The latter part of Bacon’s aphorism on the ‘idols of the market-place’ is repeated nearly verbatim by Wilkins, who intended his essay to contribute to the ‘clearing of Some of our Modern differences in *Religion*, by unmasking many wild errors, that shelter under themselves under the disguise of affected phrases; which being Philosophically unfolded, and rendered according to the genuine and natural importance of Words, will appear to be inconsistencies and contradictions’ (2001 [1668], Epistle Dedicatory).<sup>109</sup> This is almost a note in Wilkins’ *Essay*, but it is of pressing interest for ethical—civic, religious, political, and economic—reasons are the foundation of, not only Wilkins’ *Essay*, but also Dalgarno’s and Bulwer’s projects and seventeenth-century language projects overall. Composing social life meant composing language. A more true system of knowledge should allow for a more true system of communication, the *form* and *effects* of which should be felt to reverberate as healing ripples across the ailing body social.

Implicit in Wilkins’ *Essay* is the commitment that by establishing a true knowledge of the character of social life and by building into the structure of language itself, users of Wilkins’ language would be enabled to act appropriately in each specific social circumstance. Wilkins’ *Essay* was planned as more than a means to improve everyday misunderstandings arising from unclear language. It was hoped to offer a radical return to humanity’s basic potential for the ‘good society’.

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thereof, unto such from whom hitherto it hath been locked, I shall judge this pains of mine happily bestowed.’ (1981: B2, vii)

<sup>109</sup> Wilkins (2002[1668]: 13) ‘learned *Veralum*’ on real character; he begins his *Essay*, noting Bacon and writing that ‘...as things are better then words, as real knowledge is beyond elegancy of speech, as the general that of any particular Countrey or Nation’ (2002[1668]: 3, Epistle Dedicatory).



The *Essay* was motivated by the view that we have the capacity to create language completely anew, in such a shape that it can be utilised for social good over generations.

Poole describes how Dalgarno was attempting to unify what he terms as an ‘Aristotelian’ view of pure language with a Biblical account of Adam’s name language. ‘Dalgarno’s tractate, then, contests the biblical underlay assumed by Wilkins’ writings. Wilkins is the true Baconian: Bacon had opened both *Of the Proficiency and Advancement of Learning* (Bacon 1605 sg. A4r-B3v) and *The New Organon* (Bacon 2000 [1620]: 12–13) by restricting the fall of man solely to *moral* waywardness; all other forms of enquiry were and remain licit, and are not part of the fall. This division between moral and epistemological consequences is crucial, and can be seen frequently in early Restoration scientific apologetic, as in Hooke:

*And as at first, mankind fell by tasting of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge, so we, their posterity, may be in part restor’d by the same way, not only by beholding and contemplating, but by tasting too those fruits of Natural knowledge, that were never yet forbidden [...].* (Hooke 1665: v; italics in the original) (Poole, 2003: 288)

Dalgarno’s true language is a language where our expressions, oral, gestural and scribal match the ideas in our minds. He wrote less on the social benefits that would follow the implementation of such a language, but the various texts that make up his art of signs offer their own testimony to the same motivation of social harmony as the other two projects.

The *Chironomia* is intended to offer a regular, pure system for expressing oneself. Bulwer’s system should enable speakers to persuade others of their meaning with sincerity. It is a system for public communication, and draws heavily from Classical rhetoric writings. But it is not intended as a means of persuasion merely: properly used, gestures should amplify the speakers’ fundamental meaning. As such, the ‘chironomic’ system demands speakers’ clarity of thought and action. This treatise is aimed at people in positions of civic significance—the ‘pulpit and courts’—as well as speakers in ‘common life’ more generally. Clarity and honesty will prevail by enacting Bulwer’s discipline in one’s speech. The *Chirologia* shares with the *Essay* in assuming that social life ought to be improved across a range of sites. Clarity and honesty prevail as the public arena—in the markets and streets or from the pulpit or law bench—is regimented by the speakers that command it. For the *Chirologia*, mastering language, as individuals when we each speak, and collectively by controlling its natural disorder reflects the same possibility and urgency as can be seen in the *Essay*.

## 2.6 Conclusion

What are these projects, then, as folk sociologies of language? What is the understanding of the social that they offer? What is the understanding of language? Crucially, how are language and the social related?

It is possible to describe what language is in each of these projects, independently of their broader aims. For Wilkins and Dalgarno, it is a system of signs that communicates ideas. This definition could also include Bulwer if signs are understood as transitory hieroglyphs, physical movements. But hopefully the investigations that made up this chapter warn against reductive readings like this. For all these designers, when it is remembered that ameliorating the civil crisis of their origins was the motivating factor for their composition, linguistic readings of language are less persuasive. Why go to the effort to compose languages that were hoped to approach truth, perfection? Language, for each is intimately connected with knowledge. And this knowledge is decisive, but not the same. For Wilkins, it is the knowledge of the universe that is important. The system of ideas should truly represent being. If this can be laid out, then social misunderstandings dissipate. This seems a sharp contrast to Bulwer, where the knowledge that matters is knowledge of the speakers' affective intentions. For Bulwer, self-knowledge and the knowledge of the speaker were equally important, but both types are the knowledge of intended meanings. Knowledge, for Dalgarno stands between these variants. Knowledge of the system of signs itself would be reason in practice. Thus in stepping back a pace, away from the technical machinery of language to the multiple ways that these language composers connected it with knowledge, several related sociologies of language come into better focus. These are inclusive conceptions of language, they tackle speech, writing, physical communication, vocabulary, grammar, and even how to learn language. They are also total, in that they are attempts to supplant extant languages. Alone, they look odd and are easily discarded. Comparing them to the materials that follow in Chapters Three and Four shows both the scale of their ambition and seriousness. The contrast with a contemporary social-language project, the 'Endangered Languages Movement' discussed in the conclusion of this thesis is particularly compelling for what it reveals about both projects.

In the seventeenth-century, the gap between words and things was problematic not only in terms of learning, but on a broad social scale.

Couturat earlier suggested that the seventeenth century saw 'general reversal in outlook away from the past towards the future, and a feeling that great progress in science was lying ahead. Whereas both Antiquity and the Middle Ages were inclined to place the ideal world as well as the ideal language in the past, the seventeenth century was characterized by a sense of beginning, and by a strong belief in the power of human skill to change and improve the world' (in Maat, 2004: 10).

The seventeenth-century belief in man's power to create his own world—in linguistic, economic, and political terms, and not in technological terms—seems too foreign to contemplate now.

Some authors suggest that the seeming optimism about man's efficacy in all areas of his 'corrupted' life masks a deeper uncertainty. Stillman argues the assumed mastery is actually a deep seated insecurity about the perceived chaos of the world – the social world: in its religious, political and economic dimensions (1995b: 35). He writes that '...beneath the veneration of linguistic power

and the fear of its abuse, in Comenius, Bacon, Hobbes and Wilkins, and other writers of the English tradition, lies a strong desire to master language, which is also a desire to master history' (1995b: 30). It was precisely the chaos and upheaval of this 'age of crisis' that drove attempts to master language, and through language, social life.

The works discussed above compose languages such that social life might also be composed. These three authors, with their overlapping works, show us an orientation to language that seems startling for its assumed mastery. Taking note of the many references in, and around the works, to the civil wars tearing apart England and the ills of man's confusion, what first appears as the fruit of an optimistic belief in control over things human, even language, looks less born from hope than from the disquietude of life lived within incessant war. Social life is a life that is disorderly, but the hope – or the fear – motivating these thinkers is to compose it.

## CHAPTER THREE

### FIXING SOCIETY WITH DICTIONARIES

Two dictionary projects that were printed together in the 1750s, one a French multi-volume work (published between 1751-1772) and the other a single English volume (multi-edition, 1755, 1756, 1765, 1773, 1784, 1785),<sup>110</sup> appear to be more circumspect enterprises than the radical interventions studied in Chapter Two. These two works, the *Encyclopédie* and Johnson's *Dictionary*, do not look to have much structurally in common. However, they share a central aim, and this aim gives the two social-language projects a deep similitude. Each work is intended to stimulate the best in social life by fixing language. 'To fix' something conjures, for us now, images of both repair and immobilisation. Here, it is the second meaning that prevails. Johnson's *Dictionary* offers the following subtle variations of the idea of immobilizing something.

To FIX: 1. To make fast, firm, or stable...2. To settle; to establish invariably...3. To direct without variation...4. To deprive of volatility...5. To pierce; to transfix...6. To withhold from motion. (2012 [1755]: 582)

The first definition, to make something firm or to it make stable, neatly describes what both the *Encyclopédie* and Johnson's *Dictionary* intended to do with respect to language. Each project was openly described in its announcement as a project intended to 'fix' language, either in whole or in an elemental part.<sup>111</sup> In the latter case, by fixing its elemental parts, the *Encyclopédie* sought to shift the whole of language towards a perfect form. In his description of the *Encyclopédie*, the main editor, Diderot, writes:

A universal dictionary is an opus which proposes to fix the meaning of the terms of a language, by defining those which can be defined, through a short, meticulous, clear, and precise enumeration of the qualities of ideas attached to them. The only good definitions are those that group the essential attributes of the thing designated by the word. ('Encyclopédie', 1755: ¶7)

He goes to say that fixing the meaning of a term would keep it safe for posterity, protected from change as much as could be hoped by giving it a true and general meaning. This would offer a universal language:

A common idiom would be the sole means of establishing a correspondence that could extend to all parts of the human race, and ally them against nature, to which we must constantly do violence, in both the physical and moral domains. Assume that such an idiom were concerted

<sup>110</sup> Further editions continued to appear after Johnson's death, with various supplements and editions. It continued as the authoritative dictionary of English until the OED supplanted it in the early twentieth century.

<sup>111</sup> Hitchings also makes notes of the double modern sense and the singular sense which it holds for Johnson. 'For a modern reader, the verb 'to fix' has two obvious senses: 'to mend' and 'to fasten securely'. For Johnson, as the relevant *Dictionary* entry attests, it usually meant the latter. Despite his natural tendency to legislate, his first aim was not to revise the language with interventionist, pontifical zeal, but to record and fortify its present condition.' (Hitchings, 2005: 67) I argue below that there was more than recording and fortifying at stake, that retrieval and protection of the best English were Johnson's aims.

and its form fixed: notions immediately become permanent; distances of time disappear; different places are contiguous; connections are created between all inhabited places in space and time, and all living and thinking beings are in contact with each other. ('Encyclopédie', 1755: ¶10)

The two projects intend to immobilise different aspects of language. In the case of the *Encyclopédie*, the project is to establish clear and definite definitions and to propose a rational grammar. The *Encyclopédie* focuses on meaning both through word order and radicals. The *Dictionary* is seemingly a more technical project: it is intended to immobilise language by retrieving the meaning of words as it is found in the best examples (of English writings) as well as to clean up illogical phonetics and orthography.<sup>112</sup> Johnson writes of his work:

A new pronunciation will make almost a new speech, and therefore since one great end of this undertaking is to fix the English language, care will be taken to determine the accentuation of all polysyllables by proper authorities, as it is one of those capricious phenomena which cannot easily be reduced to rules. (2004 [1755]: 569)

In order to immobilise language, it needed to be fixed to, or in, something. The way by which language is fixed is not the same for each project, technically or philosophically. Both editors, however, hoped to give language a method and a reasoned grounding. The *Encyclopédie* used man as the anchor for knowledge, and also as the mooring for language. The *Dictionary* relied instead on a period, a special era in the history of the language, in which the correct form could be found and set out in print to mitigate against future degradation.

The broader end of these projects, however, was to improve social life by ordering part of it with both the methods and products of reason. Both Johnson and Diderot imagined that an emergent property of fixing language would be the betterment of society. For Diderot, a rationalised form of a specific existing vernacular language should be a platform to better things in social life. For Johnson, rationalising the shape of the English language should offer a shield against the inevitable decay of collective social things.

If the changes that we fear be thus irresistible, what remains but to acquiesce with silence, as in the other insurmountable distresses of humanity? It remains that we retard what we cannot repel, that we palliate what we cannot cure. Life may be lengthened by care, though death cannot be ultimately defeated: tongues, like governments, have a natural tendency to degeneration; we have long preserved our constitution, let us make some struggles for our language. (2004 [1755]: 43)

This double metaphor of government and language as subject to illness and death is a telling one, for it explains the anxiety that motivated the *Dictionary*. What appears for many interpreters to be

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<sup>112</sup> Planning the *Dictionary*, Johnson focuses not only on fixing the meaning of terms, but he also looks at making sound and symbol stable. 'When the orthography and pronunciation are adjusted, the ETYMOLOGY or DERIVATION is next to be considered, and the words are to be distinguished according to the different classes, whether simple, as *day light*, or compound as *day-light*; whether primitive, as, to *act*, or derivative, as *action*, *actionable*, *active*, *activity*. This will much facilitate the attainment of our language, which now stands in our dictionaries a confused heap of words without dependence, and without relation.' (2004 [1755]: 570)

a mechanical and unassuming project is, for Johnson, a much more serious and profound endeavour.

The *Encyclopédie* is usually described within an image of utopianism, and of progressivism.

Diderot explains the work:

...the purpose of an *encyclopedia* is to collect knowledge disseminated around the globe; to set forth its general system to the men with whom we live, and transmit it to those who will come after us, so that the work of preceding centuries will not become useless to the centuries to come; and so that our offspring, becoming better instructed, will at the same time become more virtuous and happy, and that we should not die without having rendered a service to the human race. ('Encyclopédie', 1755: ¶2)

And yet both projects resist simple categorisation, for they are layered throughout with internal tensions and subtleties. The *Encyclopédie* was a multi-faceted enterprise, which comes across in Diderot's definition of *fixer*. The definition makes a parallel between two senses of the word that illuminates some of the differences between these two 'reasoned dictionaries'. Diderot transposes a seemingly neutral scientific meaning with a socially vivid image:

TO FIX, This is a term relating to movement; there is a literal and a figurative meaning: one *fixes* a body in place, when one makes it immobile; one *fixes* a coquette, when one brings together under one character all that she displays to various people. [my translation]

FIXER, C'est un terme relatif au mouvement; il se prend au simple & au figuré: on *fixe* un corps dans un endroit, quand on l'y rend immobile: on *fixe* une coquette, quand on rassemble sur soi tout ce qu'elle partageoit entre plusieurs personnes. (2004 [1755]: 570)

Diderot's presentation of these literal and figurative senses of this term is unusual and illustrates just one of the tensions the *Encyclopédie* embodies. The *Encyclopédie* is a complex work of knowledge, and not only of lexicography. The depth of explanation that the *Encyclopédie* aimed at—as a 'reasoned and universal dictionary'—renders the process of defining far more than an enumeration of meanings in use (even it is assumed to be possible to establish without ambiguity the potentially endless figurative meanings of a term, 'fixer une coquette', for example, was not a common idiom of the time). Both Johnson's *Dictionary* and the *Encyclopédie* are social-language projects that take setting out the meaning of terms as a moral activity, and not as an apolitical enterprise. But the practical aim, of immobilizing language, is seemingly in contradiction with the moral objective of the two works.

In its attempt to immobilise language, the *Encyclopédie* was intended to stimulate further changes in thinking. Diderot argued that a change in thinking would be stimulated by the interplay of cross-references and the care taken in how to order and represent knowledge. 'If such confirming and refuting references are foreseen well in advance and skilfully prepared, they will give an *encyclopaedia* the character which a good dictionary ought to possess, that of changing the common mode of thinking' ('Encyclopédie', 1755: ¶30). By crafting a dictionary with a sharp awareness of the moral dimensions of the seemingly non-moral act of fixing meaning, this magnum opus could help French society approach a 'good' society in the philosophical sense of

the term. For Johnson, the hope was to take a better form of English (from the past, admitting no ‘living authors’) and preserve it, to stop it from degrading further. In so doing, the civil dimension of English life would be buttressed, warded from the barbarity of illiterate life. In both works, the attempt is self-avowedly to immobilise languages: this is done in order to mobilise something else. The hope of both works was to seize hold of something—language, meaning, knowledge—in order to release something else—the good elements of the social, of society, of social life.

### 3.1 Two new dictionaries

The *Encyclopédie ou dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres* [‘Encyclopaedia or rational dictionary of sciences, arts and crafts, by a society of men of letters’<sup>113</sup>] was the first project of this scale: the first attempt to create a ‘universal dictionary’. It is a thirty-two volume work that contains more than seventy-one thousand articles. The volumes were compiled and published over a span of roughly twenty-five years (1751-1777). Over one hundred and fifty authors, many of whom attained fame in their own right for their philosophical or political writings, contributed articles to the project. The *Encyclopédie* was presented as a multi-volume alphabetical work offering definitions written by experts on a comprehensive list of subjects. The articles varied significantly in length, despite Diderot’s attempts to generate similar form between them. It included a significant number of ‘plates’, illustrations of modern technology and scientific and craft knowledge. Diderot introduced it as excellent for what it was, but openly described it as a work in progress, hoping that it could undergo continuous revision and improvement by further experts.

The *Encyclopédie* was a product of French labour, although the initial project had begun in much humbler form as simply a translation of an earlier English work. (In a short time, the vision of both the publisher and the editors widened as a result of seeing both the potential and the limitations of the original book.)

Conceived initially in 1745 as...a two-volume translation of Ephraim Chambers’ *Cyclopaedia* of 1728, the *Encyclopédie* project had already outstripped all original plans by the time the first volume of articles appeared in 1751. When completed a quarter-century later, this monumental work comprised twenty-eight folio volumes containing 71, 818 articles and 2,885 plates. Five subsequent editions were printed in Switzerland and Italy before 1789; roughly one-half of these 25,000 copies went to readers in France. Judged in terms of its innovative approach to the compilation and transmission of knowledge, the financial and technical means marshalled, the size of its readership (some 4,500 subscribers), and the number of its eventual collaborative (over 150 identified), the *Encyclopédie* project stands as one of the greatest exploits in the history of French culture and modern capitalism. (Brewer, 1993: 13)

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<sup>113</sup> The term ‘raisonné’ is translated as either ‘systematic’ or ‘rational’ by scholars. Given the emphasis on the constructive role of ‘reason’ both for society and throughout the encyclopaedic project in key articles (especially the article ‘Encyclopédie’), ‘rational’ is used here.

And yet, even as such—‘one of the greatest exploits...of French culture and modern capitalism’—we have naught to offer in terms of sociological examinations of this work. Diderot was commissioned early as an editor, and after some years of collaboration with d’Alembert, Diderot continued as the only editor of the enormous project.

Johnson’s *Dictionary*, as it is commonly referred to, was a time-consuming collaborative project. As suggested by its name, it was undertaken as the effort of one main individual that employed a number of assistants (amanuenses). Conceived in the 1730s (actually commissioned by bookseller Robert Dodsley), it was begun in 1746 and the final edition was published in 1773. It was published as ‘two huge folio volumes’ in 1755 (Reddick, 1990: 2). It differs from the works that preceded it as it offers an attempt at a comprehensive list of the words of English. The preceding dictionaries were largely ‘hard-word’ books, books filled with obscure, scholarly words. There were also translating dictionaries.

Johnson’s *Dictionary* included ‘all’ words, or rather ‘all’ the words that English ought to have and left aside those that it ought not have.

Though it was not the most comprehensive dictionary, it was the most faithful record of the language people used. Most dictionaries paid scant attention to everyday words, and instead swelled their word-lists with thousands of so-called inhorn terms—mostly Latin or Greek words with English suffixes that dictionary makers invented. Johnson put more energy than any of his predecessors into the common words, the ones that appeared in the works of the best English writers. (Lynch, 2004: 1-2)

The words were presented alphabetically with meanings listed and, innovatively, examples were given from literature. Johnson’s *Dictionary* was a lexicographical book, and was seen as significant for this reason, when it was published. It was also seen as a ‘matter of national pride and a defence, a symbol of British individualism and strength...’ because of Johnson’s ‘bold effort to produce single-handedly the first English dictionary on the scale of the impressive lexicons of the French and Italian academies—a work which was the first to incorporate thousands of quotations from English writers as illustrative authorities’ (Reddick, 1990: 1). Johnson’s work, as ‘the dictionary’ of English, has been seriously challenged only by Webster’s American dictionary and much later (150 years) by the OED. Hitchings goes as far as to say that ‘the authority of Johnson’s work has coloured every dictionary of English that has since been compiled’, that it enjoyed ‘totemic status’ (2005: 2). It set the method of how to fix language, a method that has lingered in spectral form with different goals in the OED, as is explored in the next chapter.

### 3.1.1 Darlings of their times

In contrast to the works of the preceding chapter, the *Encyclopédie* and the *Dictionary* have not been relegated to the forgotten back shelves of a few libraries. Both projects wield sizeable fields of discussion and debate. Similarly, the main editors have spawned voluminous literatures,



dedicated journals and complex lines of debate. Unlike Wilkins, Dalgarno or Bulwer, as individuals, both Diderot and Johnson have been taken as hugely important figures in intellectual history of their nations and have generated massive literatures.<sup>114</sup> In English scholarship, Diderot has been an important figure as a *philosophe* and, more lately, as a polymath. Scholars critically interrogate his writings on a wide variety of subjects, while he has continuously been of interest solely for his work on the *Encyclopédie*. Johnson is a similarly popular subject of study as the leading eighteenth-century public intellectual and for his breadth of writings.

The *Encyclopédie* has been understood and assessed as: an encyclopaedia; a political manifesto; a miscellany of confused philosophical ideas (especially embodying tensions between rationalism contra empiricism); an emblem symbolizing a shift towards craft and artisan trade; a scientific manual; a literary object; a way of opposing the *Ancien régime*; a vehicle for undermining Catholicism (specifically Jesuits); an object with a unique position in the history of publishing; and a supplementary work for deepening interpretations of individual authors. Johnson's *Dictionary* has been scrutinised as: 'the first English dictionary' full stop; a new step in English philology; an entertaining work with witty inside jokes<sup>115</sup>; a labour of love from the century's greatest English man of letters; and the first English attempt to offer a systematic dictionary both in format and substance. Detailed scholarship has been carried out on the two works in relation to the entries' substance (the *Encyclopédie*) or in terms of their sources (the *Dictionary*), in relation to a variety of specific topics (such as the views that emerge of specific groups of people, for example women, the low or high born, religious groups, national groups, etc.), the philosophical positions of the editors, or the political views of the editors. The *Encyclopédie* has been associated with political dimensions almost to the exclusion of other topics. In contrast, the *Dictionary* has been connected with economic elements where scholars have ventured beyond author-centred inquiries into its origins.

The *Encyclopédie* has been called the 'bible of the Enlightenment' and the 'manual of the French Revolution', but both of these sorts of general statements are vague. Both projects have

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<sup>114</sup> Johnson scholarship is summarised in Greene's review (1996). For Diderot scholarship, Clark-Evans (1992) gives a useful overview.

<sup>115</sup> Lynch, editor of the abridged edition of the *Dictionary*, published a slimmer volume *Samuel Johnson's Insults* drawn from entries in the work. It is worth noting the fame that the definition given to oats has attained. The British Library offers a scan of the relevant page with the following description: 'Here Johnson gives a very unusual definition for the word *oats*: 'a grain, which in England is generally given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people.' The description reveals his low opinion of the Scots.' Others argue that it was tongue-in-cheek, on account of the fact most or all of his amanuenses were Scottish. Similarly, the definition for: 'patron' as "Commonly a wretch who supports with insolence, and is paid with flattery". His bitterness was the product of a row with the fourth Earl of Chesterfield, who had agreed to be the patron of the dictionary but then failed to produce financial backing, giving Johnson a measly £10.' BBC Magazine, 30 March 2005.

been understood as hugely significant within a broader societal change. The *Encyclopédie* is seen as the central work symbolizing, if not motivating, the Enlightenment. A number of contributing authors have also linked the French Revolution in much the same way. Rosenfeld argues that the *Encyclopédie* is seen as the culmination of a broad tide of oppositional sentiment and agitation that characterised the Enlightenment and contributed to the French Revolution:

...new intellectual forces appeared which undermined the spiritual and moral authority of the French state. In their battle against superstition and intolerance, and by their call for a rational exercise of power, the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment challenged the assumptions of absolutism and condemned the brutality of autocratic rule...No one in the eighteenth century promoted that cause more vigorously than Diderot. (Rosenfeld, 1992: ix-x)

Brewer, however, challenges the view that there is a direct and uncomplicated relationship between the Enlightenment and the *Encyclopédie*. He argues the work must be seen as an assemblage of contradictory views, uneven in their coverage and disparate in their origins. The role of ‘order’, though, is not insignificant for holding together this mass of dissimilar elements.

By no means though does [the *Encyclopédie*] undermine the concept of order, in either a political, economic, or epistemological sense. Consequently, one should be wary of viewing the *Encyclopédie* as reflecting a “progressive” Enlightenment, a “liberal” and liberating approach to order understood in a negative, restrictive way. In this multivoiced “Tower of Babel” as Voltaire called it, certain articles break with existing principles, values and institutions, while others inflexibly affirm the *status quo*. The *Encyclopédie* is hardly revolutionary, at least not in a narrowly political sense of the term. (Brewer, 1993: 17)

In some ways, the broad brush image of a time and culture as Rosenfeld presents it is useful. The *Encyclopédie* was beset by problems of censorship on account of its ‘revolutionary’ dimensions. In other respects, relying on too broad a vision of the *Encyclopédie* presents problems. Brewer continues:

...[the *Encyclopédie*] exemplifies a textual experimentation with representing knowledge and which involves a kind of discursive politics. This experimentation clearly helped the Enlighteners consolidate their own adversarial position as intellectual and social reformers. (ibid.)

