

Grammar – the first covert operation of war



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DAVID G. BUTT, ANNABELLE LUKIN AND
 CHRISTIAN M.I.M. MATTHIESSEN
 MACQUARIE UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT. The cultural perturbations created by 11 September (9/11) have produced a layering of discourses. These layers offer a remarkable opportunity for interpreting ideology in relation to text construction. We examine two degrees of this textual dispersion: first, the motivated selection in the crafting of President Bush's first speech after 9/11; and second, the speech by British Lieutenant Colonel Tim Collins as he exhorts his troops before engagement in the war against Iraq of 2003. The texts are remarkable for their similarities and their differences – two different contexts in which humans are called to enact policy which involves behaviour that should be abhorrent. Bush presents an asymmetrical world (in moral, not economic, terms); and this asymmetry is mainly expressed in the consistent allocation of grammatical roles. Collins presents the regiment's task as a family mission, with dramatic switching between positive constructions of an Old Testament Iraq and the regiment ('family') on the one hand, and the 'rightful destruction' of the enemy, on the other hand. Again, but in more varied ways, it is the grammar which carries the burden of discriminating between those to be protected and those to be targeted. Ideology in language follows from the fact that we can construct multiple versions of the 'same' physical, biological, social and semiotic events.

KEY WORDS: 9/11, grammar, ideology, systemic functional linguistics

Introduction

11 September (9/11) has significantly altered the enactment of power in the global systems that mediate between nation states. From it has emerged an acceptance, by a number of countries, of the doctrine of 'pre-emptive strikes', which provided the publicly stated rationale for the wars in Afghanistan and with Iraq, and it has created an environment in which direct military conflicts with North Korea and with Iran are discussed as if they are legitimate topics of public

debate and government policy. In the process, the United Nations has been ignored or circumvented, much in the way that the League of Nations was marginalized before the Second World War.

None of these effects followed necessarily from the events of 9/11. These events were very complex, taking place within **systems of different orders** (see, e.g. Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999: Ch. 13): these events were, in order of increasing complexity, **physical** (the destruction of planes, buildings and other structures), **biological** (the killing and maiming of human organisms), **social** (the elimination of persons; and the tearing apart of social networks within families and other institutions) and **semiotic** (the silencing of meaners – with their personalized meaning potentials of experiences, memories, engagements with other meaners, and so on; and the tearing apart of networks of meaners – with their collective memories and joint constructions of knowledge). But the catalytic potential of the bombings in America is semiotic in the first instance – what the events are taken to signify; and here linguists (including discourse analysts) can make a key contribution (cf. Figure 1). The meaning of 9/11 is hotly contested, and for this reason, a volume of articles such as this one is timely.

9/11 was, as noted, a physical, biological, social and semiotic series of events; and it created waves and ripples within these four orders of system. Semiotically, there was an explosion of discourses within a multitude of different registers, ranging from public to private: live news reports, delayed news reports, news