Brewer’s approach, which brings forth the oppositional quality, or ‘adversarial position’ of a number of the important *Encyclopédie* contributors and crucially, of the editors, is a useful starting point in an analysis that would otherwise either drown under a sea of generalisations, or lose touch with the multifaceted character of a project as complex as the *Encyclopédie*. Brewer writes that it was a project to bring order to knowledge, to ‘fix’ language and knowledge, for broader social benefit. Its success, in so doing, and its relationship to the French revolution are questions outside the scope of this analysis. The methods used by Diderot, toward the end of fixing language and thus of mapping knowledge are the topics addressed in this chapter to the end of exploring what sort of a social-language project it was, and the type of folk sociology of language that it embodies.

The question of ‘why Johnson?’ rather than ‘why the *Dictionary*?’ remains one that grips scholars of Johnson’s *Dictionary* even now, after it has been debated for nearly two centuries. Johnson was a ‘character’ as Hitchings describes, ‘the affection for Johnson stems from a peculiarly

English or Anglophile fondness for anyone who can be thought of as a ‘character’ (2005: 5). Johnson was a man with tics and awkwardnesses, his character was larger than life or so it became through the efforts of his biographers, not least his friend, James Boswell (1999 [1791]). Boswell left a legacy of quotes (the veracity of many of these is questionable) and witticisms with which to pepper dinner conversations. Hitchings’ colourful book on the *Dictionary*, describes how we ‘associate Johnson with carousing, with the vigorous talk of the Club and the coffee house, and with sexual unhappiness...he talked, in his own phrase, ‘for victory’, battering his combatants with learning, lancing them with finely judged critique...we enjoy his stout good humour, his warm intelligence, his robust humanity; and we are morbidly intrigued by the long shadows of his melancholy’ (2005: 5). Reddick, in his painstaking work *The Making of Johnson’s Dictionary*, begins the analysis: why Johnson, and not another author? In attempting to answer this, Reddick points to contextual factors, as do other contemporary scholars.<sup>116</sup>

In contrast to the political and intellectual characterisation of the *Encyclopédie* within the Enlightenment, the *Dictionary* has been seen as part of the advancement of several economic trends in England. Hitchings describes the ‘society of this period as lustily commercial’ (2005: 1) and two specific trends are seen to interact in producing the *Dictionary*. These are the growth of a publishing trade alongside the growth of a reading middle class (Hitchings, 2005: 28, 132). These two trends combine to create the fact that the *Dictionary* was a commissioned work.<sup>117</sup> It is seen as significant for historians that there was the emergence of a specific book-buyers’ market and there were profits to be made from taking on such a large gamble (Reddick, 1996: 13).<sup>118</sup> While these literatures

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<sup>116</sup> ‘Why did they agree to contract with the relatively unknown Johnson to undertake the work? He would seem to have been an unlikely choice. The answer to this question involves a fortunate confluence of five factors: (1) an English dictionary of this scope was indeed perceived by literate English men and women to be needed; (2) the commercial potential of such an undertaking was recognized by a group of important London booksellers; (3) Johnson was in need of a large project to establish a wider reputation and to secure a steady income for a period of time in order to support himself and his wife; (4) he possessed the ability and temperament for such an undertaking; and (5) he had a friend in Robert Dodsley, who was well acquainted with his work and abilities, and who was also very influential in the bookselling trade.’ (Reddick, 1996: 13)

<sup>117</sup> Seemingly this lends credence to economic explanations of what the *Dictionary* is. Since the *Encyclopédie* was similarly a commissioned work, this is not a wholly persuasive argument, even though analyses of the *Encyclopédie* usually start from the question of whether or not it was a manual for the French Revolution. In terms of the *Dictionary*, there was no equivalent political revolution, so no such teleological explanations are near at hand.

<sup>118</sup> ‘In eighteenth-century London, it was usually the booksellers, rather than the author or the printer, who stood to lose or gain significantly by the publication of a new work. [Note 8: The term “bookseller” in reference to eighteenth-century book production, of course, means something more like the modern day term “publisher” than a retailer of books. A bookseller or booksellers generally bought the publishing rights from an author, thus assuming both the opportunity for profit and the risk of loss]. For a project such as a huge English dictionary, requiring a considerable capital outlay, the potential of significant loss or gain was particularly great.’ (Reddick, 1996: 13)

touch on the social elements of the projects more than can be said of the literatures surrounding the seventeenth-century projects of Chapter Two, contextual discussions do not directly address the issue of how these social-language projects are analytically possible, nor what they were intended to do, and by what methods. These latter questions are salient for a sociology that struggles to bring language to the front of its investigations as they allow us to better comprehend pictures of language in which the social is irreducible.

One of the most obvious, illuminating and yet overlooked dimensions, is that both of them are a specific kind of dictionary. Importantly they are products of what Johnson calls ‘critical’ and Diderot describes as ‘reasoned and universal’ lexicography. The *Encyclopédie* has been received by most scholars as an encyclopaedia in the contemporary understanding of the word and by very few as a dictionary. Admittedly, the *Encyclopédie* appears to be an encyclopaedia as we have come to expect. It had brief, but comprehensive articles for each of its entries, complete with illustrations, and in some cases cross-references. It was created through the understanding that knowledge and language could not be dissociated in any meaningful way. Few students of the work have paid mind to the second part of the title ‘a reasoned and analytical dictionary’. There is some literature evaluating its qualities as a knowledge-language project, but no substantial counterpart that looks at it as a social-language project. Johnson’s *Dictionary* has been assessed by the standards of modern lexicography, which hold that language ought to be recorded as it is used, but it ought not be modified. There is a little debate about the role of prescriptivism in Johnson’s period and the *Dictionary*, and the consensus is that Johnson attempted (and mostly succeeded as well as anyone could under the same circumstances) to set down English as it was used.<sup>119</sup> This debate misses the term ‘critical’ that he prefaced his description of lexicography with. The *Dictionary* was a work of critical lexicography not only in its method for handling language, but crucially in the goal that it was intended to meet: to set out English in its best form, and thus do a service to English society.

The *Encyclopédie* was not the first collective project that was concerned with language reform in France. The French court supported six separate ‘Academies’ which were founded in the mid- to late-seventeenth-century. Of these prestigious specialist societies,<sup>120</sup> one—the *Académie Française*—had already committed itself to purifying the French language, an aim that was made

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<sup>119</sup> Mitchell outlines one reading of what was meant by a prescriptive lexicographer. ‘According to Johnson, it was the responsibility of lexicographers to record anomalies so that undesirable language habits were not perpetuated and reinforced. He states, ‘every language has likewise its improprieties and absurdities, which it is the duty of the lexicographer to correct or proscribe’ (Plan 1747).’ (Mitchell, 2005: 210)

<sup>120</sup> In order of age, these organizations are the: Académie française (1635); Académie de peinture et de sculpture (1648); Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres (1663); Académie des sciences (1666); Académie de musique (1669); and the Académie d’architecture (1671).

manifest in its *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (1694). The *Encyclopédie* both relied upon and distinguished itself from this *Dictionnaire*. It distinguished itself explicitly from the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*. More importantly, it distinguished itself implicitly from another contemporary dictionary. Leca-Tsiomis subtly investigates how Diderot's editorial and authorial contributions to the *Encyclopédie* were carried out as part of a critical reply to the Jesuit text *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*. This work figures more intensively into the fabric of the *Encyclopédie*, in a variety of ways. 'Leca-Tsiomis unearths the extensive [subterranean dialogue] “*dialogue souterrain*” that Diderot maintained with the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, which provided both a basic nomenclature and [a sort of vast alphabetical catalogue of prejudices, upon which Diderot exercised his own critique] “*une sorte de vaste catalogue alphabétique des préjugés, sur lesquels s'exerça la critique de Diderot*” (387)' writes Eick (2001: 460). He continues '[t]he most comprehensive universal dictionary in any language by the mid-eighteenth century, the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* was also the *Encyclopédie's* chief competitor both commercially and ideologically' (Eick, 2001: 460).<sup>121</sup> Diderot reacted against not only the substance of Church teaching, but also its form (as is discussed below in section 3.5.1 on authority). Brewer also brings the polemical relationship between the two texts forward:

In the area of religion, for instance, the encyclopedists' efforts to change opinions and received ideas is seen in the borrowings Diderot made from the Jesuits' own reference work, the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*, published between 1704 and 1771. In some borrowings, Diderot contests the religious doctrine and metaphysics that infused articles in the Trévoux dictionary by offering slight but telling recasting of the Jesuits' definitions. In other borrowings, Diderot's definitions refute the grounding of judgement on the transcendental principles of religion or idealist metaphysics, suggesting instead that judgement should be based on the sensing, material body, understood through the philosophical lens of empiricism, sensationalism and materialism. (Brewer, 2011: 50)

Whereas the Academy *Dictionary* provided a treatise of linguistic rationalisation that acted as a foundation upon which the encyclopaedists sought to work towards much higher and broader aims, the Jesuit *Dictionary* offered an ideological foil by which to put forth a different politics and philosophy.

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<sup>121</sup> 'Not coincidentally, it was the Jesuit sponsors of the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* who led the crusade to repress the *Encyclopédie*, probably in hopes of taking it over; Voltaire's tendentious allegation has been corroborated by no less than the eminent Arthur Wilson, Diderot's biographer. Leca-Tsiomis provides blow-by-blow coverage of Diderot's polemic with Father Berthier, editor of the Jesuits' *Mémoires de Trévoux*. Another original aspect of Leca-Tsiomis' study consists in situating the *Encyclopédie* within the context of a tradition of controversy surrounding French lexicography. In 1752-53, Berthier publicly attacked the *Encyclopédie* for threatening religion and plagiarizing recent editions of the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux*. But, as Diderot retorted, questions had surrounded the origins of the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* as well. Indeed, the first edition of *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* in 1704 had pirated the second edition of Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* on a massive scale, provoking outrage on the part of its Huguenot editor, Basnage de Beauval. In Basnage's journal, *Histoire des ouvrages des savans*, Basnage noted that the “authors” of the *Dictionnaire de Trévoux* had modified only the articles concerning religious terms, giving them a Catholic slant.' (Eick, 2001: 460-461)

Hitchings argues for a powerful similarity between these two critical dictionaries relating to the age's 'passion for organization'. He connects this with an emerging sense of national identity and national pride.

The *Dictionary* captures, and to some degree pre-empts, its age's passion for organization. The ambitious ordering of the arts was reflected in a vast range of manuals, taxonomies, and histories – of painting, of poetry, of music, and of the nation. At the same time the desire to 'stage' knowledge – for both entertainment and public benefit – was evident at festivals such as the Shakespeare Jubilee, and in assembly rooms, theatres, lecture halls, or the new institutions such as the British Museum and the Royal Academy. Like the colossal *Encyclopédie* of the Frenchmen Diderot and d'Alembert, which distilled the essence of the Continental Enlightenment, the *Dictionary* was a *machine de guerre*. It would become an instrument of cultural imperialism, and its publication was a defining moment in the realization of what was in the eighteenth century a brand new concept, namely Britishness. (2005: 2)<sup>122</sup>

Johnson's *Dictionary* was a dictionary in a new sense of the word for English speakers. Hitchings points out that Johnson did not entirely cut new cloth, as is often suggested.<sup>123</sup> But the quality of the preceding works, and the fact that the French and Italian national academies had already produced works of lexicographical and, following from this, national pride, cast the dictionaries preceding Johnson's as limited, confused and illogical. The best was said to be Bailey's *Universal Etymological Dictionary*, but while it 'had more uses than limitations...its limitations were unmistakable. The need for a new English dictionary was therefore a matter both of national prestige and philological necessity. As Johnson would later put it, 'languages are the pedigree of nations' (Hitchings, 2005: 50). Johnson did more than inventory and define all English words (or as many as could be managed by one man and his assistants in the eighteenth-century). He illustrated them through literature. In this, Lynch, the editor of the current (partial) edition of the *Dictionary* describes it as 'not just a dictionary, but an encyclopaedia' (2004: 2).

His book also included more than 100,000 quotations from these authors-the first English dictionary to do so. It therefore serves not only as a dictionary but also as an encyclopedia, an anthology of English literature and a dictionary of quotations. (Lynch, 2004: 1-2)

Lynch sees the encyclopaedic aspect in the recovery of English through its history, rather than the sense of alphabetically ordered definitions of all key terms in our stock of common knowledge.

<sup>122</sup> 'The eighteenth century was seized by a rage for order, manifest in a range of new phenomena: the price tag, standardized weights and measures, the proliferation of signposts on public highways, the increased use of account books and calendars. Crafts metamorphosed into technologies. Collectorship thrived as never before.' (Hitchings, 2005: 46) McDermott writes, with strangely similar tones: 'Part of this emerges from the century's *esprit de système*, the rage for order which took the 'boundless chaos' of all areas of learning from natural history to literature and went to work with a systematizing logic, subdividing and categorizing, and producing ordered descriptions ranging from Newton's division of light into the colour spectrum to Linnaeus's taxonomies. Johnson's cataloguing of the Harleian catalogue may be viewed as the quintessential taxonomic act.' (1998: 48-40)

<sup>123</sup> 'We should be clear that there *were* English dictionaries before Johnson. In fact, over the previous 150 years there had been more than twenty. The first dictionaries for English-speakers appeared in the sixteenth century.' (Hitchings, 2005: 48)

Reddick, in a discussion of how the *Dictionary* was received when published, recounts how Adam Smith deliberated over what the *Dictionary* was in actuality, and what it could have been.

Smith understood the fact that Johnson had provided a dictionary which took English lexicography far beyond the earlier hard-word books and technical dictionaries. Yet he criticized Johnson's method of arranging definitions as illogical and confusing and suggested how the work could be improved with additional authorial comments on the correctness of usage. In his examples of alternative entries, Smith suggests that he would have preferred a more encyclopedic approach, with the lexicographer writing brief essays on the meanings and usages of each word. Though believing that a much better dictionary of the language could have been written, Smith concluded by recommending Johnson's work as useful and by far the best available. (Reddick, 1990: 83)

Smith would have preferred something that had a closer resemblance to the *Encyclopédie*. The fluidity and permeability of the terms 'encyclopaedia' and 'dictionary' show that these works are not simply attempts to record language. Hitchings takes up the issue of the fluidity between the two terms:

The wide range of quoted authors and the breadth of material they provide combine, as I have suggested, to make the *Dictionary* more than just a lexicon. The semiotician Umberto Eco has argued, with his customary brio, that dictionaries are 'impoverished encyclopaedias,' and that every dictionary is an encyclopaedia in disguise. His claim is suggestive: dictionaries are fraught with submerged ideas, narratives and histories. Johnson's is no exception. It offers no overarching system of knowledge, but it is a literary anthology, a compendium of quotable nuggets, and a mine of information – some trivial, some considerable – on subjects as diverse as heraldry and hunting, rhetoric and pharmacy, oracles and literary style, the zodiac and magic, law and mathematics, ignorance and politics, the art of conversation and the benefits of reading. (2005: 102)

There are two less provocative arguments than Eco's which assert that dictionaries do more than neutrally offer linguistic information. The first is a claim that dictionaries legislate a specific variant of the language which entrenches what sociolinguists such as Fishman now describe as the 'dominant code' or 'dominant variant'. Many versions of English might co-exist, but it is the 'best English' that gets into dictionaries. The dominant variant becomes a source of power for those who use it. Mitchell argues this to be what was at stake in the emergence of dictionaries as a new type of language project.

As one might expect, the transfer of linguistic authority brought with it the propensity for controversy. The battles were not just about a word change, but about who controls language, what social classes are included, and what groups are excluded. Previously, such grammar books as Lily's had the power to decide those issues. As dictionaries became more influential and were able to reach more people, they began to dominate the linguistic sphere. They could encode values and reflect current language usage. Language is power, and dictionaries could wield that power by standardizing language. (2005: 213)

A second, more technical, argument appears in Sargeant's article, 'Lexicography as a philosophy of language' (2011). Sargeant looks at the ideology inherent in lexicographical projects and argues that it is more than just the legislation of specific meanings or word choice that is involved with the—by necessity—ideological nature of dictionaries. Key roles in this ideological shaping are played by: the truncation of connotations, the sources used, but also importantly the authority

given to any particular dictionary (Sargeant, 2011: 1-2). Mitchell's and Sargeant's insights are helpful in drawing attention to what are typically understood as the 'extra-linguistic' dimensions of these two projects and useful in showing their alignment with each other. Hitchings' insights into how power plays a role with respect to Johnson's *Dictionary* are only slightly closer to the mark.

But making a dictionary is a politically sensitive task. Words are weapons, freighted with ideology. Because language is so important to social identity, debates about language tend to be incendiary: in Britain, concern for the state of the language is usually a covert expression of concern for the state of the nation. Even a map is a means of exercising control: colonists map their new territories in order to personalize them, and Johnson – who likens himself to 'the soldiers of Caesar' – proves, in his own country, a colonist as well as a cartographer. (2005: 131)

Current lexicography works under the rubric of recording language, and thus the encoding of a dominant, standardised and standardizing variant of the language would be working at a deep, collective, ideological level. Johnson wanted to capture what he (but not all) viewed as the best English, consciously attempting to re-introduce particular words, and excluding others. His 'best English' was a literary version used over a century earlier. In this, there is a slight but meaningful shift of emphasis to the idealisation Johnson, individually, had of language. The focus in this chapter is not on the effects the *Encyclopédie* and the *Dictionary* had in entrenching idealised versions of French or English, but rather what roles power and language play in the folk sociologies of language that make up these projects.

Though the element of power and social transformation has been a topic of discussion amongst *Encyclopédie* scholars, it has been so as a result of looking at it primarily through the lens as an encyclopaedia, and not as a dictionary. Dictionaries are thought of in lay understanding as unbiased records of an individual language. As hopefully is demonstrated through the rest of this chapter, they can act as far more than that, both through their intended functions and their structure and organisation. These elements combine in the *Encyclopédie* and the *Dictionary* to produce quite a specific sort of social-language project, in which theories that describe the interdependent roles of man, language, knowledge, and social life are presented and simultaneously unsettled.

### 3.2 Critical aims

The *Encyclopédie* and the *Dictionary* shared the aim to immobilise language. The *Encyclopédie* was concerned to do so such that knowledge could be brought to order. Ordering knowledge could stimulate the reader's critical faculties individually, and more optimistically, help foster a new sharpened understanding more broadly. The objective of the *Dictionary* was to shape language with less overtly grand hopes attached to this. Still, the project was intended to glorify Englishness, to



settle its civility and protect it from slipping into barbarity. The constitution and the dictionary were comrades-in-arms in protecting the emerging modern nation of England.

Johnson's aim appears in two forms, one preceding the creation and publication of the *Dictionary* ('The Plan', 1747) and the other, a modified restatement, presented after the work was finished ('The Preface', 1755). As a project, Johnson calls the *Dictionary* a work of 'critical lexicography' and he writes in the 'Preface':

Having therefore no assistance from general grammar, I applied myself to the perusal of our writers; and noting whatever might be of use to ascertain or illustrate any word or phrase, accumulated in time the materials of a dictionary, which, by degrees, I reduced to method, establishing to myself, in the progress of the work, such rules as experience and analogy suggested to me; experience, which practice and observation were continually increasing; and analogy, which, though in some words obscure, was evident in others. (2004 [1755]: 25)

Diderot and Johnson both began with a critical attitude towards the language theories of their day, rejecting them as too thin, too partial, or too confused. Language theory in the eighteenth-century was largely the grammatical tradition, which both project designers saw as insubstantial. Diderot explains the significance of language to the *Encyclopédie*, and offering an important distinction between language and grammar:

But knowledge of the language is the foundation of all these grand hopes; they will remain uncertain, if the language is not fixed and transmitted to posterity in all its perfection; and this object is the first of those it would behoove the encyclopedists to take seriously to heart. We have realized this too late, and this inadvertence has left its imperfection in our entire work. The language side of it has remained weak (I refer to *language*, and not to *grammar*); and for this reason it should be the principal subject of an article in which its labor is examined impartially, and the means of correcting its defects are sought. ('Encyclopédie', 1755: ¶31)

The language, and not merely grammatical, aims of both are set out in a new methodical and comprehensive way. Diderot's aims for language cannot be untangled from his aims for knowledge. Brewer says that '[b]esides describing their work as a knowledge map or epistemological net, the encyclopedists also viewed it as a storehouse, a capacious text that accumulated all that was useful and valuable to know in order to preserve it over time and transmit it to future generations' (Brewer, 2011: 48).<sup>124</sup>

For Johnson and his contemporaries, according to Hughes, 'prescriptive and proscriptive linguistics attitudes were dominant, in spite of this fatalistic sense of decay and decline which permeated language matters' (Hughes, 1985: 101). For Johnson, the problem was not only that the image of language used was limited and full of inconsistencies, but more significantly that it

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<sup>124</sup> He continues that: 'For the *Encyclopédie* to succeed in such a transmission, the encyclopedists were well aware that language had to be carefully attended to. In the article 'Encyclopédie', for instance, a kind of user's manual that represents the work's most self-reflexive entry, Diderot voices concern that the treatment of language (as opposed to grammar) might be the work's weakest part. One way to strengthen that potential weakness is to employ a language that is accurate.' (Brewer, 2011: 48-49)

lacked the robustness of a more holistic conception of language and its relationship to knowledge.

Johnson's objectives for fixing language are put in eminently pragmatic terms:

The value of a work must be estimated by its use; it is not enough that a dictionary delights the critick, unless, at the same time, it instructs the learner; as it is to little purpose that an engine amuses the philosopher by the subtilty of its mechanism, if it requires so much knowledge in its application as to be of no advantage to the common workman. (2012 [1747]: last accessed Dec.12, 2012)

Both the *Encyclopédie* and the *Dictionary* were intended as a form of praxis. It would be hasty to view these two works as only reference books or word books, in differing ways, they were moral projects. They were meant to offer more than an ornament in a scholars' home, to do more than function as a display of wealth or status. Each was hoped to stabilise language. By holding fast to language, these texts were offerings intended to change or improve both cultural mores and the field of politics. Each bears in it and through it, a picture of social life: the *Encyclopédie* and the *Dictionary* contain a specific portrait of societal relations as they are and as they could be. This image is far more explicit in the *Encyclopédie* than in the *Dictionary*, however that should not obscure that such an image does emerge from the latter. These proto-sociologies differ in important ways from the ones described in Chapter Two. The images of social life that motivated the philosophical and gesture languages of the seventeenth-century were can be thought of as line drawings, etched in black and white. The languages they present are not representations of spoken language as it is enacted. Rather the philosophical and gesture languages are ideal languages, abstracted so much from the discourse of their origin that the colour has seeped out of them. Their origins were the grunts, howls and death rattles of the English Civil War. The languages they offer are abstractions: notation sheets, keys for truth, peace and social harmony. The two critical dictionaries that constitute the focus of this chapter are partial in a different way. They are not comparable so much to line drawings as to rapid painted sketches of a scene. They attempt to capture accurately the rich colours of day, and the relations between elements in a panorama. They detail language as it is spoken, used, lived and read. For Diderot, this critical project is moral and metaphysical as much as it was for Wilkins and Dalgarno. But Diderot's attitude towards the object of his labours is distinctive. The shifting, fluid quality of nature, and man within it, means that attending to one area will render another area of the picture, which we thought we had already attended closely, quite different. The *Encyclopédie* is intended to change our faculty of apprehending as much as to give us knowledge of that which is apprehended.

For Diderot, writes Cassirer in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, "This infinitely changing universe can only be understood by a flexible manner of thinking, a kind of thinking which permits itself to be borne and driven from one flight to the next, which does not rest content with what is present and given, but which rather luxuriates in the abundance of possibilities and wants to explore and test them. By virtue of this fundamental characteristic Diderot becomes one of the very first to divorce himself from the static philosophy of the eighteenth century and to change this philosophy into a truly dynamic view of the world...Nature knows

only diversity and absolute heterogeneity.” Nature is not mechanical but organic, not fixed but continually in the process of formation, and it cannot be perceived apart from the human being who perceives it. (Torrance, 1999: 1124)

Johnson, too, was aware that as language changes, so too do other things human, as was described above where he drew an analogy between languages and governments ageing and dying. Both of these eighteenth-century social-language projects try to immobilise that which they understand as inevitably subject to change. These dictionaries are not meditations: they are much closer to mediations.

### 3.2.1 *Encyclopédie*: ‘To change the common way of thinking...’

Diderot and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie* was explicitly described as a work that was hoped would help future generations. Diderot also stated that it was aimed to ‘change the common way of thinking’ (*Encyclopédie*, 1755: ¶30). By virtue of its scale and its radical form, it was a novel project, something as unprecedented as it was unwieldy. The editors subtitled it an ‘analytical and universal dictionary’ in the effort to capture this uniqueness. These latter of these two qualities expresses its transformative objective, although the former is salient for the discussion in 3.3.1 below on the epistemological foundation of the *Encyclopédie*.

Diderot wrote that “the universe is the infinite work of God. A science is the finite work of the human understanding” (641a). In other words, the old cosmological conception of encyclopedia is dead; its ordering is beyond our conception. We make the order, and the *Encyclopédie* is made to reflect that order. In the same spirit, d’Alembert wrote that it is “above all by its philosophical spirit that we are seeking to make our dictionary distinctive” (III [1753], iv). The editors also stressed that their work covered the entire spectrum of human interests, including language, aesthetics, and the fine arts (it is, in fact, in the treatment of these subjects that the *Encyclopédie* is most innovative).” (Aarsleff, 2003: 637b)

The universal element refers to both the breadth and the type of content that the *Encyclopédie* held. Diderot describes the extensiveness of the knowledge that the *Encyclopédie* would contain as one of its distinguishing features. A basic difference between the *Encyclopédie* and the works of the scholarly societies was that the *Encyclopédie* was intended to cover all branches of knowledge. This breadth of field differs significantly from the particular fields covered by the academies.<sup>125</sup> Since Diderot’s vision of what the ‘universal dictionary’ could contain was so expansive, he wrote that the worst danger for subsequent editions of his *Encyclopédie* would be if they were to be ‘turned over to the despotism of a society or a company of any kind’ (*Encyclopédie*, 1755: ¶54). Not only

<sup>125</sup> Diderot explains this as follows: “The Académie Française would furnish an encyclopedia that only pertains to the language and its usage; the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres, only knowledge relative to profane history, ancient and modern, chronology, geography and literature; the Sorbonne, only theology, sacred history, and superstitions; the Académie des Sciences, only mathematics, natural history, physics, chemistry, medicine, anatomy, etc.; the Académie de Chirurgie only the art of that name; the Académie de Peinture, only painting, engraving, sculpture, design, architecture, etc.; the university only what is understood by humanities, the school of philosophy, jurisprudence, typography, etc.” (*Encyclopédie*, 1755: ¶4)

were the academic societies incapable of producing a universal dictionary because they are concerned with only one object, but if they were to inherit the *Encyclopédie*, they would be sure to ruin it with their partisan interests and debates. In Diderot's words they would suppress essential material, endlessly multiply unimportant material, and infect the work overall with an 'esprit de corps that is ordinarily petty, jealous, and concentrated' (ibid.).

The *Encyclopédie* is not an inventory of knowledge with a more inclusive mandate than the dedicated works of specialist academies would be. Alone this would not meet the epistemological or moral objectives of the *Encyclopédie* editors. The arrangement of such a wide field of knowledge within a language matrix was also vital to it being a universal work.<sup>126</sup> In the 'Encyclopédie' article, Diderot takes special care to explain the encyclopaedic form of knowledge and the philosophical relevance of the project.<sup>127</sup> He spells out in detail the process, obstructions, aims, and limitations of the project and describes how and why language is so vital to the *Encyclopédie* project.<sup>128</sup> He does not address the arrangement of knowledge in that piece, but does so in the 'Prospectus' and the 'Dictionnaire' article. Brewer takes note of how:

...[t]he alphabetical ordering of definitions made the *Encyclopédie* usable, allowing readers to access the knowledge that the work systemised according to the alphabetical code. But the encyclopedists aimed at a much more critical goal. They sought, as Diderot puts it, to ...('change the general way of thinking'). This restructuring of thought aimed to remake and reform a culture's worldview, in part through the work of definition, a semantic struggle that had philosophical, institutional and political dimensions. (Brewer, 2011: 50)

<sup>126</sup> '...the encyclopedists' self-reflexive concern with encyclopedic form and the most effective presentation of knowledge marks a crucial moment in the establishment of Enlightenment critique: the empowerment of language so as to produce critical knowledge. The encyclopedists reject knowledge in and of itself as insufficient to eradicate unreason and bring about the reasoned reordering of values and institutions. Instead they present knowledge as representation, materially and inseparably linked to a process of production that is both linguistic-epistemological (the generation of ideas) and textual-discursive (the writing of the encyclopedic text). The two editors...unhesitatingly characterize their age as "revolutionary," a term that refers in the case of their text to a restructuring of the relation between power and knowledge, exemplified in the encyclopedic representation of knowledge' (Brewer, 1993: 14)

<sup>127</sup> For the publication of the first volume of the *Encyclopédie*, d'Alembert drafted a 'Preliminary Discourse' to introduce the work which became much discussed as it is seen as the crystallization of the *Encyclopédie's* philosophy. This, the 'Prospectus' and the 'Encyclopédie' article can be read in concert to establish what the editors hoped for their project, and the philosophy it was based upon. Rosenfeld describes the relation between these texts: 'These ideas from the article 'Encyclopédie' recapitulate some of the first volume of the themes of d'Alembert's 'Discours préliminaire' to the first volume of the *Encyclopédie*, and indeed the two pieces together form a kind of manifesto of the Enlightenment as a whole.'(1992a: xi)

<sup>128</sup> There are two ways of looking at the role of language in the *Encyclopédie*. One can read it through the lens of linguistics for the (linguistic) theories that rises up through the various interconnected articles. Such a reading is offered by Taska (1973), Dominicy (1985) and Hunt (1938). Taska offers the most well-rounded attempt to decode the 'linguistic theory' of the *Encyclopédie*, as she analyzes the many articles on language (e.g. *adjectif, grammaire, langue*) and makes reference to other writings by the same authors on language (mainly Beauzee and du Marsais). Taska finds that the *Encyclopédie* embodies a linguistic theory that is indebted to the Port-Royal grammarians and is primarily concerned with a universal grammar thought to underlie rational thought (as expressed in rationally organised speech). However, this approach is too narrow in that by attempting to locate the *Encyclopédie* articles within a trajectory of linguistic theory, attention is detracted away from what is a much more robust picture of language than as a mere grammar of thought.

The alphabetical ordering is superimposed onto a system of selection that relies on the ‘System of Human Knowledge’ (discussed below, section 3.3.1) and which is unsettled by cross-references (also discussed below, 3.5.1).

‘Universal’ has another meaning for the *Encyclopédie*, one that relates to common or global knowledge.<sup>129</sup> The dictionary contained information affecting all people that could be accessed, in principle, by all people. The *Encyclopédie* was needed because there was nothing globally accessible that was systematic. In his account of what the *Encyclopédie* compiled, Diderot refers to the need for a collectively derived knowledge. In Diderot’s formulation, a lexicon becomes more than simply a word list: it grows in stature to a storehouse of humanity’s collective knowledge. By employing specialists to define terms, it can hold the best of contemporary knowledge without being too difficult or obscure for a general reader to grasp. The project was impossible without the employment of specialists to tackle each of the different areas of knowledge.<sup>130</sup>

How could a single man, in the short span of his life, manage to comprehend and develop the universal system of nature and art?...What is a lexicon, even executed as well as it can be? A precise collection of the articles to be filled in by an encyclopedic and analytical dictionary.’  
(‘Encyclopédie’, 1755: ¶5)

Diderot’s aim to change the common way of thinking dictates how it developed as a universal dictionary. It was universal in both the expansiveness of knowledge it tried to present, and in the audience to whom it was addressed.

### 3.2.2 Dictionary: ‘The Golden Age’

Johnson did not set out the aims of the *Dictionary* in as grand or eloquent a fashion as Diderot and d’Alembert did with the *Encyclopédie*. There is no equivalent phrase, either within the *Dictionary* or in Johnson’s other published writings, which offers as clear a maxim as ‘changing the common way of thinking’ does. However, there is a connection between the internal fabric of the work and reflexive comments made by Johnson about what it was he was attempting to do with

<sup>129</sup> The translator of the online edition of English translations of the *Encyclopédie*, makes the following clarification about the use of the term ‘universal’ in the *Encyclopédie*’s full title: ‘The term *universal*, often used by Diderot in this article, has been translated *universal*, but in many contexts it does not refer to the world (or still less universe) as a whole, as does the English *universal*, and is best understood as *global* or *general*.’ (Michigan, online: last accessed Dec 30, 2012)

<sup>130</sup> Nevertheless, it was a project dedicated to all. Rosenfeld articulates this: ‘Diderot’s articles ‘Art’ in Volume I and ‘Encyclopédie’ in volume V illustrate his attachment to the mechanical arts as instruments of scientific discovery and the moral improvement of mankind. He assessed the revolutionary impact of technological innovations and calls for greater co-operation between specialists of different disciplines – more interpenetration of the theory and practice of science, and of liberal with mechanical arts – so that knowledge may be invested in applications which promote public welfare. The dissemination of such useful knowledge formed the central objective of the *Encyclopédie*. To make intelligible the successive achievements of extraordinary individuals which constitute ‘the march of the human spirit’ is to benefit the general mass of mankind. It shows the value of criticism and reveals how the authoritative precepts of one age become dead dogma to another, lifting the yoke of precedent and pointing the way towards reason.’(1992a: xi)

the *Dictionary*. He writes that he was setting out English, as it was in ‘wells undefiled’, and the period that these pure springs of the language occurred in coincided with the reign of Elizabeth I. This era offered a ‘golden age’ of the tongue, and thus according to Johnson, the English language was a worthy part of English culture, but it was sliding into a lower state as it moved farther from its peak. The *Dictionary* was intended to capture and freeze the best image of the language.<sup>131</sup>

The chief glory of every people arises from its authours: whether I shall add anything by my own writings to the reputation of *English* literature, must be left to time...if by my assistance foreign nations, and distant ages, gain access to the propagators of knowledge, and understand the teachers of truth; if my labours afford light to the repositories of science, and add celebrity to *Bacon*, to *Hooker*, to *Milton*, and to *Boyle*. (2004 [1755]: 43)

Thus, the English language and English thought had undergone a zenith in the early to mid-sixteenth-century. He writes of his intention to rescue this moment, including those words which have become obsolete. ‘Models of stile’, in other words, the English we should aspire to may contain words fallen into disuse. This is no reason for their exclusion from the *Dictionary*.

Of antiquated or obsolete words, none will be inserted but such as are to be found in authors who wrote since the accession of Elizabeth, from which we date the golden age of our language; and of these many might be omitted, but that the reader may require, with an appearance of reason, that no difficulty should be left unresolved in books which he finds himself invited to read, as confessed and established models of stile. These will be likewise pointed out by some note of exclusion, but not of disgrace. (2004 [1747]: 577)

Including lost words was not neutral lexicography, according to modern views, however it offers insight into what Johnson’s hopes were for his project.<sup>132</sup> Since Elizabethan times, English was slowly degrading.

“Every language,” Johnson writes in the Preface to the Dictionary, “has a time of rudeness antecedent to perfection, as well as of false refinement and declension.”<sup>133</sup> This pair-rise and fall, refinement and declension-suggests a peak, and this linguistic peak occupied many eighteenth-century minds eager to find a rule by which to regulate their language...Johnson describes the principle that has guided his selection of quotations: I have studiously endeavoured to collect examples and authorities from the writers before the restoration, whose works I regard as the Wells of English undefiled, as the pure sources of genuine diction. (sig. CO) Together, these two comments on the history of English in the eighteenth century’s most imposing work on the language provide an opportunity to explore the relationship

<sup>131</sup> ‘But whatever the channels through which these ideas flowed, subsequent eras inherited this concern with linguistic purity; we can hear it clearly in Johnson’s declaration in the last Rambler that he has “laboured to refine our language to grammatical purity, and to clear it from colloquial barbarisms, licentious idioms, and irregular combinations.” And as England began searching for its own canon of classics, it sought to ground its style on that of its best exemplars.’ (Lynch, 2000: 458-459)

<sup>132</sup> DeMaria, currently one of few authoritative *Dictionary* scholars, writes that: ‘The deck was stacked against prescription from the start because Johnson decided in the beginning to quote English authors to show the proper usage of words. Moreover, rather than look for quotations that exemplified the ideal proper usage, Johnson proceeded empirically, for the most part, reading “good” authors and recording how they used the language. Johnson’s was the first English dictionary to quote extensively in order to demonstrate the meanings of words in this way, and he carried the empirical procedure in lexicography much further than any of the academies of the continent had in their dictionaries. Still, Johnson was not radically empirical: he chose those whom he considered the best and most useful authors, and he limited his selections, mainly, to the period from 1588–1745.’ (online: last accessed 30 Dec., 2012)

between the language of Johnson's day and that of what was known then as "the last age," and now as the English Renaissance. (Lynch, 2000: 454)

Johnson's choice of exclusion, of which there were certain classes of words that would either require special notation, or be left out altogether shows how Johnson hoped to offer a regulated, fixed version of English and therefore to protect it and the civility it expressed. Hitchings writes that:

His *Dictionary* postulates standards and ideals that are middle-class (although the term would have been meaningless to him). Proper English is equated with moral rectitude, and 'otherness' is usually given brisk, dismissive treatment. ...Here, and in his definition of 'chaste' as 'not mixed with barbarous phrases', we can see his protectionist instincts and moral conservatism. (2005: 132)

The connection between the English language and English national culture was an important motivating factor in Johnson's work on the *Dictionary*. Hitchings describes how 'Johnson would later put it 'languages are the pedigree of nations', and at this time, Britain's pedigree needed to be advertised' (2005: 50).

### 3.3 Analytical bases

Diderot and Johnson both tried to fix language and subsequently to enrich knowledge for moral reasons. To these ends, they used certain concepts as standard measures. Diderot tried to connect meanings in language to specific orderly parts of language. However he did so with a view of man at the centre of the universe, the observing subject. 'Fixing' is an epistemologically complex idea, because it invokes an abstract entity, man – all and any man – as the variable point through which the vast map of knowledge could be discerned and laid out. Johnson's work is a slightly different case, and one lucid interpreter (Reddick) singles out time as the figure that emerges most strikingly from the *Dictionary*. Time is important in several ways: in the sense of decay, in the sense of an apex of language, and in the sense of the bleakness of the future. For Johnson, 'fixing' means recovery, selection and revision from the power of time which changes, decays and brings death. The seventeenth-century projects revolved around the image of nature, a nature that could be manipulated to proceed towards their idealised languages. The eighteenth-century critical dictionaries employed abstracted ideas of man and time to grapple with the instability and limitlessness of their objects.

#### 3.3.1 Man

Man and the 'figure of the system of human knowledge' are the two interconnected ideas that are absolutely central to the *Encyclopédie* as a social-language project. The 'tree of knowledge' was an image inherited from Bacon that the *Encyclopédie* editors presented as the guiding epistemology of the work. An illustration of the tree appears in the frontispiece, and it is described

in detail in Diderot's 'Prospectus' and d'Alembert's *Discours préliminaire*. Man is embedded within the tree of knowledge image, given a new epistemological position. The tree displays an intermediate level of knowledge. It shows the interrelations between the fruits of human faculties, but it does not structure the substance of the *Encyclopédie*. Brewer (after three decades spent making sense of the *Encyclopédie*) uses the term *mappemonde* (knowledge network) to describe the actual knowledge that the work encompasses.

Diderot gives a poignant description of the position of man in the universe, buried in the middle of the 'Encyclopédie' article.

One consideration above all must not be lost sight of, and that is that if man or the thinking, observing being is banished from the surface of the earth, this moving and sublime spectacle of nature is nothing but a sad and silent scene. The universe is dumb; silence and night overtake it. Everything changes into a vast solitude where unobserved phenomena occur in a manner dark and mute. It is the presence of man that gives interest to the existence of beings; and what could we better have in view in the history of those beings, than to yield to this consideration? Why not introduce man into our opus, as he is placed in the universe? Why not make of him a common center? Is there some point in infinite space from which we could more advantageously originate the immense lines which we propose to extend to all other points? What stirring and agreeable reaction of those beings towards man, and of man toward them, would not result? ('Encyclopédie', 1755: ¶69)

This placement of man has been likened to a 'Copernican revolution'. It is said to be a significant change in the perspective from which knowledge can be obtained and from which moral life is decided and it has been the focus of important commentaries, not least in Foucault's *Order of Things*.<sup>133</sup> Man becomes the point of refraction from which all comprehension unfolds.

In this new position as the centre of observation, the system of human knowledge image becomes a way of anatomizing knowledge.

The general system in question was based on a schematic "tree of knowledge" that Francis Bacon (1561-1626) had proposed a century earlier, which placed man at the center, with philosophy as the 'trunk'. Religion was but one of the branches, on a par with superstition and magic. Knowledge could come only from observation and inductive reasoning, not from revelation or traditional authorities. (Headrick, 2000: 156)

The system, as used by Diderot and d'Alembert, positions the source of knowledge (man), the methods for acquiring knowledge (observation and reason), and the broad divisions of knowledge (derived from man's three faculties: memory, reason and imagination).<sup>134</sup> These divisions flow into

<sup>133</sup> 'Man, in the analytic of finitude, is a strange empirico-transcendental doublet, since he is a being such that knowledge will be attained in him of what renders all knowledge possible . . . For the threshold of our modernity is situated not by the attempt to apply objective methods to the study of man, but rather by the constitution of an empirico-transcendental doublet which was called man.' (1997 [1966]: 318-319)

<sup>134</sup> Diderot writes, in the *Prospectus*, that 'As for the *history of nature applied to different uses*, one could make a branch of civil history of it; for art in general is human industry applied to the productions of Nature by virtue of man's needs or his extravagance. Whichever it is, that application is made in only two ways: either in bringing natural bodies together or in separating them. Man can do something or can do nothing according to the possibility or impossibility of joining or separating natural bodies.' This could have been a statement of method from Wilkins, deriving from the Baconian-Aristotelian view of nature. And yet, for Diderot, it serves no epistemological guide, no movement toward 'mathesis'.



fields, memory becomes history, reason becomes philosophy, and imagination becomes poetry. This new order was not the overt order of the *Encyclopédie*, of course, which was alphabetical. The system of human knowledge served as a criterion for selecting and defending the contents of the work, which were then ordered by the arbitrary alphabetical arrangement.

The order and the substance of the articles were then both supported and undermined by a complex set of interrelations. The *Encyclopédie* included the best knowledge that was available as much as possible on any subject. Articles from the many contributors varied wildly in length and detail, the amount of editorial work required to create similarity in length, form and detail was more than could be hoped of a first (or even second or third edition).<sup>135</sup> In spite of this, the *Encyclopédie* gathered the best of man's collective knowledge at the time, with the intention that once the basis had been laid, it could be collectively improved upon. This massive labour required the observation of countless men and the application of their reason to countless individual problems.

At work in the encyclopedic project, however, was a second and more profound structuring and revaluing of knowledge. As encyclopedia, the work aimed to establish and display the fundamental interconnectedness of all forms of human knowledge. The encyclopedic *mappemonde* or knowledge network was designed to map and thus reflect the order that the encyclopedists believed that thought imprints upon the world, and order that is represented visually in the encyclopedic tableau des *connaissances humaines* or table of human knowledge. In addition, the editors argue that the *Encyclopédie* would generate new orders of knowledge, new linkages between articles, ideas and modes of knowing that would result from the inquisitive and critical use to which the work's readers would put it. A vast reference work stemming from a decades-long collective documentational enterprise, the *Encyclopédie* reflects the most powerful tenet of Enlightenment thought, namely, the belief in the individual's power to understand the world critically, the world as it comes to be grasped, ordered and mastered by the rational mind. (Brewer, 2011: 48)

Brewer's emphasis on the individual draws attention away from a significant issue. While the *Encyclopédie* posited man and his faculties as the centre of the *Encyclopédie*, the work was, as mentioned above, a massive collective endeavour. It is not a celebration of what the individual can know. Man is the epistemological centre to bring forth that knowledge via observation and reason, in opposition to the traditional epistemological foundation of knowledge as given by God through tradition and revelation. Surfacing in the *Encyclopédie* are different linguistic ideas and political views. In a number of cases, these ideas are in stark contradiction with each other because the

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<sup>135</sup> Pannabecker gives a nice illustration of these problems: 'Diderot... recounted how he had explained the same guidelines to two artist-authors: one a wallpaper hanger whose trade Diderot considered simple compared to that of another unnamed artisan employed in one of the most complex industries. The wallpaper hanger submitted ten or twelve plates filled with an enormous number of figures plus three thick folio-size notebooks with minuscule writing. The other artisan submitted a tiny catalog without definitions, figures, or explanations and claimed that his art contained nothing else. Diderot concluded that the second contributor "supposed that either the rest was not unknown, or could not be written" ("Encyclopedie," p. 641).' (1998: 41)

encyclopaedists held widely different positions. The ideas are also in contradiction because the hope of the editor was to stimulate thinking. While the best experts were called to produce definitions, there was no expectation that the ‘best’ final knowledge could be attained so straightforwardly. Dissenting views were tolerated and encouraged in order to foster the critical capacities of the reader and therefore push forward man’s knowledge.

### 3.3.2 Time

In Johnson’s *Dictionary*, the analytical figure that plays the most dominant role, does so in a shadowy fashion. Time is that which, Reddick persuasively argues, most influenced the *Dictionary*’s shape. Johnson has an image of language, as of all things possibly, certainly of all things human (individual or collective) as subject to change through time. It is a largely pessimistic view of time, with decay, illness and death invoked figuratively for language (as much as for governments). But there are also periods of good health, of vigour and of purity, as described earlier in light of the golden age. But the inevitability of decay is what underpins Johnsons’ hopes and fears for the *Dictionary*.

When we see men grow old and die at a certain time one after another, from century to century, we laugh at the elixir that promises to prolong life to a thousand years; and with equal justice may the lexicographer be derided, who being able to produce no example of a nation that has preserved their words and phrases from mutability, shall imagine that his dictionary can embalm his language, and secure it from corruption and decay, that it is in his power to change sublunary nature, or clear the world from folly, vanity, and affectation. (2004 [1755]: 40-1)

Thus, time is an ambivalent image, offering the good of the past and also shadowing the future with decline and death. Reddick writes that there is a nostalgic role towards the past which surfaces specifically in the ‘Preface’ to the *Dictionary*, there ‘Johnson thematizes the elusiveness of the present and its tragic overtones of regret, failure, and death. The Preface is preoccupied with time and time’s passing’ (2010: 207).<sup>136</sup> Johnson intended to both preserve the purity and ascertain the

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<sup>136</sup> ‘Johnson’s method of incorporating illustrative quotations from previous authors into his *Dictionary* creates a ‘space of pastness,’ in which some decontextualized authors can be used by Johnson to argue or represent views in the present. The illustrations quoted in the *Dictionary* are de-historicized; indeed the *Dictionary* itself is not concerned with a history of language or diachronic development. Yet one must be cautious in assessing and using evidence from the quotations. In the case of John Milton, Johnson adjusts and re-replaces Milton’s ideological symbolic value, quoting him in rhetorically, usually self-reflexive ways, and reads him, in part, through the eyes and works of Alexander Pope.’ (Reddick, 2010: 207) He continues: ‘The decision to fill his work with citations from authorities of previous generations, indeed previous centuries, setting the *terminus ante quem* for selection of illustrations considerably more than a generation earlier than the period of compilation, clearly affects the type of dictionary Johnson produces. It was seen by most as a monument to the state of English letters; yet it is past written language that is cited. This characteristic of ‘preteriteness’ or ‘pastness’ is, on the one hand, characteristic of any dictionary, always attempting to capture the moment in the present which, however, remains elusive. In Johnson’s case, it is overtly contradictory to base present usage on examples from the distant past. Such a work as the *Dictionary* collects selectively the past discursive record, becoming ‘monumental’ in the sense of being metonymic

meaning of English. The method by which to immobilize the process of decay, and it was to be found in the writings of the best authors.

Johnson writes in the Preface: ‘When I took the first survey of my undertaking, I found our speech copious without order, and energetick without rules: wherever I turned my view, there was perplexity to be disentangled, and confusion to be regulated; choice was to be made out of boundless variety, without any established principle of selection; adulterations were to be detected, without a settled test of purity; and modes of expression to be rejected or received, without the suffrages of any writers of classical reputation or acknowledged authority.’ (2004 [1755]: 25)

Reddick notes Johnson had not only a nostalgic view of the past, but also an uneasy relationship with his sources for revitalising the past.

He protests, if not too much, at least enough to suggest to us that this inheritance of the English language was both liberating and burdensome. Johnson is the inheritor not only of the language, but also the literary and philological mantle, the matrix of discourse. And it is the managing of this ‘authority’ that seems to be one key to understanding Johnson’s ambivalent relation to past writing in his Dictionary. (2010: 208)

Time is a medium of change: of the blossom of youth and the decay of ageing. It furnishes Johnson with the materials to spread out, rationally and convincingly, English through the past authority. However, the *Dictionary* is offered with hesitations, it is a folly to imagine one could ‘embalm language’. A fact that tempers such a bleak view is that Johnson did not couple language with knowledge in the strident manner that the Encyclopedists did.

I am not yet so lost in lexicography, as to forget that *words are the daughters of earth, and that things are the sons of heaven*. Language is only the instrument of science, and words are but the signs of ideas: I wish, however, that the instrument might be less apt to decay, and that signs might be permanent, like the things which they denote. (2004 [1755]: 28)

Time will reappear in the OED, in respect of how English changes. There, however, it takes a different, organic form that shows Johnson’s understanding of time to be as abstract as Diderot’s conception of man is.

### 3.4 Method

Diderot wrote of ‘changing the common way of thinking’ and of bringing man to the centre of the *Encyclopédie*, ‘as he was in the universe’. The foundation for all these great hopes was by fixing language and his technical methods for doing so involved straightening out the order of words to match ideas and establishing the best radicals. Johnson, in reaching for English at its purest moment, focused on rendering regular those aspects of language now familiar to lexicographers: etymology, phonology, and orthography. But he also used the novel means of selecting words and demonstrations of their meaning from past writings, as well as excluding words that would not be fitting to pure English.