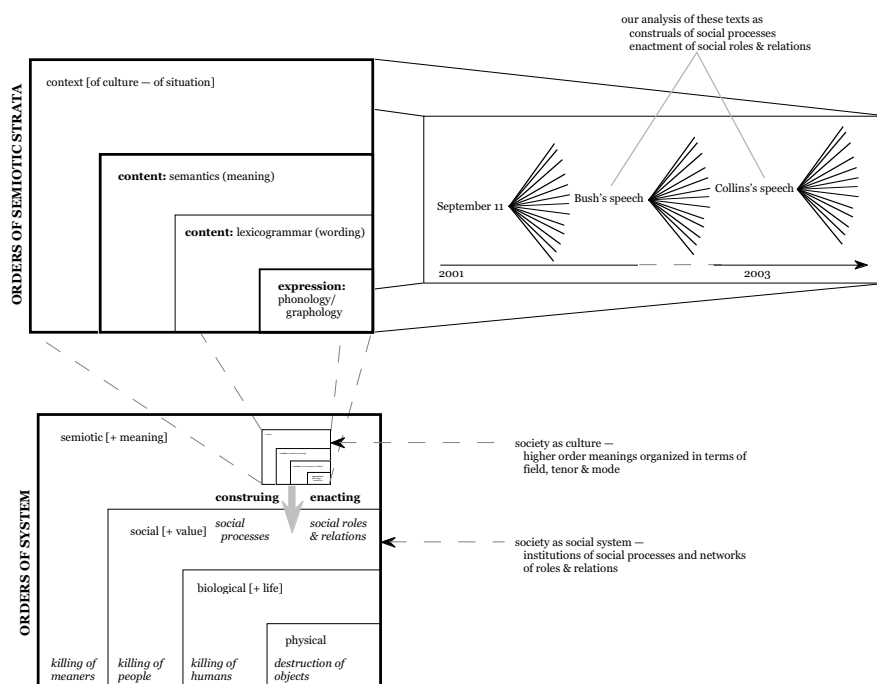


FIGURE 1. Orders of system, the systemic complexity of '9/11', and the focus of our analysis

commentaries, editorializing, statements and speeches by political leaders, essays by analysts, professional discourses of planning and procedure, medical consultations, conversations among friends and family members, and so on. These discourses served a rich and varied range of purposes, embodying both consensus and conflict; but it is possible to discern different 'inter-textual' paths through many of these discourses, as earlier discourses became part of the system of meanings that provided the semiotic environment for later ones. From all these possible paths, through innumerable discourses, we have selected two key texts. They instantiate two distinct, but related, registers (in the sense of 'text types') located within two distinct, but related, sociocultural contexts, which form part of the post-9/11 semiotic milieu. The first of these is Bush's State of the Union address delivered just nine days after the shocking events of 9/11. The second is a speech delivered by Lieutenant Colonel Tim Collins to British troops on the eve of the invasion of Iraq by coalition forces.

In analysing and interpreting these two texts, we will show the power of language to construe our experience of the social world, and to enact social roles and relations, while at the same time creating a universe of information. We are thus looking at how language serves to construe and enact patterns in **society as social system**; but we are also exploring how language helps create society at a higher order of complexity – that of semiotic systems (Figure 1). This is to view **society as culture** – as a system of meanings. Texts thus occur in contexts that are both social and cultural.

Our two texts are part of creating sociocultural contexts that explain and validate action to be taken. In Bush's speech – reported as 'Bush's Battle Cry' in *Newsweek* (1 October 2001), the focus was the response of US administration to 9/11, including the setting out of the 'state of affairs' which would make defensible and palatable a whole range of actions: increased defence spending, attacking Afghanistan and then Iraq, the killing of civilians and the potential loss of American soldiers in these conflicts. Collins was addressing soldiers who were about to face direct action as part of the process of enacting the response to 9/11, foreshadowed in Bush's speech. Both of these events were stage-managed for the global media – in the case of the Bush speech, the speech was written by a team of speech writers, and vetted by public relations, intelligence, and defence agencies; the *New York Times* (7 October 2001) reported 'the text got an extraordinary going-over', and *Newsweek* (1 October 2001) wrote 'There were 19 drafts, many pencil-edited by Bush, and repeated practices before the Teleprompter in the family theatre.' In the case of the Collins speech, we have not been able to determine anything about the media management of this event, although given that it received widespread coverage, and that apparently no other speech to troops going into the war was similarly reported, we can only assume it was designed as part of the Coalition's 'hearts and minds' strategy. There is now no doubt that many aspects of this war, like the first Gulf War, were heavily orchestrated in a bid to manage the 'public relations' side of the operations (Rampton and Stauber, 2003).