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with memory; yet it claims to be not a historical dictionary but one reflecting the state of the English language (Reddick 1996: passim).’ (Reddick, 2010: 209)

Diderot's methods to immobilise language relate to philosophical questions about meaning and symbolisation, not unlike those that Wilkins and Dalgarno argued about. Diderot's focus on radicals reflects how this innocuous 'linguistic' element is the centre-point of a comprehensive and complex mapping of knowledge. By contrast, Johnson's linguistic criticisms and solutions are broader at the level of discussion and thinner at the level of implementation. He recommends standardisation, in a rational way, of speech, writing, grammar and lexicon. However, Johnson's implementations look like decoration by comparison to Diderot's efforts. 'Philosophy knows only the rules founded on the nature of beings, which is immutable and eternal. The last century furnishes us with examples, it is up to ours to prescribe the rules' ('Encyclopédie', 1755: ¶8).

### 3.4.1 Radicals and inversions

The method of drafting the *Encyclopédie* involved much that became standard lexicography. Word lists needed to be drawn up (or pillaged, as noted above in the debate against the Jesuit dictionary), definitions set out, and contributors found. Once the submissions were received, the work of the editor to smooth them into a similar form began. The article 'Dictionnaire' gives clear instructions as to how the *Encyclopédie* contributors were to present their terms. These instructions show the shaping, truncating and arranging needed to lay out ideas in a similar format. But these are not the elements of fixing language in a metaphysical sense that follow from the use of man as a measure and the system of human knowledge. Those methods involved setting out a form for ideas and their expression that enabled the latter to be most accurately mapped. The making of the *Encyclopédie* involves the exercise of reason, but it needs 'material' standards, which Diderot calls radicals.

Here then are the practical and necessary conditions for the language, without which knowledge is not communicated; to be fixed as much as nature permits us to fix it, and for which it is important to fix it for the principal object of a universal and analytical dictionary. One must possess a *descriptive alphabet*, accompanied by the *meticulous detail of the movements of the speech organs and the change of air in the production of sounds* attached to the elementary letter, and to each syllabic combinations of such characters; first write the word using the customary alphabet, and then using the analytical alphabet, each syllable separated and marked according to quantity; *add the Greek or Latin word that renders the French word, only when it is a radical*, along with the citation of the location where the Greek or Latin synonym becomes superfluous. ('Encyclopédie', 1755: ¶20)

Such a large task will require the efforts of many collaborators, but it is not out of reach. While Diderot does not expand on the way in which a 'descriptive alphabet' might be designed, or on the how to create this clear vocal counter-part, he does spend time on how to handle radicals.

There are two characteristics of language that are essential to improve the organisation of knowledge. One is grammatical: Diderot describes the superiority of one type of word order in

sentences over another. The other is lexical: Diderot is interested in how to make words more rational. The lexical dimension of language involves finding the correct word to attach to an idea. The question of how to best define terms is so important to the project that Diderot gives extensive instructions to both his current authors and future editors of the *Encyclopédie*.

The grammatical characteristic that concerned Diderot was the idea of ‘inversion’ which refers to the order which things and their qualities are placed in sentences. One example is whether adjectives precede or follow what Diderot calls substantives. In French, he notes, the order is correct, substantives appear first and are followed by adjectives. Latin, ancient Greek and other languages suffer from ‘inversions’ by placing things in an illogical order in speech. ‘The white bonnet’ is not how we apprehend the world, rather ‘*le bonnet blanc*’ is. Diderot sees no tension between our sensory perception of things and our rational understanding of them. We take in the world in an orderly way. However, our language does not follow perfectly from our rational apprehension of thing. The relationship between the rational character of our understanding, and the more or less rational expression of that understanding is the problem that concerns Diderot. It appears that French offers a more rational form of expression as an accident of history. Diderot explains how:

It follows that, since the communication of thought is the principal object of a language, French is of all languages the best organised, the most precise, and the most excellent, for it retains less than any other the negligence, or what I may call the lispings, of the childhood of the race: in other words, by having no inversions we have gained in clearness and precision, which are essential qualities in writing; but on the other hand we have lost in warmth, in energy, and in eloquence. (1916 [1751]: 191)<sup>137</sup>

It is possible for languages to arrive at more rational forms on their own (as French has done) however it is also possible for humanity to form its language. The *Académie Française* has assisted in purifying French grammar of inversions. Diderot refers to this when he discusses how French is ‘made’ by contrast to English.<sup>138</sup> As a result, French is better suited to science than English. For

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<sup>137</sup> Diderot continues: ‘I may add that the orderly and didactic movement of our language makes it peculiarly suitable for science; but the Latin, Italian, and English languages, which allow of inversion, are more suited for literature. We can express the intellect better than any other nation, and common sense will choose French for its utterances; but imagination and the passions will prefer the ancient tongues, and that of our neighbours, to ours. French should be the language of society and of the schools of philosophy; Greek, Latin, and English, the language of our lecture-halls, pulpits, and theatres; but if truth return to earth, I believe French would be her chosen speech, while Greek, Latin and other tongues will be the language of fables and falsehoods. French is the language for teaching, enlightening, and convincing; Greek, Latin, Italian and English for persuading, stirring the passions, and hoodwinking; talk Greek or Latin or Italian to the multitude, but talk French to the wise.’ (1916 [1751]: 191)

<sup>138</sup> ‘We do not yet know, it seems to me, to what extent a language is a rigorous and faithful image of the exercise of reason. What prodigious superiority one nation acquires over another, especially in the abstract sciences and the fine arts, from this single difference! And how far the English are still behind us, on the sole consideration that our language is made, and that they are not yet thinking about fashioning theirs! Precision in the exact sciences, taste in the fine arts, and consequently immortality in works in that genre, depend on the perfection of the idiom.’ (‘Encyclopédie’, 1755: ¶15)

Diderot, it did not follow from the inclusive vision of a ‘universal dictionary’ or the emphasis on ‘humanity’ as a whole that all languages are equally amenable to ideal expression and consequently able to facilitate the improvement of the species.<sup>139</sup>

The lexical solution for how to ‘fix’ the names of ideas relies on first identifying the radical (i.e. separating it from associated ideas)<sup>140</sup> and then finding a common measure that will not change. This common measure is to select the radical from a ‘dead’—and hence unchanging—language.

Next let us consider the manner of fixing the notion of these radicals: it seems to me that there is but one means, and still it is not as perfect as one would wish; not that it leaves ambiguity in those cases where it is applicable, but in that there can be cases to which it cannot be applied, however skilfully one goes about it. This means is to relate a living language to a dead one: there is but one dead language which can be an exact, invariable, and *common measure for all men now living or who shall live*, among those they speak and will speak. As that idiom exists only in authors, it no longer changes; and the effect of that characteristic is that its application is always the same, and always equally known. (‘Encyclopédie’, 1755: ¶14, italics added)

He states that Greek is preferable to Latin because not only is Greek language more expansive, but it is superior in terms of the philosophical and scientific ideas that it can express. Radicals are the core idea that a word describes, and in order to render language immobile, Diderot argues that these root terms need to be identified and organised properly.

The *Encyclopédie* editors made good their aim to fix language and knowledge by offering clear guidance to contributors for the presentation of terms, by systematizing the mainstay of language (radicals) and by showing how to form these into not merely grammatically correct expressions, but logical and accurate expressions. The combination of these efforts yielded the knowledge system of the *Encyclopédie*. Censorship and the cross-references, however, destabilised it.

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<sup>139</sup> ‘Consequently, language offers Diderot a yardstick for measuring the degree of progress, philosophical as well as technical, that past civilisations have attained. Looking forward, what this view of language means, and what the encyclopedists grapple with, is that temporal and historical change permeates language. New words will be coined to refer to new discoveries, techniques and ideas. Thus they fear that linguistic flux, the very historicity of language, might well render the *Encyclopédie* incomprehensible to future generations. Here, as in so many areas of eighteenth-century intellectual enquiry, time enters the equation, creating a situation the encyclopedists will seek to resolve and indeed turn to their advantage.’ (Brewer, 2011: 50-51)

<sup>140</sup> ‘First, those who collaborate on this opus must oblige themselves to define everything, without exception. Once that is done, the editor will only have to separate the terms when the same word will be taken for a type in one definition, and for a difference in another: it is evident that the necessity of this double usage constitutes the vicious circle, and is the limit of definitions. When all the words have been repertoried, it will be found by examination that of the two terms which are defined by each other, it is sometimes the more general, and sometimes the less general, which is type or difference; and it is evident that it is the more general one that should be considered one of the grammatical roots. Whence it follows that the number of grammatical roots will be precisely half the number of terms repertoried; for of two definitions of a word, one must be admitted as good and legitimate; in order to show that the other is a vicious circle.’ (‘Encyclopédie’, 1755: ¶14)

### 3.4.2 Inclusion and exclusion

Johnson's *Dictionary* merged two overarching methods: word choice and illustration. Within these two broad tactics were sets of procedures that emerged through the practice of making the *Dictionary*. Johnson aimed to present the words as logically and clearly as possible, and then to offer examples of their best usage from literature. Even before the question arises of what form to put the entries in, a deeper issue of what entries to put in comes out. Stated otherwise, Johnson faced the issue of how to create the word list for the book. The way that Johnson handled this problem has been one of the reasons that it has retained its reputation as a novel enterprise, carried off so well. It was an authentic collation of English, as it was used, including common words (those difficult ones to define like and, the, put, will as well as the mundane ones, table, chair and so forth). But Johnson did not actually include all words. Certain classes of words were excluded or included with hesitations, marked off as low words, not worthy of continued use. Other obsolete words were recorded carefully with a view to re-introducing them or at least making the literature where they could be found more accessible. The *Dictionary* is an attempt to fix language by freezing a preferred vocabulary.

This has been the heart of a debate on whether Johnson's work was prescriptive of proscriptive. Some scholars point out that, for the time, the *Dictionary* was comparatively free of the urge to legislate a specific form of the language.<sup>141</sup> In the 'Plan', Johnson defends he is not correcting the language. 'But the chief rule which I propose to follow, is to make no innovation, without reason sufficient to balance the inconvenience of change; and such reasons I do not expect often to find.' ([1747] 2004: 569). In the 'Preface', his position appears to have been confirmed:

Some senses however, there are, which, though not the same, are yet so nearly allied, that they are often confounded. Most men think indistinctly, and therefore cannot speak with exactness; and consequently some examples might be indifferently put to either signification: this uncertainty is not to be imputed to me, who do not form, but register the language; who do not teach men how they should think, but relate how they have hitherto expressed their thoughts. (2004 [1755]: 39)

Nevertheless, Johnson's inclusion and exclusion of words was undoubtedly a way of forming the language according to an idealisation of what it ought to be. And returning to the 'Plan', it seems Johnson sensed from the outset that engaging in a project such as the *Dictionary* implied shaping language. The lexicographer's task is:

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<sup>141</sup> Mitchell, for example, treads a middle ground. 'However, while early grammarians were focused on fixing the English language, eighteenth-century lexicographers like Johnson aimed to slow the changes in language so that future generations would be able to read English. The vernacular had been growing and changing in unpredictable ways to the extent that sixteenth-century language contrasted significantly with that of the eighteenth century. Johnson even states, 'no dictionary of a living tongue ever can be perfect, since while it is hastening to publication, some words are budding, and some falling away' (1755: sig. C2v). However, Johnson's dictionary helped stabilize the changes in language so that future generations would recognize the English language.' (2005: 208-9)

... to distinguish those irregularities that are inherent in our tongue, and perhaps coeval with it, from others which the ignorance or negligence of later writers has produced. Every language has its anomalies which should be tolerated but not increased, but also every language has its improprieties and absurdities, which it is the duty of the lexicographer to correct or proscribe.

(2004 [1755]: 26)

Johnson's lexicographical work consisted of, as he described it, 'the mere drudgery' of drafting the word list, working out etymologies, composing the definitions, and importantly, of discarding words. Johnson's lexicographical work consisted not only of drudgery, of drafting definitions and investigating etymologies. Due to the major role given to literary illustrations of words in the *Dictionary*, the major portion of Johnson's work was actually reading.<sup>142</sup> Hitchings vividly portrays Johnson's engagement with the authorities the work relied upon.<sup>143</sup> The tasks that ensued from reading, and most lent themselves to the proscriptive dimension of the work were word selection and the literary illustrations.

Hitchings sets up the question of where to begin a wholly new enterprise as a dictionary:

How does one compile a dictionary from scratch? Is it a matter of thinking of words, and then of their definitions and the means of illustrating them? Or of finding the illustrations and working back from there? Should you seek out existing resources, in order to cannibalize their juicier parts, or ignore all such precedents, choosing instead to be dispassionate and to begin with the cleanest of clean slates? What kind of words need to be included, and what can safely be left out? Should one incorporate the technical terms of chemistry and engineering, zoology and jurisprudence? Does one really need to define everyday words like 'water' and 'chair', with which readers will presumably be familiar? (Hitchings, 2005: 65)

The question of inclusion was a difficult one that ended up being solved through an emerging working practice. It developed that Johnson kept out various classes of words especially particular foreign words and low words. Johnson commented broadly on how the language was degrading through the incorporation of French terms and the development of more words of cant. Cant, as has been noted by MacIntosh and Hudson, did not refer to only 'low' words in the sense of social class. It refers to the words of a specific social group, be they occupational or other. Cant was one

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<sup>142</sup> Reddick discusses how it was Johnson's failure as a linguist that led to him being a success as a literary interpreter. 'If Johnson had possessed the rigorously systematic mind of the German philologists, or even of Horne Tooke, he might have remained within his system or modified it, to explain and account for English usage. Johnson's mind, however, was of a critical bent: each usage in a particular context suggested a different inference or subtlety of meaning for which he had to account. This is why it can be argued that the first few years of working on the *Dictionary* marked an awakening (or at least a maturation or pushing forward) of Johnson's critical brilliance. As Tooke and Charles Richardson would argue, Johnson really became more interested, in the course of his work, in the literary contextual life and representation of words, than in the systematic study of philology. And this fact is largely responsible for the triumph of Johnson's *Dictionary*, not so much as lexicographical monument, but as a dynamic critical act of engagement with the language. (Reddick, 1990: 54)

<sup>143</sup> The imagery that attaches to Johnson's reading habits is notably visceral: surgical perhaps, but veering towards butchery. He spoke to Boswell of ripping the heart out of a book 'like a Turk'... Boswell records Johnson keeping a volume wrapped up in the tablecloth on his lap while eating – 'to have one entertainment in readiness when he should have finished another'... And he was aware of his crude habits; he once gave Hester Thrale a handsome copy of Demosthenes, explaining that it was 'too fine for a Scholar's talons'. (2005: 72)



form of ‘licentious’ language, these were words too specific to a group to be of good English. MacIntosh’s representation of the different sorts of ‘normative’ labels that Johnson attached to words that he included in the *Dictionary*, is worth reproducing at length.

It is in labels that seem to be ‘normative’ that Johnson is most creative and most unpredictable. In addition to ‘barbarous’ (*wondrous* as adverb), ‘low’ (*ding; barley broth; to set by (door)*), as ‘ludicrous’ (*denice*, which he spells *denuse*) and ‘very low’ (*yellowboy*), he marks some words as ‘bad’ (*fraughtage*), some as ‘familiar’ (*thee*), ‘solemn’ (*thysself*), ‘inelegant’ (*to pleasure*), or ‘not inelegant’ (*salliance*). *Neverso* is a ‘solecism’. Johnson recognizes other forms of ‘cant’ than the argot of thieves: ‘medical cant’ (*nervous*); ‘the cant of the city’ (*plum*); ‘Military cant’ (*Fascine*). Fashionable slang terms are sometimes identified as cant: *frowzy, poachy, fun*. Many, perhaps most of these labels signify something other than just incorrectness; they express a set of attitudes that is compatible with Johnson’s choice of illustrative quotations: literary, cosmopolitan, moralistic, and wary of recent innovations. Nevertheless, Donald Siebert has shown that Johnson was ‘surprisingly receptive to post-Renaissance familiar language’, including slang from the Beggar’s Opera (*brimmer, gull, cully, peel, betty*), fashionable terms (*spark, nitling, fribbler, hipps*), and London language (*bubby, bum, clapt, selling bargains*). (MacIntosh, 1998: 17)<sup>144</sup>

The other group that was kept out of the *Dictionary* were words that drifted into English (lately) from other languages, the worst offenders being French terms.<sup>145</sup> Mitchell notes that Johnson was not alone in the fear that English was being changed by the introduction of words recently entering from French. ‘He argues that patriotism and national identity should be reinforced by having foreigners learn the mother tongue as soon as possible’ (2005: 208-9). By using the golden age of English as a standard, Johnson could act as a gatekeeper, retrieving older terms that added to English and excluding recent entrants and terms too specific to a particular group.

### 3.5 Authority

The idea of authority had very different meanings for the *Encyclopédie* and for the *Dictionary*, but its importance cannot be overstated. It has been touched on in epistemological terms in relation to man and time. However, it played a role in the moral cast of both works. The *Encyclopédie* was revolutionary in its form of knowledge: man would rely on his own critical faculties and not on the knowledge given by tradition, by received authority. Quite by contrast, Johnson was attempting to stimulate the average literate reader by offering them specially selected kernels of knowledge, through the best authorities that English literature could offer. Diderot’s efforts to undermine the system of accepting authorised knowledge involved cat-and-mouse games with the censors, cross-references and his inclusion of craft knowledge. Johnson’s attempt to legislate a

<sup>144</sup> Cf. Hudson (1998)

<sup>145</sup> Johnson shared an anxiousness with grammarians that the English language would change beyond recognition. He may have read how Guy Miege (*English Grammar* 1688) warns both native speakers and foreigners not to incorporate any more foreign words. Miege observes that ‘now the English is come to so great Perfection, now ‘tis grown so very Copious and Significant, by the Accession of the Quintessence and Life of other Tongues, ‘twere to be wished that a Stop were put to this unbounded Way of Naturalizing foreign Words’ (A9).

purser, more moral English and thus help civil society are best exemplified by the changes he made to the fourth edition of the *Dictionary* and the work's spillage (in relation to his choices of authorities).

### 3.5.1 Crafts, censors and cross-references

The inclusion of newly emerging craft knowledge is important for the *Encyclopédie* insofar as it destabilised the authorised 'high' image of knowledge that the Catholic Church put forward. Censorship had a constitutive role in the form and content of the *Encyclopédie*, but not in a way that can be described as positive. To escape the censure of the censors and to undermine received knowledge, the *Encyclopédie* developed a system of cross-references. These three elements combine to create a mobile work, reflecting the transitoriness of the universe as conceived by the *Encyclopédie's* main editors.

The role of crafts in the *Encyclopédie* illuminates whom Diderot intended the work to be read and used by, namely: the common man.<sup>146</sup> Brewer makes a distinction between know-how and knowledge that captures the two forms of understanding that the *Encyclopédie* was trying to nurture. 'It is as if the encyclopedic gaze cuts through their object, just as the surgeon's scalpel cuts through the body in the surgical plates or as sight penetrates machines in the cross-sectional engravings, in order to reassemble those objects in the form of a diagram, that is, a kind of representation that is less concerned with depicting the real than with conveying both know-how and knowledge' (Brewer, 2011: 49).<sup>147</sup> The many plates that were included in the *Encyclopédie* gave a new sort of knowledge, one that was visual and offered an extra-linguistic communication. But these were augmentations of the main terms the plates were meant to illustrate. The inclusion of craft knowledge was one way that knowledge was nudged into a more common and accessible shape and away from the guardianship of the highly literate Church men.

Diderot, for good reasons, saw censorship, especially through the hands of the Church, as a form of oppression. It was unjust for the authors of the work, and for the readers. (Diderot

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<sup>146</sup> Cf. Pannabecker, 1998.

<sup>147</sup> 'In all the articles involving the trades and mechanical arts, Diderot notes, it is the everyday, practical language of the worker and the workshop that must be used, not exclusively the language of the scholar, whose definitions risk remaining abstract, ideal and theoretical, cut off from language in its everyday and practical use. Illustrating this view of language, as editor Diderot left the writing desk while composing numerous technical articles involving the arts and trades, venturing to the workshop to consult with artisans themselves. In the 'Prospectus' to the *Encyclopédie*, Diderot writes:...'('Too much has been written on the sciences; not enough has been written well on most of the liberal arts; almost nothing has been written on the mechanical arts.' Elsewhere, in the article 'Art', Diderot notes that the time-honoured distinction between the liberal and the mechanical arts, based on the division between the work of the mind and that of the hands, has unfortunately resulted in ...('demeaning highly estimable and useful people'.') (Brewer, 2011: 48)

describes the legitimate and illegitimate use of power in his article ‘political authority’, but his views on the abuse of power are perhaps best illustrated by certain events that played a role in the publication of the *Encyclopédie*.) One of the events highlighting questions of power, liberty and knowledge is a private feud that erupted during the final phase of printing the *Encyclopédie*. This feud stemmed from Diderot’s discovery that the printer had been censoring the proofs of the last half of the volumes without Diderot’s awareness. The correspondence surrounding this episode infuriated Diderot, not least because he had already been playing games with censors for years leading up to the compilation of the final volumes (cf. Gordon & Torrey, 1947). Every book that was printed in mid-seventeenth-century France had to undergo editing by official censors. Earlier volumes of the *Encyclopédie* had been linked in public discussion with an attempted assassination of the king, and therefore the later volumes of the work came under intense scrutiny.

There is another reason why control over the dissemination of knowledge was important. The extraordinary value placed on knowledge cannot be disputed – this value is the foundation of the whole enormous, seemingly mad, project of the *Encyclopédie*. Knowledge was not to be kept as an esoteric commodity of a select few. Diderot appeals to the idea of ‘humanity’ in a long and strident passage.

...there are narrow minds, unkind souls, indifferent to the fate of the human race, and so focused on their little society that they see nothing beyond its interests. These men want to be called good citizens; and that is all right with me, provided they allow me to call them *cruel men*. One would think, to hear them, that a well-made *encyclopaedia*, a general history of the arts, should be nothing but a big manuscript carefully locked up in the monarch’s library, and unavailable to any eyes other than his: a book of state, and not of the people. What good is it to divulge a nation’s knowledge, its hidden transactions, its inventions, industry, resources, secrets, arts and all its wisdom! Are these not things it owes in part to its superiority over rival, neighbouring nations? That is what they say; and here is what they could further add. Would it not be preferable, rather than enlightening the foreigner, to shed ignorance on him, and plunge the rest of the world into savagery, the better to rule over it? They fail to notice that they occupy no more than a point on this globe, and will last but an instant; and to this point and this moment they wish to sacrifice the happiness of future centuries and the entire species. They know better than anybody that the average life of an empire is less than two thousand years, and that in less time than that in less time than that, perhaps, the name *French*, that name will last forever in history, will be impossible to find on the surface of the earth. These considerations do not expand their vision; it seems to them the word *humanity* is devoid of meaning. (‘Encyclopédie’, 1755: ¶48)

The censorship system was administered by the Church on behalf of the monarch. The complex system of cross-references subverts the power of both in various ways. There are quite direct articles that similarly unsettle received authority, wherein the content and form of knowledge was governed by tradition and not reason.

One of the ways that Diderot evaded the attention of the official censors was by setting up a cross-reference that satirised what appeared to be a serious article. Diderot describes this function of the cross-references in the ‘Encyclopédie’ article:

There would be much art and a considerable advantage in these latter references. The entire opus would gain from them internal force and unseen utility, the silent effects of which would necessarily be perceptible over time. Whenever a national prejudice commands respect, for example, that article ought to set it out respectfully, and with its whole retinue of plausibility and persuasion; but at the same time it ought to overturn an edifice of muck, dispel a vain pile of dust, by referring to articles in which solid principles form a basis for contrary truths. This means of undeceiving men acts very quickly on good minds, and ineluctably, and without any disagreeable consequence, silently and without scandal, on all minds... ('Encyclopédie', 1755: ¶30)<sup>148</sup>

Diderot writes that 'authority' is either something granted by consent or taken by violence.

No man has by nature been granted the right to command others. Liberty is a gift from heaven, and every member of the same species has a right to enjoy it as soon as he is in possession of reason. If nature has established any *authority*, it is that of paternal power; but paternal power has its limits, and in the state of nature it would end as soon as children were able to look after themselves. All other *authority* originates outside nature. On close examination, it can always be traced back to one of two sources: either the strength and violence of the person who has got hold of it, or the consent of those who have submitted themselves to it, by virtue of a contact, actual or presumed, with the person on whom they have conferred it. (1992a: 6)

The question of authority and power, in this article, is subtle.<sup>149</sup> The legitimate use of power turns on one key question: the liberty of those who are governed. This is what makes consent an issue: as long as rational subjects have their liberty within a political system, and are able to give their consent under free conditions, then the authority of a sovereign individual or group is – although *outside* nature – tolerable. Diderot, an atheist, uses arguments from religion to defend this position. His central argument is that there is only one master to whom all men should submit: God.<sup>150</sup> But

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<sup>148</sup> 'Besides definitions, the cross-referencing system of the *Encyclopédie* also plays a critical role in the encyclopedists programme. Scholars have repeatedly stressed the importance of cross-references, not only for the way they highlight textual and epistemological order, by creating connections between various branches of knowledge but also for the ironic, subversive effects they produce. Numerous cross-references have as their primary function to produce other, less predictable linkages that serve to undercut unity, resist the imposition of closure and monological order, and open up counter-discursive subtexts and the possibility of dialogical critique, notably of received ideas and institutionalised truths. These cross-references represent a more generalised textual practice characterising an intellectual culture of resistance that directed strategies of irony and dissimulation against a social and political order that forcibly repressed those intellectual developments that were perceived as a threat.' (Brewer, 2011: 51)

<sup>149</sup> In the case of authority that is imposed by violence, Diderot asserts that it has no legitimacy 'power acquired by violence is nothing but usurpation and lasts only as long as the person retains greater strength than those who obey...' (1992a: 6-7). By contrast, Diderot does not condemn authority that comes from the consent of the people governed. Diderot states that it, 'necessarily presupposes conditions which makes its exercise legitimate, useful to society, advantageous to the republic, fixing and restraining it within limits' (1992a: 7).

<sup>150</sup> 'It was this profound faith in the reality and value of true morality that inspired the hatred which Diderot professed for false religions, of which Christianity, as embodied in the Catholic Church, was the chief; false, not primarily because they were based upon false premises, although that was true enough, but because they made bad men. "Wherever people believe in God, there is a cult; wherever there is a cult, the natural order of moral duties is reversed, and morality becomes corrupted." It should be possible to have a religion based "upon the primitive and evident notions which are found written upon the hearts of all men." Such a religion, he thought, would have no unbelievers. Such a religion it was the business of philosophy to establish; or rather, 'philosophy,' as Diderot understood it, was such a religion; a religion which would

God and the Church were two different things, and the latter gave much for Diderot to react against in the *Encyclopédie*. The Catholic Church dominated French life and, crucially, had control over the production and dissemination of knowledge. Diderot discusses how the new sort of thinking that the *Encyclopédie* is marked by *does not rest on traditional authority*, but rather that seeks out new truths by the use of reason:

But that which will lend the opus an outdated feel, and cover it with scorn, is above all the revolution that will take place in men's minds, and in the national character. Now that philosophy is rapidly advancing; that it submits all the objects within its jurisdiction to its power; now that its tone is the prevailing one, and we are beginning to shake off the yoke of authority and example to hold to the laws of reason, there exists hardly a single elementary and dogmatic work with which we can be wholly satisfied. ('Encyclopédie', 1755: ¶8)

Reason offers a liberating counterweight to the stifling role of tradition in the pursuit of knowledge for Diderot.<sup>151</sup>

The *Encyclopédie* was an analytical dictionary in the sense of being scientific, and inductive rather than doctrinal and based in revelation (as with the Jesuit knowledge). Diderot explains the *Encyclopédie*, not encyclopaedias as a genre, in the 'Encyclopédie' article. As a genre, there were few and those that were are better called a miscellany. The encyclopaedists wanted to establish a rational form of knowledge and what they refer to as an analytical dictionary.

...I do not believe it is given to a single man to know all that can be known, to make use of all there is, to see all that can be seen, to understand all that is intelligible. Were an analytical dictionary of the sciences and arts nothing more than a methodical combination of their elements, I would still ask whom it behoves to fabricate good elements; whether the elementary exposition of the fundamental principles of a science or an art is the first attempt of a pupil or the masterpiece of a master. ('Encyclopédie', 1755, ¶7)

Analytical refers to the pre-eminence accorded to scientific-philosophical orientation precisely as against old despotic forms of knowledge that were then dominant and flowed from the church and state. The common man with visual knowledge (know-how), the evasions and circuitous way of publishing the work, and the role of cross-references each express a negative conception of authority.

As ordinarily happens in such situations, the deliberate toning down of unorthodox and controversial ideas was made up for by the willingness of the reader to try harder to find

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approve itself, not primarily because it would have no unbelievers, but because it would make good men.' (Becker, 1915: 60)

<sup>151</sup> Where there is an apology for civil authority, in that Diderot claims that the use of power can be a benefit to broader society if it is based in reasoned consent, there is no such apology for the power that the agents of religion wield. Their power is not offered through reasoned consent, but this can only be approached tangentially by Diderot, for example in his article on 'Intolerance'. There Diderot defends religious toleration, but it is likely that he was defending toleration not only in relation to religious practice in everyday life but in terms of freedom of expression. He concludes the article with the following lines: 'If the prince says that the unbeliever is unworthy of living, is it not to be feared that the subject will say that the unbelieving prince is unfit to rule. *Intolerant*, bloodthirsty men, see the consequences of your beliefs and shudder. Men whom I love, whatever be your feelings, it is for you that I have collected these thoughts and which I beseech you to meditate upon. Consider them and you will renounce a heinous system suited neither to uprightness of mind nor goodness of heart.' (2006b: 6)

meaning between the lines. Lough's brief analyses of cited material bring out clearly the expository tactics and stylistic ruses employed by the Encyclopedists to enhance the alertness and reward the complicity of their audience. One of the most frequent and effective methods was, of course, irony. Another was to pretend editorial disapproval of the "dangerous doctrine" taught by some other (as a rule, conveniently dead or foreign) thinker, and thereupon to expound it freely. Similarly, a pro and contra discussion could be made to publicize the scandalous opposite of any accepted belief. Often, gross examples of superstition and fanaticism were ridiculed as manifestations of non-Christian religions, leaving it to the imagination to draw analogies closer to home. Some contributors resorted to equivocal language and even a sort of double-talk that the reader was expected to puzzle out. Or a cross-reference at the bottom of an unobjectionable article might send one to a second article that undid the effect of the first. Asides and digressions, too minor to cause a fuss, were inserted in many out-of-the-way places. If nothing else served, official teachings could be defended so weakly as to inspire more doubt than conviction. But in quite a few instances when the risk of candor seemed worth taking, enlightened ideas were asserted openly, although in a moderate and conciliatory fashion. The Encyclopedists thus drew upon a whole gamut of literary stratagems permitting them to say in reality something very different from what they seemed to be saying, or to say with impunity what they meant to say. (Vartarian, 1973: 308-309)

### 3.5.2 The fourth edition and spillage

Johnson's *Dictionary* was drafted with quite a different—a positive and fecund—idea of authority in mind. Authorities were not figures that stifled thought and freedom. On the contrary, for Johnson, it was in the authorities of the best literature (symbolised by the best political form) that the stimulus for thought and greater moral self-knowledge were to be found. The idea of spillage, in the sense of Johnson's inability to keep to the era he identified as the best, and of how the fourth edition soaked up new moral sources rather than other sources illustrates how literary authority moves into moral authority in the *Dictionary*.

Reading was the initial and terminal parts of the process of making the *Dictionary* and it posed dangers because Johnson was reading on multiple levels. He was reading to find word illustrations, but these were always within a broader context. Johnson read to find morally educative illustrations. And yet he read beyond the fences that demarcated the best English. This is evident from the start of the project.

Dodsley gave Johnson a list of the authors whom Alexander Pope had recommended that a lexicographer consult, and Johnson took up most of them. He declared that Pope would have been pleased with the work, but he left out Pope's friend Bolingbroke and he rejected his recommendation of Hobbes. Both writers, Johnson felt, were impious, and Johnson was determined to quote authors who would teach morality and other useful topics at the same time that they demonstrated the received usage of English words. He said in the Preface to the *Dictionary*: "When first I collected these authorities, I was desirous that every quotation should be useful to some other end than the illustration of a word; I therefore extracted from philosophers principles of science; from historians remarkable facts; from chymists complete processes; from divines striking exhortations; and from poets beautiful descriptions." DeMaria, R. Jr. (online: last accessed 30 Dec., 2012)

His moral goals were sufficiently important that Johnson's authorities no longer exactly matched the period of 'English undefiled', but washed over into contemporary books.

Johnson announced in his Preface that he would select the overwhelming number of his 'authorities' (i.e. illustrations) from works written in a roughly 100-year period, between the time of Sir Phillip Sidney (1554–1586) and the Restoration. These works he calls 'the wells of English undefiled' (Kolb and DeMaria 2005: 95). (He did stray from this chronological boundary often, however: for example, passages from Dryden and Pope are among the most frequently quoted.) (Reddick, 2010: 209)

This aspect of morally educative sources has been investigated in detail by Reddick, who argues that Johnson used theological sources polemically in the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Dictionary*. 'The pious, though for the most part politically neutral, religious presence in the first edition of Johnson's *Dictionary* is politicised in the fourth. If it is true, as De Maria has argued, that "Johnson was unwilling to enlist his book to an internecine ecclesiastical debate," then this was only the case with the original edition, for he clearly altered his intentions when he revised his *Dictionary* in the early 1770s' (1990: 144).<sup>152</sup>

On some levels, there may be a fruitful contrast with the use of cross references in the *Encyclopédie*, however on other levels, it obscures the polyvalent form of the *Encyclopédie*. McDermott argues that Johnson's use of literary authorities was not the heavy-handed moralising that it is sometimes portrayed as, but rather that in the *Dictionary*, Johnson is offering the benefit of his labours for others to enjoy. Readers might be stimulated and educated, but the work is only an aide. It is not a rule-book.

Johnson does impose his own authority on the text, but it is the authority of an instructor, and it is aimed at the common reader; these are not the arbitrary edicts of a linguistic dictator, but the wisdom of a common reader who has become learned by a process of education which he is opening up to others for them to follow. He exposes to common view the passages from his 'authorities' so that we may all, as readers, disagree with our instructor because he provides us with the evidence on which his judgements are based. (1998: 55)

Reading with McDermott, the *Dictionary* does share much with the *Encyclopédie*.

What sort of moral messages was the *Dictionary* intended to offer from literary authorities? Hitchings offers some intriguing coverage of Johnson's political stance, through the entries in the *Dictionary* in a chapter entitled 'Opinionist' which looks at the seepage of Johnson's personal views into his lexicographical project. (Hitchings rightly notes that the *Dictionary* is not a political treatise.)<sup>153</sup> Hudson analysis of Johnson's politics (in his monograph on Johnson's contribution to the emergence of modern England) coheres with the image that Hitchings offers. He argues that Johnson was conservative in a number of significant ways that relate to Johnson's role in the contributing so much to 'constructing the English national identity'. In brief, the salient aspects of Hudson's account of Johnson's political stances were that he did not so much oppose progress or

<sup>152</sup> Cf. chapter 7, Reddick (1990) especially, page 159.

<sup>153</sup> [Note 3] 'The subject of Johnson's politics has provoked considerable debate. This is not the place to enter the fray: while the *Dictionary* contains traces of political opinion, it is hardly a sustained work of political thought. The first place to look for detailed evidence of Johnson's politics is, naturally, in his political writings. The best guide to these is still Donald Greene's *The Politics of Samuel Johnson*.' (Hitchings, 2005: 254)

change as looked for it to be managed (2003: 9-10) and he held a version of individualism that was compatible with needing a ‘vigorously legislating state’ (2003: 6). Thus the way that authority plays a role for the *Dictionary* unfolds from Johnson’s views of how fruitful literary guides can be for stimulating men to greater critical abilities and knowledge.<sup>154</sup>

### 3.6 Conclusion

Where in the *Essay* and *Ars Signorum*, the concern is to represent nature as it occurs—being in its relations with other elements of being—the *Encyclopédie* and *Dictionary* take a different starting point. They are arranged by the arbitrary alphabetic word list. This ‘lexicographical’ shift (this move into the world of dictionaries) is to some degree a ‘lexical’ shift insofar as the presentation of knowledge follows lists of words, rather than complex taxonomies of things. And yet, it is not as simple as this. The *Encyclopédie* is simultaneously a ‘reasoned and universal’ dictionary, as is demonstrated through the cross-references and the complex system of human knowledge that organises the work. The taxonomy that is expressed through the system of human knowledge in the *Encyclopédie* is too much for an individual to map. The cross-references are working on two levels: firstly, to lay out the system of human knowledge; and secondly, to undermine previous representations of knowledge. The *Encyclopédie* holds such a large collection of knowledge that it must be the work of a society of men of letters, not a man of letters. This is a profound difference to Wilkins, in terms of the detail of the knowledge it contains. Both the alphabetical arrangement *and* the form of the definition (‘words begetting more words’ as Bacon wrote) position the *Encyclopédie* as a quite a different type of social-language project than those of the previous chapter. Johnson’s *Dictionary* is a self-confessed work of critical lexicography. It lies somewhere between the word lists that preceded it and Wilkins’ philosophical language. It is a product of discipline over language, the attempt to logically present English comprehensively and authoritatively. Its entries follow a carefully established form and are intended to be exhaustive. They are supported by examples from literary usage. Both the *Encyclopédie* and the *Dictionary* give us a new grasp of knowledge by their ordering of language.

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<sup>154</sup> English culture was at its peak in Elizabethan times, in Johnson’s eyes, as was the language. Harvey, compositor of Johnson’s political writings, explains how the present system of English politics ‘may be properly said to have taken rise with the reign of Queen Elizabeth. This includes: establishment of Protestant religion, which ‘naturally allied us to the reformed state, and made all the popish powers our enemies’, extension of trade (competition with neighbours) settlement of colonies ‘We seem to have snatched them into our hands, upon no very just principles of policy, only because every state, according to a prejudice of long continuance, concludes itself more powerful as its territories become larger’ (Harvey, 1968: 1-2).



Diderot's *Encyclopédie* and Johnson's *Dictionary* are each social-language projects with a double objective. Both clearly express the aim to immobilise language, to freeze the best French, the best English. Each scholar also noted misgivings about actually being able to do such a thing. But their other objective is strange, in that it is about liberation. For the *Encyclopédie*, this is most succinctly captured by the phrase 'to change the common way of thinking'. The fabric of the whole work, a vast collective enterprise by the best specialists of the day was hoped to help improve man's critical abilities and to free society from prejudice and received authority. Johnson's work, while more limited in ambition and scope, was also hoped to bring about the best of the emerging British nation, in literature and science and governance. This is a tension that these two social-language projects share.

One of the most striking factors about the *Encyclopédie* and the *Dictionary* is the way that man and time figure into them. Both of these concepts act simultaneously as organizing devices and as rationales. When the *Encyclopédie* and the *Dictionary* are put next to each other, they seem different in texture. One is self-consciously a knowledge-language project, the other is about language with little reference to the knowledge that may follow. They appear different in objective, one is for the future happiness of humanity and the other is to arrest the decay of human institutions. They look different in scope also. However, when man and time are brought to the fore, and these works are contrasted with those of the seventeenth-century and the nineteenth-century, the *Encyclopédie* and the *Dictionary* bear a close resemblance. The seventeenth-century projects located the source of order in nature, and connected this to the idea of perfect and universal languages. Nature is something that can only be manipulated, but can be investigated through scientific procedures. Man and time, as they figure into the eighteenth-century social-language projects, are detached from the actual universe, from actual events, and conceived abstractly. The substance of the projects is actual knowledge, actual language, unlike the seventeenth-century projects. To grapple with the seeming limitlessness of those fields, the editors of the *Encyclopédie* and Johnson took man and time as standards, in the way we use measuring devices to evaluate all things. In the next set of works, man is replaced by people and time changes to history.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RECORDING A PEOPLE

The social-language projects of the nineteenth-century are difficult to capture with a single phrase. Where ‘compose’ showed the subtleties of two distinct dimensions of the seventeenth-century works, and ‘fix’ was self-referential phrase used by both Diderot and Johnson about their dictionaries, the works of this chapter have no analogous expressions. Instead, multiple terms represent aspects of the projects, but each requires qualifications. The philological and linguistic work of the Grimm brothers and the Oxford English Dictionary are both projects which can be said to record, collect, compile, preserve and capture language. By doing so, these social language projects aim to record a distinctive form of social life, a people, a nation.

In these two scholarly corpuses, ‘the social’ that is of concern is understood as a specific national culture. Both the Grimm brothers and the OED editors saw social life through a lens that coloured it with ideas about life and time. A ‘people’ was thought of like an organism, which underwent developmental transformations. These metamorphoses of growth showed through in the laws, customs and significantly here, the language of the people. The Grimms wanted to preserve the vanishing form of the Germanic people, the *Volk*, by collecting and recording its expression in language. Their conception of language was catholic, ranging from sung sagas to phonemes, the smallest particles of spoken sound. The OED was intended to preserve, ostensibly without shaping, English as a language. In so doing, it was gathering the language of the English, as they were expanding and building across the globe in what they grasped as an era of empire.

#### 4.1 Peoples’ projects: The Grimm writings and the OED

The Grimm brothers have become synonymous with fairy tales in the two centuries since their writings were first printed. However, these two authors produced many books on language that remain less well-known than their collection of ‘children’s and household’ tales (*Kinder- und Hausmärchen*). In the fifty-odd years that the brothers published, they contributed works on runes, law, Latin poetry, legends, and grammar as well as compiling the first half of the significant German dictionary - the *Deutsches Wörterbuch*. The brothers co-authored many of these texts: ‘Children’s and Household Tales’ ‘German Folk-Tales’ (*Sagen*) and the *Wörterbuch*. Aside from their collaborative efforts, each brother wrote significant works as a sole author. Jakob Grimm has gained more fame for his writings, especially amongst linguists for his 4-volume ‘Germanic Grammar’ (*Grammatik*). However, he also drafted ‘On Old German Lyric Song’, a 3-volume work on ‘Teutonic Mythology’ (*Mythologie*), ‘German Legal Antiquities’ (*Rechtsaltertümer*) and ‘History of the German Language’ (*Geschichte*). Wilhelm Grimm engaged in translations, such as ‘Old Danish Heroic Lays, Ballads,

and Folktales’ and ‘Three Old Scottish Songs, in the Original and in Translation’. In addition, he wrote two books ‘On German Runes’ (*Runen*) and ‘The German Heroic Legend’ (*Heldensage*). This does not exhaust the pieces composed by the brothers, either jointly or independently. However, this sketch indicates the volume—and to an extent, the focus—of their research into language. Their work is a social-language project of the most apparent kind.

Scholars debate whether it is appropriate to treat the Grimm brothers as if they were a single writing source. Some scholars argue that there is more to be gained from studying the works of each brother separately. Others stress that since the brothers worked in uniquely close intellectual and physical proximity and they produced so many co-publications, this allows us to treat their corpus of writings as a single body of work. There are many internal differentiations. For example, Jakob Grimm’s *Grammatik* offers a noticeably altered approach to the treatment of grammar than earlier articles he published in the brothers’ short-lived journal ‘Old German Miscellany’ (*Altdutsche Wälder*). And Wilhelm Grimm transformed the stories in the *Hausmärchen* significantly over the seven editions that were published between 1812 and 1857. However, there is enough criss-crossing across the many publications of the Grimm brothers to warrant studying these works as a single body with the proviso that it is conceived as an untidy and exploratory collection. One way that the broad cohesion is illustrated is through the different tactics that the brothers employed to deal with their subject matter. They tried collecting, repairing, interpreting, translating, and analysing elements of language. Throughout these different efforts runs a continuous commentary on the nature of language that returns again and again to some core ideas. These ideas weave together to form several strong unifying threads throughout the brothers’ oeuvre. Two particular threads that unify the Grimms’ body of writings are explored below. One strand is easier to describe than the other, and it is the historical conception of language that the brothers share. This historical orientation is in evidence throughout their researches. The other thread is more difficult to bring to the surface because it appears at the edges of their texts. This thread involves the specific way that the Grimm brothers understand language as an expression of a distinct historical form of social life.<sup>155</sup>

The ‘New English Dictionary’—eventually the ‘Oxford English Dictionary’ familiar to us now as the OED has been likened to Grimm’s *Wörterbuch*.<sup>156</sup> The OED was modelled after the *Wörterbuch* in several significant ways. However, the OED was more than simply an expanded

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<sup>155</sup> Source materials that have been indispensable to this chapter are prefaces, introductions, letters, and lectures because it is in these border texts that the objectives of the Grimms’ project are clarified. These objectives show the relevance of the brothers’ efforts to preserve and present the older culture of the Germanic people to their modern counter-parts.

<sup>156</sup> (1838-1854). Leipzig: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung. It was a thirty-two volume work that was not finished when the brothers died.

English version of the Grimm brothers' historical dictionary. The OED took a more extreme form of what can be understood as an 'historical dictionary': in principle and in practice, the OED is a clear expression of an historical conception of language and also of social life. One of the first editors, Trench, describes the vision that underwrote the OED:

A dictionary is an historical monument, the history of a nation contemplated from one point of view; and wrong ways into which a language has wandered, or been disposed to wander, may be nearly as instructive as the right ones in which it has travelled: as much may be learned, or nearly as much, from its failures as from its successes, from its follies as from its wisdom (1860: 6)<sup>157</sup>

The OED arose out of a programme to follow upon the 'advances of applying philological principles to lexicography' made in Europe, for example the dictionaries of Littré<sup>158</sup> and Grimm. An important paper presented to the Philological Society (entitled 'On some Deficiencies in our English Dictionaries') inaugurated the project. Trench argued that there should be created 'an entirely new Dictionary; no patch upon old garments, but a new garment throughout' (1860: 1). The original title of the OED was the NED – *A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles, Founded mainly on Materials Collected by the Philological Society*. This 'historical' dictionary would replace earlier 'critical' language projects. It would amass an accurate inventory of all the words in English, noting changes in usage and grounded in the objectivity of examples from a vast corpus of English texts. The task of making the OED was onerous and relied on a large corps of volunteer readers, sub-editors and successive editors.

The OED was a project, the first explored here, which has not been 'completed'. As English continues to change, the project has proceeded in the collection of words and examples of their meanings. The editorial process has not stopped, although decision making about the inclusion and exclusion of terms has become increasingly transparent as the project has grown in size and changed in form.<sup>159</sup> The OED has undergone changes in form alongside changes in technological capabilities for handling and representing such a vast quantity of information. The

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<sup>157</sup> The OED project aims, its analytical frame and the methods used to produce it, arise in the papers and proposals standing at the edges of the OED: the marginalia.

<sup>158</sup> *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (1866-1877). Paris: Hachette. This dictionary was composed of thirty parts.

<sup>159</sup> Ogilvie's recent book *Words of the World: A global history of the Oxford English Dictionary* (2012) has caused a flurry of discussion on social and mainstream media, resulting largely from a review in the *Guardian*. The review sensationalised, as Ogilvie puts it, 6 pages of a 240 page work wherein the reviewer claims that Ogilvie looked at the surreptitious exclusions of foreign words by Burchfield, (the OED editor working in the 1970s on the revised edition). Ogilvie has replied that she compared Burchfield's editorial decisions on loanwords to the inclusiveness that she describes the initial OED editors as having towards words entering English from the margins. However, she replies that 'my book's case is precisely the opposite of what found its way into this week's news' (*Guardian*, 30 Nov). 'Some journalists have even suggested that Burchfield did this deleting surreptitiously or covertly, which is a ridiculous claim, and not one I made' (*ibid.*) Ogilvie worked on loanwords at the OED and current OED editors have come to the defence of her monograph, arguing it is a balanced account of the topic indicated by the title.

OED has no potential end: in this regard, it is reminiscent of Borges' infinite hexagonal library of 410 page books (1962). Setting aside the apparent limitlessness of the project, the first edition is the natural cutting off point for exploring the OED as a social-language project. The project officially began with a publishers' contract in 1879 and the first edition publication was completed in 1928, nearly fifty years later.

These two projects are not of the same form. The Grimms tackled records of language on all levels, from ancient sagas to phonological changes. They used oral and written sources to interrogate different forms of language with different immediate research questions. The OED was a huge collective effort to, quite literally, stockpile English words. Once the collection of recorded usages had gained momentum with the reading and gathering public, it generated such a wealth of responses that a special building (the 'Scriptorium') was fitted out with vast rows of pigeon-holes in order to organise the slips of paper citing word uses. The narrow request to note usages yielded an unfathomably large harvest. These social-language projects share a quest to preserve language, and with it, a specific culture, a certain people, an individual historically unique nation.

#### 4.1.1 Princesses and the queen

The publications of the Grimm brothers and the OED are familiar fare for most readers, well beyond the borders of Germany or the United Kingdom. The Grimms are associated with the meteorically popular, and intensively marketed (which came first?), Disney interpretations of a few of the *Hausmärchen* (Cinderella, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty). The OED is taken as *the* dictionary of English, and has an unrivalled authoritative status. Scholars, happily, have moved a little beyond these understandings of the two social-language projects, although the literatures on both are narrower than might be expected. Scholarship on the Grimms has branched out along the lines of their specific publications. They are variously interpreted within the rubrics of linguistics, lexicography and folkloristics. Amongst scholars of language, Jakob Grimm is known for his grammatical work and especially the setting out of 'Grimm's Law' of phonological change. This was considered something of a breakthrough in philology. The final area has been home to a debate relating the *Hausmärchen* to National Socialism and atrocities committed by the Nazis in concentration camps. This debate is not only about how the *Hausmärchen* might have been appropriated for Nazi propaganda. As Naithani recounts, it was that the content of the stories *and*

the attempt to record the specific character of the Germanic *Volk*, were both part of ‘Romantic Nationalism’.<sup>160</sup> This, in turn, lent itself to National Socialism.

Röhrich remembers that “After the Second World War a tidal wave of press against the ‘horrors of the Grimm tales appeared’ . . . [and] “the Anglo-Saxon occupational powers temporarily forbade the printing of any new folktale collection because folktales made the German people cruel; folktales, they claimed, had played a major role in the developments of the methods used in the concentration camps.” Röhrich also knows that “There was also no lack of German authors of the same opinion. For example, Günther Birkenfeld commented that in the light of the Grimm tales, it no longer seemed inconceivable that the German people could commit the cruelties of Belsen and Auschwitz” (Röhrich, *Folktales* 112).’ (Naithani, 2011: 118-119)

Recent folklore scholars have taken a different view, and attempted to show that folktales, can by their nature, be appropriated by the other end of the political spectrum.

Historically the Grimms did indeed succeed in creating a monument in honor of the German cultural heritage by collecting and shaping their tales into an “enchanted forest”, so to speak, that has brought great fame to Germany, and has even transcended Germany. But, perhaps they succeeded more than they would have liked in the creation of a peculiar German monument, for their tales have been the subject of ideological debate drawing ultraconservative scholars, who have used them to promote a racist ideology, and radical philosophers such as Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, and even Antonino Gramsci, who sought to grasp the revolutionary appeal of the tales. (Zipes, 1987: 67)<sup>161</sup>

Questions about the appropriation of the Grimms’ work are not wholly peripheral to an inquiry into what sort of social-language project the Grimm corpus is. This debate focuses on the *Hausmärchen* to the exclusion of the much broader range of language materials the Grimms published on. It is worth returning to this debate once the Grimm’s social-language project as a whole has been explored, as some questions raised by it may have evaporated, only to be replaced with other related questions.

The OED has been received by scholars in three main ways. It has been understood within the framework of lexicography. Scholars try to work out how the OED was brought into

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<sup>160</sup> Naithani writes that it was not just the Grimm brothers, but the whole discipline of folklore studies that were thought to be at fault: ‘...Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm had offered the concept of *Kultur* to rise above the petty political boundaries of early nineteenth-century Germany and see the then nonexistent nation as an entity defined by the *Märchen* of the German-speaking folk. Hermann Bausinger argues that the deep historical connection between Romantic Nationalism and *Volkskunde* shaped the Nazi appropriation of folkloristics in the twentieth century: “I will mention the *national* emphasis. It need not be stressed that this did not just appear in the year 1933. It was part of the beginning of folk research, and it was maintained as an undercurrent during times of international problems, functioning broadly in the public” (13; emphasis in original).’ (2011: 118)

<sup>161</sup> Zipes writes of an abundance of Grimm scholarship, however, it is not as plentiful as he implies. His own bibliography shows this. ‘To the credit of recent literary and historical scholarship, care has been shown about the Grimms themselves, and new approaches have been developed that, I believe, enable us to assess their work from a sharper socio-historical perspective. These approaches are not new, in the sense that they rely on unique and original methods of scholarship, but new in the sense that they have unveiled distortions about the Grimms and their scholarship, and thus provide us with a new sense about the endeavors of the Grimms and the impact of their tales. Since it would be impossible to summarize all the recent approaches to the Grimms, especially when so much new material has appeared to commemorate their 200th birthdays in 1985 and 1986...’ (Zipes, 1987: 67)

being relative to other dictionary projects, as well as evaluating the technical challenges posed by keeping a historical dictionary of the language current. There is a strand of publications (mostly from people connected to the OED, or by popular authors) that has glamourised the history of the OED. There is also a more recent branch of scholarship that locates it within Victorian culture, and tries to read the OED from this culture or to read this culture out of the OED. Willinsky has produced a provocative book positioning the OED as part of a political project of empire building during Queen Victoria's reign.<sup>162</sup> His book makes an interesting counter-point to a number of scholars that argue it was a project of democratisation through language.

#### 4.2 Disappearing, campaigning

Both these projects appear as part of the new 'science of philology'. This refers to historically analysing language broadly understood, as well as studying the changes in words, more narrowly, through etymological or phonological investigations. However, the seeming objectivity of the scientific philological basis of the Grimm brothers' work and the work of the OED should not mask that there is another, perhaps less impartial aim which is to archive, and in so doing, hold onto the specific form of a people. While the Grimm's had a connection to romanticism and the idea that the Germanic sense of the *Volk* was transforming due to the forces of modern industrial urban life, the case of the OED is slightly different. The OED is not looking to find the pure native English of the peasants, so much as to raise the flag of contemporary English by presenting its breadth and depth through the dictionary.

...Willinsky challenges the authority of this imperial dictionary, revealing many of its inherent prejudices and questioning the assumptions of its ongoing revision. "Clearly, the OED is no simple record of the language "as **she** is spoke," Willinsky writes. "It is a selective representation reflecting certain elusive ideas about the nature of the English language and people." (Estival, D. & A. Pennycook, 2011: 327)

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<sup>162</sup> Willinsky analyzes the favored citation records from the three editorial periods of the OED's compilation: the Victorian, imperial first edition; the modern supplement; and the contemporary second edition composed on an electronic database. He reveals shifts in linguistic authority: the original edition relied on English literature and, surprisingly, on translations, reference works, and journalism; the modern editions have shifted emphasis to American sources and periodicals while continuing to neglect women, workers, and other English-speaking countries. Willinsky's dissection of dictionary entries exposes contradictions and ambiguities in the move from citation to definition. He points out that Shakespeare, the most frequently cited authority in the OED, often confounds the dictionary's simple sense of meaning with his wit and artfulness. He shows us how the most famous four-letter words in the language found their way through a belabored editorial process, sweating and grunting, into the supplement to the OED. Willinsky sheds considerable light on how the OED continues to shape the English language through the sometimes idiosyncratic, often biased selection of citations by hired readers and impassioned friends of the language. (Estival, D. & A. Pennycook, 2011: 330)

#### 4.2.1 Saving the *Volk*

The Grimm brothers held a tiered conception of the history of language. Language was seen to progress through stages. They saw three main stages which corresponded to three main forms of social life. The second stage was the one they were fascinated with and tried in myriad ways, to record. This stage was the time of the *Volk*, the people, in a folk Romantic sense.<sup>163</sup>

In 1851, Jakob Grimm gave a lecture to the members of the Academy of Science entitled ‘On the Origin of Language’ (‘Ursprung’). The lecture was a position piece after many years of research. Grimm framed his lecture through reference to a tradition of essays on this topic within the Berlin Academy: a tradition dating back eighty-five years to Johan Peter Süssmilch’s 1766 essay entitled ‘Attempt at a Proof that the First Language Received its Origin not from Man but from the Creator Alone’.<sup>164</sup> A few years later, in 1771, Johann Gottfried Herder won a competition for his essay ‘On the Origin of Language’ in which he countered Süssmilch’s divine origin thesis with an argument that language was singularly the product of human efforts. Grimm draws heavily upon Herder’s essay, but not in order to engage in the debate on the divine or human origin of language. Only a small section of Grimm’s lecture deals with refuting the idea of language as having been divinely created as a whole. Rather, following Herder, Grimm asserts that language must have developed—it must have changed over time. Herder argues against the idea of a divinely created language by asserting that language is a product of reason, and reason—as a necessary faculty of man’s life—is a product of nature (2002:98). In the process of making his argument, Herder offers some linguistic insights that were of special interest to Grimm. Since language was a product of natural human origin, it must have undergone changes within the course of human history. Herder saw the history of language as the history of the development of ‘this creature’s spirit’, describing it as a ‘history of its discoveries’ (2002: 100).<sup>165</sup> Echoing Herder’s earlier essay, Grimm writes in ‘Ursprung’ that language is our ‘inheritance’ or human heritage (1984: 12-13). As well as sharing a vision of language as a historically developing entity, Herder makes some specific points about

<sup>163</sup> The notion of *Volk* comes through most clearly in Herder’s writings. ‘This could go back even further, for it was Herder who coined the term *Volkslied*, which symbolized for him the conjunction of language, nation, and spirit of a people.’ (Naithani, 2011: 118)

<sup>164</sup> *Versuch eines Beweises, daß die erste Sprache ihren Ursprung nicht vom Menschen, sondern allein vom Schöpfer erhalten habe* (transl. M. Benzer).

<sup>165</sup> Herder describes how the ‘first vocabulary was therefore collected from the sounds of the whole world’. In this early stage of language, the ‘thought of the things itself hovered between agent and action’. This is evidence that nouns were the first words, and that verbs arose from nouns. ‘This matter becomes explicable in the context of the steps of development of human sensuality, but not in the context of the logic of the higher spirit’ (2002: 100). Herder goes on to say that ‘all the old, savage languages’ are full of this origin and that ‘in a “*philosophical dictionary of the Easterners*” each stem-word with its family, properly presented and soundly developed, would be a map of the course of the human spirit, a history of its development, and a whole such dictionary would be the most excellent proof of the human soul’s art of invention’ (2002: 101).



how language changed (gender, nouns, poetry) which figure significantly in Grimm's essay.<sup>166</sup> Grimm extends Herder's observations about the historical development of language by discussing in detail several distinct stages of language. In 'Ursprung', Grimm outlines an image of the history of language as passing through three eras. Each period of language is marked by specific grammatical and prosodic characteristics. Each of these periods also designates an epoch of social relations.

The stages of language that Jakob Grimm outlined in his lecture corresponded to different forms of social life. The first stage of social life that coincided with the sensuous and immediate form of language was not of great interest to the brothers, and they wrote little on it. Jakob Grimm mentions only that the earliest language emerged in a time of 'exultant joy for the human spirit' – an early period of 'creation' (1984: 15) – but he says little beyond this except that:

Its thoughts have nothing lasting, enduring. Therefore this earliest language founds yet no monuments of the spirit and fades away like the happy life of those oldest men without trace in history, but countless seeds have fallen into the ground which prepare the other periods. (1984: 20)

Without monuments, scholars would only be able to gather the earliest forms of social life through a process of deduction similarly to the linguistic deduction of the *Grammatik*, or the mythological deductions of *Mythologie*. Neither brother attempted such a study, leaving the first stage of social life (as they would have understood it) shrouded in mystery.

The second stage is a time that the brothers often referred to as the *Vorzeit* [prehistory] period of human history. In the 'Ursprung' lecture, Grimm intimates the sort of social relations that are implied by the second form of language:

The whole language is indeed still sensuously rich, but more powerful in thought. In all that this entails, the flexibility of inflection assures a rapidly spreading supply of animated and regulated expressions. At this time we see language most highly suited to meter and poetry. For these beauty, harmony and exchange of form are essential, indispensable. The Indian and Greek poetry designate for us a peak reached at the right moment in immortal works later unattainable. (1984: 20-21)

However, in many other works, the brothers offer thicker descriptions of the sort of social world that corresponds to the *Vorzeit*. According to the Grimms, the form of life of the *Vorzeit* is expressed in fairy tales, folk tales, animal fables, epics and Medieval songs. Interpreting what sort of social world these shards express shows the time of the *Vorzeit* to be a time of the collective. The Grimms describe it as an era of innocence and even though social relations were often rough and violent, they were also more closely aligned and exhibited a deeper unity than in modern times.

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<sup>166</sup> Herder writes that: 'What is notable in language are two things: the 'poetry and the gender-creation of language' which are 'humanity's interest, and the genitals of speech, so to speak, the means of its reproduction' (2002: 102). Grimm disagrees with Herder on the pre-eminence of nouns in the origins of language, instead arguing that verbs were the original roots of language (1984: 19). The role of gender is important to Grimm because it shows how the original concept language split off into more complex forms.

The fairy tales and folk tales betray common social characteristics across the different regions that they originate from. For example, Wilhelm wrote in the Preface to the second volume of the *Hausmärchen* that:

...oral narratives, which have stood the test of time, have a certain intimacy and inner effectiveness that other things, which may on the surface seem more dazzling, rarely attain. The epic basis of folk poetry resembles the color green as one finds it throughout nature in various shades: each satisfies and soothes without ever becoming tiresome. (2004c: 408-409)

This ‘epic basis’ involves in interweaving of the actual deeds of history with the divine quality of myths. This both drew from the specific locale of a people, and transcended the specific locale by aligning it with supra-local religious conceptions.<sup>167</sup> Religious notions held a universal quality, as is shown in Jakob Grimm’s claims in *Mythologie* that the pre-Christian heathen religion of the Germanic tribes was in the process of naturally returning to monotheism. And yet the local dimension of language was also vital, as it gave people a foundation and a sort of security.

Every time a man journeys out into life he is accompanied by a good angel who has been bestowed upon him in the name of his homeland, and who accompanies him in the guise of an intimate companion. He who does not sense the good fortune that this companion brings him will nevertheless feel a sore loss the minute he crosses the border leading from his fatherland, where the angel will then forsake him. This benevolent companion is none other than the inexhaustible store of tales, legends, and history, all of which coexist and strive to bring us closer to the refreshing and invigorating spirit of earlier ages. (1981a: 1)

Within the folk tales, different character types—archetypes or stereotypes—arise that are expressive of the folk character of nations. Folk tales were more recent variants of ancient epics, but both relate to the specific character of different nations.<sup>168</sup>

Where information about the character of social relations in the earliest stage of the developmental picture of the ‘Ursprung’ essay is sparse, there is almost as little information in the writings of the Grimm brothers on the current modern stage. Jakob Grimm writes of the transition from the one stage to the other, describing it as progressive:

Now since, however, the whole nature of man and consequently his language are indeed understood to be in eternal, irresistible ascent, the law of this second period of language development could not suffice forever, but had to yield to the striving for a still greater freedom of thought. Even the grace and power of completed form seems to place limitations on this freedom...The spirit of language strove to be released from the restraint of such truly overpowering form as it gave way to the influences of the common idiom, which in the alternating fate of peoples rose up again to the surface with new fruition. Against the decline

<sup>167</sup> Wilhelm Grimm continues in the Preface: ‘As for the content, if you look closely, you find that it is not just a web of fantastic whimsy that throws together different colored threads according to this or that caprice or need. To the contrary, you can always identify a reason, a meaning, or a core. In this poetry, thoughts about the divine and spiritual in life are preserved. Ancient beliefs and doctrines are dipped into an epic element that develops with the history of a people and is given shape. But intention and consciousness have not been the agents. Rather, everything has emerged naturally and from the essence of tradition. For that reason there is a natural tendency to explain and clarify what comes from it that is only partially understandable according to what goes on in the present. The more the epic element dominates, the harder it is to see the essential...’ (2004a: 415)

<sup>168</sup> In *Mythologie*, these ‘nations’ are understood as the Germanic tribes: for example the Goths, Franks, Langobards, Merovingians, Westphalians, and the Frisians (1981b: 3).

of Latin since the introduction of Christianity the Romance languages surged upwards on another stratum and foundation, and next to them in the course of time the German and the English languages were set free, not at once with their oldest means, but in the mixture conditioned by the very force of contemporaneous events. (1984: 21)

The absence of sustained investigations of the modern form of language is due to a lack of scholarly interest, and not to methodological barriers as it was with the earliest stage of language. As scholars, the brothers were not interested in modern life, either in language or in law, in and of itself. They were interested in it only insofar as it offered a contrast to the way of life of the *Vorzeit*. In the comparison between the two social orders, modern social relations are characterised by the severance of individuals from the collective. Where once tradition dictated what individuals did in what seemed to be an almost formulaic manner, in modern social relations, there are no formulas. 'Devotion to tradition is far stronger among people who always adhere to the same way of life than we (who tend to want change) can understand' (2004c: 408-409). The Grimm brothers were concerned about this liberated modern social life and language only outside of their scholarly labours. They saw their work on early Germanic language as contributing to the retrieval of a Germanic spirit that was in keeping with the process of nature. Jakob Grimm summed up his long life's work in his *Autobiography* as a scholar:

Nearly all my labours have been devoted, either directly or indirectly, to the investigation of our earlier language, poetry and laws. These studies may have appeared to many, and may still appear, useless; to me they have always seemed a noble and earnest task, definitely and inseparably connected with our common fatherland, and calculated to foster the love of it.<sup>169</sup>

More stridently, Wilhelm Grimm stated that: 'We do not investigate German antiquity in order to lead us back into age which has long passed away into the stream of history; we investigate it in order to truly understand ourselves and through this understanding to contribute to the present, to which we owe our capabilities, our love, and our concern [cited from a report in the *Koelnische Zeitung* of March 1, 1844]' (2004b: 362).

Our language is also our history. Just as the territory of one people, of one empire was settled by individual races who were united, accepted common customs and laws, acted in alliance and extended the scope of their possession, so also custom requires a first act of discovery from which all successive ones are derived and back to which they refer. Afterwards the continuance of the community imposes a number of modifications. (1984: 20)

Social life and social relations take different forms according to the form of language of different historical instances.

#### 4.2.2 To witness English

The OED was an act of patriotism in terms of the impetus to advance the scientific achievements of Great Britain. 'Patriotism and the new philology assume joint prominence in the

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<sup>169</sup> He continues: 'My principle has always been in these investigations to under-value nothing, but to utilize the small for the illustration of the great, the popular tradition for the elucidation of the written monuments'. (ibid.)

dictionary as thus proposed; it was above all to stand as ‘a new Dictionary worthy of the English Language and of the present state of Philological Science’ (Mugglestone, 2000: 5). The OED was also patriotic in terms of the specific way that the notion of empire played into its creation. The OED aimed to describe English scientifically and comprehensively. The scientific aims were under the umbrella of the Philological Society that undertook the work. Continental Europe, this committee, was disheartened to observe, had great dictionaries based in this new approach to language and yet there was nothing in English.<sup>170</sup> The lack of progress in English language science was grounded in the idea that England had been left behind. Philological and etymological investigations were piecemeal and fragmentary.

Not only did English lack such an historical (and not just literary as Johnson’s was now viewed) dictionary, but the practical tool that a truly scientific philological dictionary could offer was a huge gap for the empire. This was a project of English – and the slide in meanings from language to nation – was a slide that naturally occurred with the first editors and organisers of the OED. It was a huge undertaking of proportions that exceeded England as a nation, but not as a political empire. The OED exceeded in the sense that this was a project that spread the language across the colonial landscape also.

The OED was a product of “a particular history of national self-definition during a remarkable period in the expansion and collapse of the British empire and the development of a far more democratic state at home” (Willinsky 1994, p. 194). The upshot of this massive work was to produce a dictionary and a set of discourses about English that emphasized inclusivity, size and scale: English was bigger than any other language. (Estival & Pennycook, 2011: 331)<sup>171</sup> The slogan for the *Oxford English Dictionary* is, with no little measure of wit, ‘the definitive record of the English language’. Because of the imperial dimensions, it was not just an historically definitive record, but it was also a socially, politically and geographically definitive record.

Mugglestone describes what is distinct in the *OED*’s conception of its project as involving the lexicographer ‘as prime linguistic witness to the shifting nuances of speech, divorced alike from fallible notions of its needful ‘fixing’ and from the conceptualisation of change as inevitable decline’

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<sup>170</sup> ‘In comparison with Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm in Germany, and Emile Littré in France, all of whom strove to implement the philological advances of the nineteenth century in terms of lexicography, England seemed even more lacking. Dictionaries such as Johnson’s represented only ‘the pre-scientific stage’ of philology, ‘when real analogies were overlooked, and superficial resemblances too easily seized; when anything was thought possible, and *a priori* reasoning applied to problems which could only be solved by patient induction’ (MP17/9/1883: 2).’ (Mugglestone, 2000: 4)

<sup>171</sup> Winchester writes in somewhat more purple prose: ‘Huge ships, immense palaces, bridges and roads and docks and railways of daunting scale, brave discoveries in science and medicine, scores of colonies seized, dozens of wars won and revolts suppressed, and missionaries and teachers fanning out into the darkest crannies of the planet—there seemed nothing that the Britain of the day could not achieve. And now, add to it all—a plan for a brand new dictionary. A brand new dictionary of what was, after all, the very language of all this greatness and moral suasion and muscularly Christian goodness, and a language that had been founded and nurtured in the Britain that was doing it—the idea seemed no more and no less than a natural successor to all these majestic ventures of iron and steam and fired brick.’ (2003: 42-43)

(Mugglestone, 2000: 3). The debate over whether the OED describes or prescribes English involves both the process of collection and of organising and presenting. Behind this apparent 'lexicographical' debate lies the whole question of how this is a social-language project, in all the senses that implies. To develop a serious science, there was no project better suited than an historical dictionary. Such a dictionary would capture English in its vastness, accurately and thoroughly. This huge undertaking was made all the more challenging because in the eyes of philologists, languages never stop changing. The OED project would have no meaningful endpoint.

### 4.3 Analytical frameworks

The aim of the OED editors and the Grimm brothers were in both cases, very simply put, to record language. Scholars point out that the OED was grounded in German philological principles (Armitage, Mugglestone). The OED did not, however, incorporate such a fully-fledged philosophy of culture and history as was developed by Grimms. The Grimm brothers developed a detailed philosophical history of how language played a role in the culture of a people, specifically those of the proto-Germanic people, described as *Poesie*. The OED editors and Grimm brothers took different approaches to capturing a disappearing past. Both social-language projects continually grew, but not in the same fashion. The Grimms added continuously to their techniques and to their subject matter. The OED, however, developed an increasingly strict technique and amassed and amassed and amassed and amassed. The reason for this relates to how the OED editors understood time as historical change.

#### 4.3.1 History, *Poesie*

The significant conceptual elements for Grimms in all their works are two connected ideas: history and *Poesie*. These dimensions motivated their researches and form the architecture of their collections. They were preoccupied with history, not time, as Johnson understood it (as a golden past and bleak future). Instead, the Grimms were concerned with a metamorphic image of living things within time. Language, and the culture it contained, was such a changing thing. Peoples' languages evolved into different forms throughout time. *Poesie* described a specific, valued form of the development and it was to be found in the expressive imagination of the Germanic peoples in materials like tales, sagas and poetry. These two elements provided the intellectual stimulus for the Grimms' internally diverse social-language project.

According to the brothers, the first stage of language was in the period of humanity's prehistory and for the most part, it lies too far distant in time to have left fragments for scholars

to study. However, it is possible to deduce what the form of this language is by looking at the patterns of later historical transformation. Sanskrit, Zend, ancient Greek and Latin are late representatives of the first stage of language, as is contemporary Chinese.<sup>172</sup> Grimm states that we must assume an even more ancient tongue before Sanskrit ‘in which the fullness of its nature and tendency had again been expressed in purer form. This we can no longer reach at all historically, but we suspect it from the behaviour of the Vedic language’. He goes on to write that the earliest language emerged in a period of ‘creation and resultant formation in language’ (1984: 15). This newly created language was marked by its lack of inflection: it relied on a constellation of ‘chief concepts’. These concepts were not broken apart by inflection – by linguistic modifications such as verb tense or aspect, or noun declensions.<sup>173</sup> Lacking inflection meant that this language lacked abstraction: it was immediate, concrete and sensuous. It had, Grimm eulogises, ‘a rich, well-pleasing, admirable completion of the form in which all sensuous and intellectual objects have vigorously interpenetrated each other’ (1984: 15). The level of abstraction that exists in language increases with each stage of linguistic development. In the first era, the impression of words was ‘pure and artless, yet too full and overloaded, so that light and shadow could not rightly be distinguished’ (1984: 16). However the ‘prevailing linguistic spirit allows greater weight to fall on the subordinate ideas’ which then break away and re-attach themselves to the chief concepts through the process of inflection (1984: 16). Grimm summarises the nature of the language in its original phase:

Its appearance is simple, artless, full of life, like blood in a youthful body with rapid circulation. All words are short, monosyllabic, almost all formed with short vowels and simple consonants. The supply crowds thick and fast like blades of grass. All concepts result from a sensory outlook, which itself was already a thought from which light and new thoughts arise on all sides. The relationships of the words and ideas are expressed naively and freshly but unadorned by subsequent, still unorganised words. The garrulous language unfolds in fullness and capacity with each step it takes, but in general it works without measure and unison. (1984: 20)

Language changed from the ancient, sensuous form to become more internally differentiated and more abstract in the next stage of its development. The most significant feature of the second era of language is how naturally and gracefully inflection is manifested. The languages of this stage have what Grimm describes as an ‘inner power and suppleness’ of inflection (1984: 15). Languages like Gothic, Old High German, and the medieval Romance languages were of particular interest to the Grimms, because the brothers’ attention was exclusively directed towards this middle era of

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<sup>172</sup> Grimm includes Chinese, in a footnote, writing that: ‘One can say that the uninflected Chinese language has to a certain extent remained in the first period.’ (1984: 27, footnote 25)

<sup>173</sup> What Grimm means by the lack of inflection in the first period of language is illuminated by a description of how it functions in the second period. He says that: ‘In the second period person, number, tense, mood and gender can be shown in each verb: the person by attached personal pronouns, the tense mostly by auxiliary words, which originally were loosely attached and gradually grew into inflections.’ (1984: 19)

language. This sustained interest in the pre-modern era of language is the strongest unifying element of the Grimm brothers' social-language project and also what cast them into the category of Romantic Nationalism.

In his lecture on the origin of language, Jakob Grimm summarises the results of decades of research on the form and transformation of many variants of this second stage of language. This period of language has, in his words, 'resonance and beautiful adroitness' (1984: 15). He contrasts old Gothic with modern German. Gothic has greater 'form-perfection' whereas modern German has 'a manifoldly enhanced development of speech' (1984: 15). Grimm, like Herder before him, sees sound as the fundamental stuff of language. In sound, the 'roots' of language emerged. One of the major discoveries Jakob Grimm is credited with, early in his career, was the role of alliteration as opposed to rhyme in ancient Teutonic poetry.<sup>174</sup> The role of sound also forms the basis of one of the main arguments in *Grammatik*: the change in certain sound patterns that was part of the transition from the second to the third era of Germanic languages. But importantly, Grimm was not concerned with sound as merely auditory patterns. He was interested in what sounds indicated: the 'intellectual content' of phonetic roots (1984: 16). The relationship between the sound elements of language and what they refer to is subtle. Grimm clarifies this subtlety somewhat in his account of the series of small transformations that combine to make the broader shift between the first and second phases of language.

In these later ones [periods] all sound laws opened up brilliantly and in multiples. Out of splendid diphthongs and their shortening to long vowels, the euphonic exchange originated alongside the prevailing fullness of the short ones. In such a way consonants pushed against each other, no longer everywhere separated by vowels, and increased the power and force of the expression. However as the individual sounds are more firmly joined together, particles and auxiliaries begin to push closer, and as the meaning dwelling in them gradually weakens away, they are said to unite with the word which they determine. Instead of heavily dominating special concepts along with the diminution of sensuous power of language and unbounded series of words, beneficent aggregations and pauses result. These let the essential stand out from the accidental, the predominating from the subordinate. The words have become longer and polysyllabic. Now masses of compounds are formed from the loose order. As the individual vowels are compressed into diphthongs, the individual words are compressed into inflections. (1984: 20-21)

The Grimm brothers accepted that there were only remnants of the older, pre-modern form of language left. They saw proverbs, stories, legends, and songs as shreds of the second stage of language, in the form of what they called as '*poesie*'. *Poesie* refers to culture as it is expressed in

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<sup>174</sup> The term 'Germanic' is used by the brothers as well as 'Teutonic' – some scholars prefer to translate Teutonic because it refers to a broader field in English. Nielson explains: 'In the first edition [of *Grammatik*], he proposes a division of the Germanic tribes into four main groups: one consisting of Goths and related tribes; a second consisting of Longobards, Bavarians, Burgundians, Alemannians, and Franks; a third comprising Saxons, Westphalians, Frisians, and Angles; and as the fourth and final group "Nordic" (J. Grimm 1819: l-lii).' (1990: 26-27)

literature, and literature was understood broadly by the Grimms to refer to all of the elements noted above.<sup>175</sup>

A distinction was made between the old literature—*Naturpoesie*—which was captured in speech and was the property of a whole people, and modern literature—*Kunstpoesie*—which was more likely to be written and was attributable to a single author. Grimm’s study of the transition from Medieval song ‘On Old German Meistersang’ (*Über den deutschen Meistersang*) was the Grimm brothers’ first extended engagement with *poesie*. In that book, he writes of the difference between *Naturpoesie* and *Kunstpoesie*. ‘One can call *Naturpoesie* life in the pure act itself...*Kunstpoesie* is a work of life and of philosophical character already in the first bud’ (*Meistersang*, 6 transl. M. Benzer). Grimm’s distinction between the two latter stages of language refers back to Herder, who had also made a distinction between ‘poetry’ and ‘prose’.<sup>176</sup> (For the sake of clarity, the term *poesie* will be used for *Naturpoesie* and ‘prose’ for *Kunstpoesie*.)<sup>177</sup> The abstraction that this second stage of language has started to manifest is greatly increased in the third stage, alongside the shift from poetic culture to prose culture.

In conceiving of the third stage of language—the modern language of the nineteenth-century—Jakob Grimm writes that it is marked not only by a greater facility to speech, but that it is intellectualised. Inflection loses its central role, it ‘has become worn out and contracted to merely unfelt symbols...Language loses a part of its elasticity, but gains everywhere measure and rule for its infinitely heightened thought riches’ (1984: 16). Grimm offers a detailed account of the nature of modern language.

...our consonantal system was destined to be shifted, deformed and made harder. One may regret that the purity of the whole sound system was weakened, almost put out of joint. But

<sup>175</sup> Toews describes what the term *poesie* meant to the Grimms, writing that: “Their starting point was the assumption that the written texts or oral reports that were the objects of their investigation could and should be read as fragments of an expressive “poetry” (*Poesie*) created unconsciously by an ethnic people (*Volk*). *Poesie*, the term used by the Romantic generation to designate works of the expressive imagination – “literature” in a broad cultural sense – indicated the general category in which the Grimms had placed the texts they were examining... “*Poesie* is that which emerges in the form of words directly from the core of feeling [*Gemueht*], and is thus the continuous natural drive and innate ability to grasp this feeling.” [J Grimm in a letter to Arnim, 1811] In the preface to his first book, Jacob Grimm described *Poesie* as “nothing else than life itself, grasped in its purity and contained in the magic of speech.” [in *Meistersang*: 5] In archaic *Poesie*, the subject of the feeling that found expression in words was the collectivity, or the “whole”; in modern poetry it was the individual person in a problematic relation to the whole. [in a letter to Arnim, 1811] (2004: 327)

<sup>176</sup> Herder writes that moderns have failed to understand an ancient saying, namely: ““that *poetry was older than prose*?” For what was this first language but a collection of elements of poetry? Imitation of resounding, acting, stirring nature! Taken from the interjections of all beings and enlivened by the interjection of human sensation! The natural language of all creatures poetized by the understanding into sounds, into images of action, of passion, and of living effect! A vocabulary of the soul which is simultaneously a mythology and a wonderful epic of the actions and speakings of all beings! Hence a constant poetic creation of fable with passion and interest! What else is poetry?” (2002: 103).

<sup>177</sup> See Kamenetsky for extended discussion of distinction (1992: 63-68).



none will fail to recognize that the intermediate tones arising have brought about unexpected, new aids which could be made use of with the utmost freedom. A mass of roots are obscured by such sound changes. Henceforth, they are continually maintained no longer in their sensory primal meaning but only for abstract ideas. Of the former inflections most get lost and are replaced, rather outdone by richer, freer particles because thought can surely enough make gains by many-sided application. Indeed the four or five Greek or Latin cases in themselves seem less capable than the fourteen of the Finnish languages. Yet the latter accomplish less with all this more apparent than real agility. In this manner also our modern languages are less deprived than one should think by the fact that they must either leave unexpressed the overrich form of the Greek verb, or, where it is important, they must paraphrase it. (1984: 21-22)

The modernizing process in language is not yet over. No more can we establish the ‘peak’ of the older language, than can we assume that the ‘intellectual refinement...has reached a conclusion. It will not be for an incalculably long time yet.’ (1984: 15). This third stage of language is not, according to Grimm, the final stage of language. He speculates that languages may in the future ‘flow together purely and clearly’ and ‘absorb many noble items which now lie among the ruins of the languages of extinct peoples’ (1984: 22). He describes the process of language as ‘always in a state of progress and growth from its inner power’ (1984: 20).<sup>178</sup> The stage that fascinated the Grimms was *Poesie*, the second stage. They tried innumerable measures to work with the expressive imagination of the people, which is described shortly in section 4.4.1.

#### 4.3.2 Language as growth

The Grimm brothers worked with a sophisticated social philosophy of language that characterised linguistic change over time, a metamorphic view. According to them, the shape of all languages changes. The OED editors, while hoping to emulate and better the lexicographical achievements of the Grimms’ *Wörterbuch*, presented no theory of language metamorphosis. They did, however, see language as historically mutable, but they had a relative simplicity of vision what that change meant for recording language. While the OED worked on etymological researches for each word, the collection of examples in past history was of more importance. Examples were furnished for language in use and the practice was to look for the earliest examples of context. The analytical image of history is simply a long timeline and English gets proportionally larger and larger and larger. It is a growing thing, even if not something that changes form.

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<sup>178</sup> Grimm summarizes the three stages, beginning with the first, or the stage of: ‘...creation, along with the growing and drawing up of the roots and words; the blossoming forth of a perfected inflection; the third, indeed, the impulse to thought. Through all, inflection continued but was not yet satisfactory, and what happened spontaneously in the first period was prepared for in the second. The connection between word and vivid thought was once again affected with stronger consciousness. Leaf, blossom and ripening fruit according to nature’s demands have come in a fixed sequence next to and after one another.’ (1984: 15-16) See also Koerner on how Grimm ‘maintained...that language is shaped to respond to the requirements of its speakers and may develop differently at different times (Grimm 1984 [1851]: 93-98).’ (1990: 20)

In 1916, while many of its staff were serving in various capacities in the war, OUP published a pamphlet extolling the Dictionary's virtues as, among other things, 'An Imperial Asset': 'It is perhaps...in its exhibition of the language as a living and growing thing closely connected with the history of the nation, that it will have its greatest value for the British Empire and the whole English-speaking race'. (Brewer, 2007: 4-5)

The plans of the OED of as presented in both 1860 and 1879 show the editors to be inclusive of all English, and it describes how they would; 'admit as authorities all English books, except such as are devoted to purely scientific subjects, as treatises on electricity, mathematics, &c., and works written subsequently to the Reformation for the purpose of illustrating provincial dialects' (1859: 3).<sup>179</sup>

The OED project developed into these extraordinary dimensions because it was not only an attempt to inventory all the words in English, but because it did so through trying to establish their historical usage. It is in this regard that it can be described as a language artefact that is attempting to *capture* language. The successive editors were like natural historians, they wanted to observe English as it had been used before attempting to record its nature.<sup>180</sup> They also desired a scientific—comprehensive—observation. This picture of language as an ever-enlarging creature, led not only to the horror of thinking that the project could never possibly be completed. It led to disputes between the editors of the OED and authors (users) of English. The editors began to despair of being able to record English in all its subtle nuances when writers were liable to 'write hastily' or 'without thinking'. Often the editors wrote to authors asking them to specify the meaning of words they had used in popular books. The fact that English was constantly evolving and shifting also meant that the OED staff had to begin revisions on early sections of the work (which had progressed alphabetically) before they had even reached 'T' because of the modifications that usage had undergone. This beast, that seemed insatiable, also constantly threatened to become a relic.

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<sup>179</sup> 'There are many who conceive of a Dictionary as though it had this function, to be a standard of the language; and the pretensions to be this which the French *Dictionary of the Academy* sets up, may have helped on this confusion. It is nothing of the kind. A special Dictionary may propose to itself to be such, to include only the words on which the compiler is willing to set the mark of his approval, as being fit, and in his judgment the only fit, to be employed by those who would write with purity and correctness. Of the probably worth of such a collection I express no opinion. Those who desire, are welcome to such a book: but for myself I will only say that I cannot understand how any writer with the smallest confidence in himself, the least measure of that vigour and vitality which would justify him in addressing his countrymen in written or spoken discourse at all, should consent in this matter to let one self-made dictator, or forty, determine for him what words he should use, and what he should forbear from using. At all events, a Dictionary of the English language such a work would not have the slightest pretence to be called.' (1860: 5-6)

<sup>180</sup> 'I am absolutely a pioneer,' he wrote to Henry Sweet; 'nobody exc[ept] my predecessors in specimens of the Dicty, has yet *tried* to trace out historically the sense-development of English words...I shall have to do the best I can at defining probably 80,000 words that I never *knew* or *used* or *saw* before' (MP/29/3/1882). (Mugglestone, 2000: 2)

The OED still uses the imagery of creature to describe English, and also refers to the role it has as a witness to the changes in English culture, to ‘the development of our society’.

The ambitious goals which the Philological Society set out in 1857 seem modest in comparison with the phenomenal achievement which their initiative set in motion. The *Oxford English Dictionary* is a living document that has been growing and changing for 140 years. Far more than a convenient place to look up words and their origins, the *Oxford English Dictionary* is an irreplaceable part of English culture. It not only provides an important record of the evolution of our language, but also documents the continuing development of our society. It is certain to continue in this role as we enter the new century. (OED, online, last accessed 30 Dec., 2012)<sup>181</sup>

#### 4.4 Method

The methods that were employed by the Grimms and the OED editors differ in kind, as much as in purpose. The OED began by setting out the expected methods of lexicography, involving classing, defining, offering etymological and phonological information for words. These tasks were soon eclipsed by trying to ‘trace historically the sense-development of English words’ (Sweet in Mugglestone, 2000: 2). The method of finding senses within literature became the OED’s signature form and so it remains now. The Grimms were more varied in their efforts to capture *poesie*, including collecting, recording, reconstructing, compiling, and preserving.

##### 4.4.1 Natural history of *Die Volk*

The Grimm brothers reacted to loss of the older language in a number of different ways. They collected fragments of old Germanic literature (such as fairy tales [*Märchen*], folk tales [*Sagen*] and animal fables [*Fabel*]); they reconstructed damaged texts (for instance, the *Hildebrandslied* portion of the *Nibelungen* epic cycle); they interpreted a variety of written and spoken materials (especially proverbs and legal materials for *Rechtsaltertümer*); they analysed the historical transformation of language (through sound changes in the *Grammatik* and myth in *Mythologie* and *Heldensage*); they deciphered ancient materials (most notable is Wilhelm Grimm’s work on runes) and finally, they collated (for example, organizing definitions for the *Wörterbuch*). These different attempts were all unified by an interest in recovering cultural materials that the Jakob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm perceived to be on the edge of disappearance. Three of these efforts and how they relate to language materials—collecting, reconstructing and analysing—are explored below.

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<sup>181</sup> ‘At no period in its history has the *Oxford English Dictionary* been profitable commercially for Oxford University Press. However, the Press remains committed to sustaining research into the origins and development of the English language wherever it is spoken. This commitment to the cultural values embodied in the Dictionary is shown by the £34 million (US\$55 million) funding of the current revision programme and the associated programme for new words. The remedial work of revising original 19th and early 20th century editorial material is in progress, and the results of the revision programme and additions of new words will be published online every three months.’ (online, last accessed 30 Dec., 2012)

The Grimm brothers collected a wide variety of materials that they understood to be remnants of Germanic *poesie* in the course of their scholarly careers. The earliest published collection was their book on fairy tales, *Hausmärchen* which first appeared in 1812. This was followed four years later by their book on folk tales, *Sagen*. The other significant collection was Jakob Grimm's book on Germanic law which had been drawn from his accumulation of 'rituals, sayings, adages and customary usages' of language pertaining to law (Toews, 2004: 349). Still other collections emerged episodically from the brothers (for example, collections of Spanish romances and Irish fairy tales). Each of these collecting enterprises betrays something about the way that the brothers conceived of language. They held a broad vision of language: one that was grounded in seeing the historical form of language as a natural element of its environment. This image is illustrated by a circular letter which Jakob Grimm composed in 1815, in hopes of enlisting fellow scholars to collect *poesie*. Jakob Grimm presents the following list of items which he hopes others will try to gather:

- 1) Folk songs and rhymes that are performed at different occasions throughout the year, at celebrations, in spinning parlors, on the dance floors, and during work in the fields; first of all, those songs and rhymes that have epic contents, that is, in which there is an event; wherever possible with their very words, ways, and tones.
- 2) Tales in prose that are told and known, in particular the numerous nursery and children's fairy tales about giants, dwarfs, monsters, enchanted and rescued royal children, devil, treasures, and magic instruments as well as local legends that are held to explain certain places (like mountains, rivers, lakes, swamps, ruined castles, towers, stones and monuments of ancient times). It is important to pay special attention to animal fables, in which fox and wolf, chicken, dog, cat, frog, mouse, crow, sparrow, etc. appear for the most part.
- 3) Funny tales about tricks played by rogues and anecdotes; puppet plays from old times with Hanswurst and the devil.
- 4) Folk festivals, mores, customs, and games; celebrations at births, weddings, and funerals; old legal customs, special taxes, duties, jobs, border regulations, etc.
- 5) Superstitions about spirits, ghosts, witches, good and bad omens; phenomena and dreams.
- 6) Proverbs, unusual dialects, parables, word composition. (2002: Quoted in Zipes, 26-28)

The brothers were interested in preserving language. They collected their material with the hope of safeguarding remainders of the older language and, thus, the old way of life.

The Grimm brothers did see preservation as needing a certain amount of scientific involvement. They merged variants of fairy tales and legends that they collected, and also editorially shaped them (especially in the fairy tales). 'Shaping' the stories was done in an effort to discern their true meaning.<sup>182</sup> Jakob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm did not think that 'pure' authentic

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<sup>182</sup> 'And create they did. The Grimms were not mere collectors. In fact, their major accomplishment in publishing their two volumes of 156 tales 1812 and 1815 was to create an ideal type of the literary fairy tale, one that was intended to be as close to the oral tradition as possible while incorporating stylistic, formal

versions of a tale were to be found, obscured amongst imitations or forgeries. Rather the brothers saw the different versions of the tales as representing a series of forms of the same *Ur-story*.<sup>183</sup> Their editorial efforts were intended to get closer to the authentic Germanic culture that the various shreds of *poesie* were relics of. Thus the emphasis of the Grimm brothers as collectors was on the content of language and *not* simply its form. They were interested in the expression of a people's character through their stories. They introduced the *Hausmärchen* by saying that 'Poetry tends to concentrate the characteristic features of an entire nation in one character so that what you see in bits and pieces or in a weak or unclear fashion is focused and given shape. One could say that poetry gives us only complete characters who appear in primary colors' (2004a: 425). The sorts of characters that appear in the stories that they collected are kings, princesses, swan-maids, dummies, and thumblings. It is not that these characters were thought to constitute the population of the earlier period of Germanic history. Rather the orientation that the thumblings and swan-maids take towards life, the struggles they face and the solutions to those struggles represent the older way of life and in combination express the character of a people—almost as a collective subject. This explains why the brothers envisioned their work as a type of natural history, and also why they viewed their work as a kind of protection of rare—and nearly vanished—material.

Jakob Grimm described their work through the analogy to natural history in his '*Ursprung*' lecture:

Very often and also not without reason language study has been placed side by side with natural history. These resemble each other even in the manner and method of their imperfect or more complete pursuit. For it strikes one that, just as those philologists researched Classical monuments of language in order to gain from them critical rules for the emendation of deteriorated and corrupted texts; so also botanists originally applied their knowledge to discover healing forces in individual plants. Anatomists also dissected bodies to become more aware of the inner structure, upon which knowledge the restoration of normal health could then be found. (1984: 2)

The brothers hoped that their collection of fairy-tales would offer benefits to social life. 'The aim of our collection was not just to serve the cause of the history of poetry.' They wrote in the preface

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and substantial thematic changes to appeal to a growing middle-class audience. By 1819, when the second edition of the tales, now including 170 texts in one volume, was published and Wilhelm was largely in charge of revisions, the Brothers had established the form and manner they wanted to preserve, maintain and present what they felt were profound truths about the origins of civilisation, the childhood of humankind, and customs the Germans in particular had cultivated.' (Zipes, 2002: 67)

<sup>183</sup> In the Preface to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the *Hausmärchen*, they write: 'In every location they are present in the form of traditions, and for that reason they have a certain special nature. No one can dispute the fact that they have been handed down over the centuries in this way, transforming themselves continually in their outer manifestations, but remaining the same when it comes to essentials. If one were to assume that the tales had their origins in a certain location in Germany, then it would be hard to explain their diffusion across so many regions and landscapes that are independent of each other as well as the peculiar and unique twist that each story takes.' (2004a: 415)

to the 2<sup>nd</sup> volume of the fairy tale.<sup>184</sup> ‘It was also our intention that the poetry living in it be effective, bringing pleasure wherever it could, and that it therefore become a manual of manners’ (2004c: 410).<sup>185</sup>

The brothers also collected for the sake of preservation and not only moral education. In others, they collected more purposively toward the end of analysing the remainders of language that they recovered. The two lengthiest analytic works that the brothers produced both came from Jakob Grimm’s pen. The first was an ambitious and somewhat different project from the earlier collections: the German grammar. That work offers four volumes of analysis of the historical transformation of Germanic dialects. The second was the analysis of Germanic mythology. There, also, Jakob Grimm investigates the historical transformation of an earlier form of language into a later one. In the Foreword to Volume 1 of the *Grammatik*, Jakob Grimm had written of a ‘language spirit (*Sprachgeist*) [which] animated the linguistic organism of words and grammatical forms. Grimm’s *Grammatik* was an excavation of the structures of all the Germanic languages in their historical sequence, an explanation of their transitions from one stage to another’ (2004: 343). As part of his analysis, Jakob Grimm traced out several ‘rules’ of sound change from Greek to Gothic to Old High German such as the transition of the phonemes P (Greek) – F (Gothic) – B (Old High German). The analysis of myth follows a similar logic. Ancient gods from the ‘heathen’ era of German tribes are transformed into a new pantheon that accords with the new religion in the latter Christian era. Grimm draws the two studies together in the Preface to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition.

As all the sounds of the language are reducible to a few, from whose simplicity the rest can be derived—the vowels by broadening, narrowing, and combination of diphthongs, the mute consonants by subdivision of their three groups each into three stages, while particular dialects shift them from one stage to another in regular gradation;—so in Mythology I reduce the long array of divine personages to their unity, and let their multiplicity spring out of this unity; and we can hardly go wrong in assuming for deities and heroes a similar coincidence, combination and gradation, according to their characters and particular functions. How Wuotan, Donar, and Zio partly run into one another has been shewn; Logi (lowe, blaze) become Loki (lock, bolt), g becomes k, the sense of fire is exchanged for that of bolts and bars (of hell), as Hamar and Hern came to signify the implements they used. We have seen Wuotan reappear in the long-bearded Charles, in red-bearded Frederick. On comparing the Norse hero-legend with the German, we see remarkable instances of this shifting and displacement of names and

<sup>184</sup> ‘Moreover, though the collection was not originally published with children in mind as the primary audience, Wilhelm made all the editions after 1819 more appealing to a children’s audience or what he thought might be proper for children. This did not contradict what the Brothers thought the collection should be, namely, an educational manual, an *Erziehungsbuch*. The tendency to attract a virtuous young middle-class audience and to educate young readers is most evident in the *Kleine Ausgabe...*’ (Kamenestky, 1992: 69)

<sup>185</sup> Toews describes their aims: ‘Their whole enterprise was premised on a belief that recovered memory of the historical moment when *Naturpoesie* captured the reality of a life lived in the whole could function in a powerful, creative, integrative fashion within the individualized psyches of the present. Feelings of participation in the unconscious core of German folk culture, however diluted or repressed, existed on some level of psychic reality for all Germans.’ (2004: 328)

persons. Gudrun in the Edda occupies the same place of our Krímhilt, while Grímhildr is her mother's name; in the Vilkinsaga Mímir is the smith and Reginn the dragon, in the Völsungasaga Reginn is the smith and Fáfnir the dragon. If these changes took place at haphazard, there would be nothing in them; but they seem to proceed by regular gradation, without leaps. (1999b: xxii)

The contrast of these two projects illuminates how the specific historical character that language takes is infused in the more total social and cultural context.

The Grimm brothers' also reconstructed *poesie*. The central text that they tried—at various points across their careers—to salvage was the *Hildesbrand*. The reason that this text was of such interest that they returned to it, time and again, was that they saw the *Hildesbrand* as part of a larger ancient epic cycle that was a 'German Odyssey'. The brothers saw great value in recovering such a work, not only for the linguistic data that could be gleaned for such historical comparative researches as Jakob Grimm would later undertake with the *Grammatik*. The story of the cycle was of enormous value as it would illuminate the origins of the literature and way of life of the more recent past.

The Grimms were fully aware of the text's new dimensions and its value as a document of the epic heritage of the nation. In their preface, the obvious connection with the epic cycle decides the issue against "*die schnöden Zweifler*" ['the disdainful doubters] (J. Grimm and W. Grimm 1812 "*Vorrede*" [i]). In one of his articles three years later, Jacob left no doubt how he felt about the historical significance of the text: "*Als historisches Denkmal hat es für die Geschichte der germanischen Poesie unschätzbaren Werth.*" ['As historical monument, it has inestimable value for the history of Germanic poetry.'] (J. Grimm 1815: 112) The search of his generation for a national myth had produced the first real and most inspiring source that documented the existence of a poetic antiquity within the Germanic tradition. (Dick, 1990: 75, transl. M. Benzer)

According to the Grimm brothers, fragments of *poesie* such as 'spinning tales' and epic cycles presented the character of the older Germanic people in a direct, albeit not necessarily a direct or moralistic, fashion. They were pragmatic, and used whatever means they thought helpful to better bring out *poesie*.

#### 4.4.2 Unregistered Words Committee

The writings of the OED editors, Furnivall and Trench, involved multiple criticisms of preceding dictionaries. Technically, they reacted against the inconsistencies of existing definitions and the paucity of supporting citations. More broadly, however, the aim of the OED becomes clear in their argument that none of the existing works could be 'considered as a *Lexicon totius Anglilitatis*' (a 'total English vocabulary') and that each suffered the additional deficiency of being poor 'philological guides' (1857: 81). The main problem that was identified by the proposals for a new dictionary was the incompleteness of our picture of English. The problem was seen to be that most important of the existing English dictionaries did not include all English words. The first suggestion to rectify this was a supplement to extant works, a supplement to be drafted by the

painstaking collective efforts of the ‘Unregistered Words Committee’, which was to function as a special outreach of the Philological Society.<sup>186</sup> This Committee would use a systematic method employed by any number of volunteers to compile an exhaustive list of English words—obsolete and current—as could be drawn from the written record of the language through its literature. They set about the task by clarifying what the aim was:

We may begin then by stating that, according to our view, the first requirement of every lexicon is, that it should contain *every word occurring in the literature of the language it professes to illustrate*. (1859: 2-3)<sup>187</sup>

This committee was successful in its collecting aims. The readership programme it implemented through the reading public yielded enormous responses, in the form of word slips indicating a term and its place in a literary source. The editors organised the word slips alphabetically and they selected the most ‘typical forms’ of words. On this basis, they worked to attain an arrangement of ‘homographic groups, i.e. groups of words identical in spelling, but perhaps even of words having no connexion’ (in Mugglestone, 2000: 24). After this, the words were divided into ‘parts of speech’ (i.e. noun, adjective, or verb). The grammatical classification worked alongside the alphabetic organisation, as simply a way to arrange the material. However, the next step – arranging the quotations by date – enabled the dictionary to truly fulfil its ‘historical principles’. This step allowed the meaning and construction of each word across time to show through. The actual definition of each word was slowly and painstakingly derived from the examples of its usage. The editorial process of deriving definitions of words went through the hands of sub-editors and sometimes, re-sub-editors, and then back again to the editors. Murray, one of the early editors, described the ‘real work’ of the dictionary: it lay in ‘the power of seeing the sense of quotations, of formulating the senses of words, of writing good definitions, or revising the defective ones of imperfect helpers’ (in Mugglestone, 2000: 15).

Mugglestone’s book, *Lost for Words*, opens with an account of the difference between the first proofs of the first edition pages and what appeared in actual print for public consumption. OED entries now, many editions later and in the interactive digital form have achieved a status as

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<sup>186</sup> ‘...the collection of materials towards completion of this truly national work would be an object well worthy of the energies of the Society, and if undertaken by several persons, acting in concert on a fixed and uniform system, could hardly fail to produce most valuable results.’ (1857: 81)

<sup>187</sup> They continue: ‘We entirely repudiate the theory, which converts the lexicographer into an arbiter of style, and which leaves it to his discretion to accept or reject words according to his private notions of their comparative elegance or inelegance. In the case of the dead languages, such as Greek, no lexicon of any pretensions would omit the *ἀπαξ λεγόμενα* of Lycophron, or the experimental coinage of Aristophanes and other comedians; and as we are unable to perceive any difference between a dead and living language, so far as lexicographical treatment is concerned, it follows that we cannot refuse to admit words into the Dictionary which may not be sanctioned by the usage of more than one writer, or be conformable in their structure to our ideas of taste. However worthless they may be in themselves, they testify to a tendency of language, and on this account only, if on no other, have a distinct and appreciable value. (1859: 2-3)



the template for dictionaries, the standard against which others will be judged. Mugglestone shows the labour involved in travelling from naught to template, and as she demonstrates over a mere few pages of proofs, the editorial labour was enormous.

For the OED, vocabulary supersedes all other dimensions of language. It is not that language is seen *only* to consist of a collection of words, but that language can only be properly understood if this aspect of language is taken to be more important than all others. The phonetic changes in language which had been the basis of the philological enterprise, and from which the etymological component lingers on, were seen as subsidiary to the semantic changes. In other words, not only is vocabulary the single most important dimension of language, but it was written vocabulary that counts. The purview of the OED seems quite restricted by comparison to the other social-language projects described above. However, this restrictedness is deceptive. The single-mindedness of the OED editors' approach to their task had the peculiar consequence that it became a project of monstrous proportions. It now boasts in excess of 2 million quotations, and several hundred thousand words.

#### 4.5 Social life and law

The social-language projects of the Grimms and the OED have been presented above in light of the emerging notion of 'people' in a specific, ethnic sense. The connections between language and the social do not end with ideas of the empire or the *Volk* however. There is a special mediating element that shows the social richness of these projects. In line with these two projects generally, it emerges explicitly and robustly in the writings of the Grimm brothers. This area is law: natural law for the Grimms and common law with respect to the OED.

Jakob Grimm carried out another vein of research that connected literature with the character of the nation in a different way. This other research involved years of collecting materials concerning *poesie within* the domain of law.<sup>188</sup> He amassed proverbs, adages, legal phrases, and writings from civil, constitutional and criminal law in order to intuit the national character as it was expressed in the historical form of Germanic law. The interrelations between Jakob Grimm's work on grammar and law were sufficiently clear to Jakob Grimm that in his 'Preface' to the first volume of the *Grammatik*, he spends some time discussing how his working method is different from that of his teacher Carl von Savigny. Savigny is credited with having directed Jakob Grimm's attention to law and *poesie* as a student. However, Savigny's own research used methods that had not arisen in Germany and his focus was on Roman law, something that Jakob Grimm increasingly distanced

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<sup>188</sup> There are three main texts on this topic: the article 'Concerning Poetry in Law' from 1813 [*Von der Poesie im Recht*]; the lengthy book 'German Legal Antiquities' published first in 1828 and again in 1854 [*Deutsche Rechtsaltertümer*]; and the article entitled 'The Word of Property' from 1850 [*Das Wort des Besitzes*].

himself from in preference to Germanic law. However, Jakob Grimm did share with Savigny the general conception of the relations between language, law and peoples. Zipes describes how:

Savigny argued that the spirit of a law can be comprehended only by tracing its origins to the development of the customs and language of the people who share them, and by investigating the changing historical context in which laws developed. Ironically, it was Savigny's emphasis on the historical-philological aspect of law that led Jacob and Wilhelm to dedicate themselves to the study of ancient German literature and folklore. (2002: 7)

In Jakob Grimms' studies of law we find that 'law' is understood as natural law (in other words as historically emergent, rather than a product of a universal capacity such as reason). Toews offers an extended account of Jakob Grimm's work on *poesie* in law.

Grimm... saw the primal origins of the people as the source that provided the ancient symbols and rituals of law with their divine aura. Like ancient epic narrative, ancient popular legal relations possessed an ambivalent quality, participating in the timeless universal qualities of myth while speaking in the concrete sensuous language of spatially and temporally bound particulars. In origin, Grimm would claim in 1815, literature and law were one; they "arose from the same bed [*aus einem Bett aufgestanden*]" with the aura of their common mother still clinging to them. [from "*Von der Poesie im Recht*" (1815)] (2004: 339)

He goes on to point to the metaphor that Grimm employed of law and literature arising from a common maternal 'bed.' This common origin explained why the two domains had 'analogous structures'. Such structures were obvious through tracing the etymological similarities of chief concepts, such as 'judge' and 'poet'.<sup>189</sup>

Grimm's general thesis was familiar – the written structures of any culture's constitutional, civil, and criminal law emerged from patterns of social interaction in preliterate folk culture. These patterns were articulated in rituals, sayings and adages, and customary usages that could be gleaned from literary descriptions, legal judgements, or historical descriptions in medieval texts, but also from the more recent evidence of an oral tradition of juristic folklore and customary practices among the common people. (2004: 349)

The 'fatherland' that the Grimm brothers referred to was composed of the Germanic nations that had emerged from earlier tribes. Jakob Grimm relied heavily on Tacitus' work *Germania* in his assessment of the ancient way of life in Germany. He describes the nobility of the pre-Christian Germanic peoples

Germany holds a middle place, peculiar to herself and not unfavourable. While the conversion of Gaul and that of Slavland were each as a whole decided and finished in the course of a very few centuries, the Teutonic races forsook the faith of their fathers very gradually and slowly, from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Remains of their language too have been preserved more fully and from the successive periods. Besides which we possess in the works of Roman writers, and especially Tacitus, accounts of the earlier undisturbed time of Teutonic heathenism, which, though scanty and from a foreign source, are yet exceedingly important, nay invaluable. (1999a: 8-9)

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<sup>189</sup> Toews offers a more detailed account of this: 'Grimm tries to demonstrate the analogy, for example, between the judge in the legal tradition and the poet in the literary tradition through an etymological series that traced both terms to one root in an everyday concrete term, revealing the origins of poetic creation and legal judgment in the act of finding the appropriate statement and this defining meaning from within the possibilities of speech.' (2004: 339)

Law is also seen as more than the line dividing tolerable from intolerable behaviour. Rather it was seen to encompass mores, customs, and to regulate social relations on all levels: the political, the economic, the familial, and the religious levels.

The shift from poetry to judgment only makes sense in the framework of natural law. The OED, coming out of a different legal history has a rather different relation to law. Armitage provides a compelling contrast between the *Wörterbuch* and the OED in relation to the two different legal traditions and he argues that the shape of the OED has followed the form of English law. This is a contrast to the internal form of the work and not the connection that is assumed to obtain between language and social life. Nevertheless, Armitage does go on to connect these.

It is of course no coincidence that the two greatest anglophone exponents of systematising political vocabulary, who satirise “insignificant Speech” on the one hand and deplored “terrorist language” on the other, were those two great enemies of the common law, Thomas Hobbes and Jeremy Bentham. It is also no accident that the most elaborate attempt to systematise English vocabulary, *Roget’s Thesaurus* (1852), sprang from Benthamite soil. Peter Mark Roget was a protege of Bentham’s disciple, Sir Samuel Romilly, and briefly collaborated with Bentham himself on a design for a prototype refrigerator. Though the *Thesaurus* registered Roget’s ambivalent memories of that collaboration, fifty years on, in its denunciation of those “modern writers” (among them, presumably, Bentham himself) who “have indulged a habit of arbitrarily fabricating new words and a new-fangled phraseology”, Roget did declare that his aim in compiling his synonymy had been ‘to obtain the greatest amount of practical utility’ [28]. The *Thesaurus* has remained the culmination of the great eighteenth-century tradition of synonymies to which Richter has directed our attention as sources of political and social vocabulary: in its Benthamite organisation, according to abstract ideas rather than meanings or usage, it represents the victory of system over history, and deduction over induction, in the history of anglophone lexicography. Roget even hoped that it would be the first step towards creating a Universal Language, to bring about ‘a golden age of union and harmony among the several nations and races of mankind’ by removing the impediments created by linguistic diversity’. (Armitage, 1999: 18)

Thus, there is a further insight into the roles of language and law to be gained by the comparison of the Grimms work and the OED. This affects the aims, analytical frame and the methods of each social-language project.

#### 4.6 Conclusion

These two projects are attempts, with language, to record a people. The types of collectives that this refers to are not the same. On the one hand, we have a vision of a past that is romantic, the notion of an ethnic concept of the German folk. On the other hand, the people was the English of the Victorian empire, expanding and absorbing different collectives as it grew. The way that these projects were carried out has been connected, suggestively, to two different ideas of law, on common law relating to precedents and the other civil law, relating to analysis and evidence. The idea of law as a mediating element within language and the social has also been persuasively connected to the political forms (Germanic diversity of principalities and the expanding English state). The two elements, the development of civil law and the diversity of

German-speaking polities combine to give the Grimms greater freedom in choosing what tools to use to record *poesie*. The OED, in contrast, ended up with a singular method and purpose: to amass. These two social-language projects, then, give us a thick historical image of language and the social. As projects, intended to do something and not merely observe something, they look to the past for recovery.

How the Grimms' work was received is a lingering question when we ask what sort of social-language project the Grimm corpus is. The debate about their relation to National Socialism focuses on the *Hausmärchen* to the exclusion of the much broader range of language materials that the Grimms published on. It is worth returning to this debate from another angle, one more distant in time to consider where the folktales are now. Zipes notes the irony of where the Grimm's efforts to record the specific expressive imagination of the Germanic *Volk* is now:

...their enchanted forest, created to illuminate and celebrate certain truths about German culture, was turned into and still is, a pleasure park where people stroll and randomly pluck meanings with complete disregard for the historical spadework of the Grimms. Certainly, the personal approach and sampling of the tales are legitimate ways of appreciating them, but often they have been endowed with more "magical power" than they possess and have been appropriated in a manner that makes them appear infantile and ahistorical. After all, why should anyone care about the Grimms when we have the tales? (Zipes, 1987: 67)

What began, in both instances, as a work of historical specificity, recovering *this* language, recording *this* people, have in both instances become global and supra-linguistic.

## CONCLUSION

### Future directions

This work points in two main directions. Firstly, it should offer a basis for further studies in social-language projects that could contribute to new sociology of language. By comparing folk sociologies of language at work in social-language projects, we ought to gain on a number of levels. The pictures of language and the social should develop in their richness and specificity. Concepts such as efficacy, or the aim to regulate, should offer the foothold for digging deeper into many of the taken-for-granted assumptions that are current in sociology. There are many projects that promise to be compelling individual studies, and of these, there is one contemporary project that looks particularly intriguing for sociologists interested in language. In themselves, further historical researches like the ones carried out in this thesis would yield much. However, contemporary projects might be especially illuminating for grasping the elements of the *Weltanschauung* of the current moment.

Another, equally fruitful and equally challenging approach is to look for moments in social thought that may offer helpful ways of thinking about language and the social. Some particularly useful starting points are likely to be Benjamin, Bourdieu and Agamben. This is so because of the prominent role given to language in their works. Additionally, Simmel and Durkheim have what may be described as ‘language moments’ in their work, but nothing like fully-fledged theories. These may be intriguing, if taken as fragmentary and treated accordingly. Foucault wrote about language in some very early articles and these deserve further attention, as does Baudrillard’s comments on symbolic exchange on graffiti. There are likely to be other texts within social theory that could be very useful for a revitalised sociology of language.

### The Endangered Languages Movement project

There is a social-language project that is developing increasing momentum and speed today, which is the ‘Endangered Languages Movement’. This project aims to protect, and sometimes to revitalise, language. The social aims that are connected to this are often stated as ‘safeguarding’, either specific cultures or humanity in general. This protectionist objective is a response to data from several sources on how nearly half of the world’s languages are predicted to become extinct within the next century. With no small measure of alarm, various agencies including individual linguists, religious bodies<sup>190</sup>, universities and supra-national groups are setting

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<sup>190</sup> The *Summer Institute for Linguistics* (SIL) is a ‘faith based’ organization with over 950 accredited linguists. Their remit is to translate the whole bible into the threatened language.

about to stop these languages from vanishing without trace. They do so by gathering, recording, storing, and disseminating vast amounts of language data from individual languages under threat. Sometimes these are in the form of oral recordings, sometimes the task is to create a detailed linguistic record using the conceptual tools of current linguistics. Since the mid-1990s, the Endangered Language Movement has increased in size and scope.

The University of Hawaii is one of the organisations involved in tabulating how many languages there are in the world, and how many are on the brink of disappearing (through their database ElCat). They offer a telling classification of the status of languages, using terms for languages as we use for living things: there are silent, sleeping, and finally, extinct languages. This image of languages as living things runs throughout the commentaries that make up the ELM. It feeds into the florid prose that accompanies this social-language project. The *Endangered Language Alliance* is a New York project recently discussed by Mark Turin on the BBC. He describes how the urban mix in New York City makes it one of the most linguistically diverse places in the world. It is also home to ‘the highest density of endangered languages per square mile on earth,’ thus making New York a ‘graveyard for languages’.

In defending the need to safeguard languages on the brink of disappearance, one set of discussions draw a clear analogy with the extinctions happening in the natural world and the need to record information (such as genetic information<sup>191</sup>). Another set of images relates language disappearance with cultural annihilation:

... a global language crisis is looming. Of the approximate 6,500 languages spoken on the planet, as many as 90% may be gone by the end of the 21st century. While languages have come and gone over the course of human history, the present rate of extinction is unprecedented. On average, one language dies every two weeks...As languages die, thousands of years of accumulated human knowledge, experience, creativity and evolution goes with them. Ken Hale, an MIT professor and language activist once said that losing any one language “is like dropping a bomb on the Louvre”. Given the depth of botanical, ecological, biological, geological, historical and cultural information each language carries, language loss has more of a cluster bomb effect, like knocking out the Louvre, The British Museum, The Smithsonian, The Museum of Natural History, The Met, and large sections of the Library of Congress in one go. (ELA: online, last accessed 30 Dec. 2012)

The moral dimensions of this movement come across in myriad ways, and it deserves to be more fully unpicked and explored. Challenging the premises of the movement seems to result in moral censure.

Turin is used to hearing sceptics dismiss the research. “I get a lot of people saying that they think this work is pointless as all minority languages that have no utility are better off dying off anyway – a kind of social Darwinian position,” he says. “But I usually ask them whether they feel the same about all the old churches and buildings that Heritage Lottery money is helping to restore – or the plight of species around the world. Our work means we’re helping

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<sup>191</sup> ‘The disappearance of a language means the loss of valuable scientific and cultural information, comparable to the loss of a species.’ From Endangered Language Project homepage.

not only endangered languages to stay with us, but all the culture and history that they denote.”  
(Guardian: online, last accessed, 30 Dec., 2012)

Another moral dimension of this project is the position that the most widely used languages are the cause of the threat to smaller languages. Against this, some are arguing that the ‘big’ languages are splintering and morphing, as will inevitably happen since language undergoes constant change. English may be the language of the Internet, but it is many Englishes.

The increasing prevalence of the internet in everyday life means that language online is not a zero sum game. Instead, it allows multiple languages to flourish.

“Most people actually speak multiple languages - it’s less common to only speak one,” says Mr Munro. “English has taken its place as the world’s lingua franca, but it’s not pushing out other languages.”

Instead, other languages are pushing their way into English, and in the process creating something new. (BBC online: last accessed, 30 Dec., 2012)

The Endangered Language Movement is a multifaceted movement involving a number of distinct projects. In this way, it appears an intriguing reflection of the philosophical and universal language projects of the seventeenth-century. Instead of a dozen individual scholars trying to solve social disorder by repairing language in a general way, however, the Endangered Language projects are collective enterprises of an unprecedented scale harnessing new technologies that offer unforeseen storage and transmission of huge language data they are collecting.

Perhaps the scale of the Endangered Language Movement is unprecedented only in temporal terms. It is reminiscent of other contemporary global scientific projects that countless individuals over the world contribute to, for example, monitoring climate change. When placed alongside such global initiatives, the Endangered Language Movement looks, in some ways, diminutive. And yet it is growing daily. Last year, Google launched an Endangered Movement Language site in order to help store and safeguard this precious element of humanity pointing to its global dimensions.

There is a global aspect in two senses: the subject – endangered languages – is seen to be spread across the globe, and this gets mapped, linguistically to show areas where there is the greatest language diversity and endangerment. It is also global in the sense of involvement of supra-national organisations, specifically the UN and the EU. The attempts by various parties to have a ‘charter of linguistic rights’ ratified bespeaks another dimension, namely the intriguing interplay between the universal and the distinctively local. ‘Universal’ should not be confused with ‘global’. Global can mean simply geographic spread whereas universal invokes a model of *homo linguis* with associated rights that applies to all people. It seems then, and research would need to bear this out, that the movement is global and universal, and still it is local and specific.

This research has pointed to two sites in the social where language has or is erupting. Both Treaty Seven and the Endangered Language Movement are points where language and the social can be seen as irreducibly connected and as rich sites for further analysis. They offer slightly

different yields. Treaty Seven has the potential to help us better investigate how language plays a role in creating and maintaining forms of social life, of brokering or failing to broker, agreement between collectives. The Endangered Language Movement could, handled carefully, reflect one of today's most widespread folk sociologies of language. In so doing, it may tell a great deal about assumptions we hold about what language and the social are and how they interact or intersect.

### **Folk sociologies of language and social-language projects**

The folk sociologies of language that arise from the nine social-language projects studied in the main part of this thesis have hopefully offered a number of ideas of how it is possible to envision social life as inseparable from language. This study has aimed to be a productive, but not a prescriptive, work in the sense that it presents pictures of language and the social without dictating what we should understand language or the social to be.

The social-language projects investigated above were complex attempts by scholars—philosophers and men of science—to utilise the best knowledge of their time in order to *do* something to the social with language. These projects are not formally linguistics of any kind, yet each drew upon the extant versions of linguistics and each rejected those language disciplines as, fundamentally, too narrow. The grammatical studies of the Latin tradition were hopelessly ‘confused’ in the face of real (vernacular and physical) language, according to Wilkins, Bulwer and Dalgarno. The dictionaries and grammars of the *Académie Française* and the Jesuits were ideologically restrictive, and stifled the knowledge and potential of humanity to reach toward moral good, towards happiness. The lexicographers that preceded Johnson, and the grammarians of schoolbooks, could not do justice to English as it was expressed in the best literature, the highest point of the culture and language, in Johnson’s view. The Grimms carried a Romantic ideal of the *Volk* with them as they moved from the research of collecting folktales to the careful phonetic studies upon which Jakob Grimm developed his ‘sound law’. But the language studies of their peers, while promising in some regards, failed to show the breadth or depth of form and meaning for the Grimms. The living words of the people were superior to myopic etymological researches carried out for their own sake. The editors of the OED respected the linguistics of their day, philology, as it had been practised on other major European languages, but they saw it as a problem that it had not yet been exercised on English. Even so, that field offered a basis for their ambitious project, and not an end in itself. Each project has a commitment that knowledge be put to use, as opposed to generating knowledge for the sake of storage. These projects should not be rejected as linguistically naïve.



What about the proto-sociologies that they present, are these naïve or are these vulgar? The images of social life that can be derived from these projects are rich, but partial. The images that they give us are idealisations of what social life could be, ought to be, or was once. In this way, they are more familiar as social philosophies than as sociologies. Unlike the cases of the language theories, these social-language projects did not reject the sociologies of their time as too narrow or too ideological, for the obvious reason that there was no sociology. They did engage with different cognate social philosophies. The debate between Dalgarno and Wilkins on the nature of Adam's faculty of language and Adam's actual language offers a clear example of this. From this debate flows a fully-fledged social epistemology and social ontology. This matters because of the two projects' overarching aim of trying to offer a means to peace, an end to the condition of humanity as in constant civil strife. Bulwer presented, in his writings, implicitly more than explicitly, a proto-sociological theory of civil society in opposition to primitive society. In his presentation of the *Chirologia* is an image of a residue of primitive life, powerful and problematic, undermining contemporary society. The *Encyclopédie* was a social political work, embodying certain ideals of liberty and authority which come across strongly in its character as a social-language project. Johnson's conception of languages and governments decaying and dying surprises the reader, as a basis upon which to design a dictionary, as do the moral dimensions that shine through in his uses of authority for a positive outcome. The Grimms have yielded a new social scientific field, folkloristics, the borderlands of which sometimes overlap with the borderlands of sociology. Yet their work is regarded as sociologically inadequate at best. At worst, they are seen as politically dangerous, leading directly to the most tragic and haunting events of the twentieth-century.

The fact that each of these works are projects, attempts to *do* something with language and the social, means that these works begin with the belief in their power over language and the social. Such a belief is not usually shared by sciences that purport to observe their object. These folk sociologies of language are based in a belief one can do something, not just reflect something. This fact makes the projects appear to fall onto a continuum from the earliest, wherein man is assumed to have the greatest control over his world and attributes, to the final ones, wherein all man can do is collect and inventory the world around him. Agency seems to recede even though man, then the people, comes forward. The seventeenth-century projects were concerned with fallen man, a condition acknowledging the inferiority of man as a being created by Divine power. Yet unexpectedly, these projects assume the greatest capacity for man in terms of making his social world, his language, his government. The eighteenth-century projects take a new entity, abstract man, man as observer to the universe. He occupies a special position, yet he cannot make or change language or the social in the way his predecessor, fallen man, could. The nineteenth-century

projects proposed man as an historical collective: the people. The people were not able change the conditions of their world, something inside, a *telos*, was moving them forward in time, changing their shape and structure. The best that could be done for a people was to paint its portrait. This new collective sense of man, the people, appears powerless in contrast to fallen man.

Concurrent to this idea of human power, or agency to use a more familiar term, is the question of controlling, regulating, legislating that surfaces in these projects. In each of these works, there is an objective to make, or form or preserve one of man's collective qualities: language. This is not the place to offer a new dualism (from structure-agency to legislating-efficacy, for example), but it is worth pointing out that it is possible to recast one of sociology's long-standing debates into slightly different terms through the lens of these projects. To make this a little clearer, it is a feature of each of these works, as projects, that where we can look at the role of the subject (and the subject's efficaciousness) we can see connected to it a role for the aim to control, to immobilise, to regulate, or to capture. These projects are rich sources for re-interrogating some of sociology's key debates and concepts.

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## RESOURCES SPECIFIC TO THE ELM

### Homepages

Linguist list ELCAT

<http://linguistlist.org/projects/elcat.cfm>

Endangered Languages

<http://www.endangeredlanguages.com/>

Endangered Language Alliance

<http://endangeredlanguagealliance.org/main/about>

Endangered Language Project

*The Endangered language fund* is a 'smallish' project affiliated with a few US scholars.

<http://www.endangeredlanguagefund.org/chomsky.php>

<http://www.endangeredlanguagefund.org/>

Foundation for Endangered Languages

<http://www.ogmios.org/>

Hans Rausing, SOAS

<http://www.hrelp.org/languages/>

Lyon

[http://www.ddl.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/colloques/31\\_2012/index.asp?Langues=EN&Page=](http://www.ddl.ish-lyon.cnrs.fr/colloques/31_2012/index.asp?Langues=EN&Page=)

Sosoro

<http://www.sorosoro.org/en/endangered-languages>

Summer Institute for Linguistics

<http://www.sil.org/sil/>

UNESCO

<http://www.unesco.org/new/en/culture/themes/endangered-languages/biodiversity-and-linguistic-diversity/>

### Relevant articles in the media

On the idea of a universal declaration of linguistic rights

[http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal\\_Declaration\\_of\\_Linguistic\\_Rights#section\\_1](http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universal_Declaration_of_Linguistic_Rights#section_1)

'Are dying languages worth saving?' BBC

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-11304255>

'New York, Graveyard of language'

<http://m.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-20716344>

'Vanishing languages' National Geographic

<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2012/07/vanishing-languages/rymer-text>

Guardian tabulation of extinct languages

<http://m.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/apr/15/language-extinct-endangered>

Telegraph on Google initiative

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/google/9346048/Google-to-save-endangered-languages.html>