In exploring language in relation to these two orders of society, we focus on the contribution of lexicogrammatical patterning of content (Figure 1) – patterning created by the wording of the text. Within lexicogrammar, grammar has a particular power, because it lies beneath the threshold of consciousness. Whereas words – such as *terrorism* – have been consciously debated and attended to (see UN Secretary General Kofi Annan’s recent warnings on the use of the ‘T’ word: www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/030121/2003012130.html), the patterning of grammar in post-9/11 discourses has been much more consequential, but much less analysed or reflected on. It is this view of grammar – of **grammar as a covert operation** – which we bring to bear in this article on the consequences of forms of discourse for the construction of reality in the post-9/11 context. To some degree we also mention patterning within the higher level of content – semantic patterning, although this remains an area in which there is still much theoretical and descriptive work to be done (cf. Butt and Matthiessen, 2000; Cloran, 1994; Eiggins and Slade, 1997; Hasan, 1996a; Martin and Rose, 2003).

Before beginning our discussion, we note the constraints of dealing with two texts within the scope of the article, given that our method requires detailed explication of the grammatical patterns. Bush’s speech alone is nearly 3000 words, so it will not be possible to reproduce the text (although this can be found at www.tamu.edu/scom/pres/speeches/bushsept20.html), much less present an exhaustive discussion of the grammatical patterning of the text. We can, therefore, present only some of the findings from our analysis. For both speeches, the details of analysis can be viewed at http://minerva.ling.mq.edu.au/resource/VirtuallLibrary/Publications/grammar_of_war.htm.

A call to the nation – ‘Bush’s Battle Cry’

Bush’s speech of 21 September is a significant semiotic event in the shaping of acts of meaning, social processes, and material action since 9/11. The speech was broadcast across the globe, and was much debated in the following days and weeks. The speech came after a series of faux pas in the days following the attack, in which President Bush had referred to the perpetrators of the attack as ‘folks’, and had called the coming conflict a ‘crusade’. It was heralded by the *New York Times* (7 October 2001) as ‘2988 Words That Changed a Presidency’; and *Newsweek* (1 October 2001) wrote ‘W [W = Bush] becomes a war president’.

Bush’s speech sought to explain the events of 9/11, and to set out the US government’s response. The Macro-Theme¹ (Martin, 1993) is Bush’s praise of the courage and endurance shown in the face of adversity – interpreted as an indication of the strong state of the union. This leads to his expression of gratitude to the Congress and the world. This is in turn followed by the bulk of the speech, which includes a quasi-dialogue with Americans – questions being asked by ‘Americans’, including: *Who attacked our country?; Why do they hate us?; How will we fight and win this war?; What is expected of us?*, and answers provided by Bush.

(The quasi-dialogue can be contrasted with the statistics on actual dialogues with the American people, even dialogue mediated by journalists: veteran White House correspondent Helen Thomas, who has been a journalist for 59 years, has commented [as quoted in the *Sydney Morning Herald Good Weekend Magazine*, 2 August 2003]: ‘This President has given only eight press conferences. He doesn’t want to answer questions, not from me, not from anyone.’ This is very low compared with his father’s 58 press conferences in his first two years in office.) This dialogue with Americans is interleaved with a set of commands issued to the Taliban, reassuring statements made to Muslims, an announcement of the creation of the Office of Homeland Security, and a call to the military to *be ready* since *The hour is coming when America will act and you will make us proud*. The macro-New of the whole speech is Bush’s resolve, and an invocation of God.

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The speeches of US presidents, in particular since the Second World War, involve highly complex combinations of contextual parameters. The degree of complexity follows from the heterogeneous audiences to which the wordings are addressed. The historical timing of Bush’s speech (i.e. post 9/11) and current technology meant that Bush’s audience was extended beyond the immediate space of the Congress to a degree perhaps never experienced by preceding presidents. The tenor, field and mode values (Butt, 2002; Halliday and Hasan, 1989; technical terms used are from networks in Butt, 2002) relevant to the speech are notable for their ambivalence – contextually, the speech is a play of mirrors, reflecting back dimensions of often contrastive situations and styles.

For instance, in the tenor values we find those factors of ‘social hierarchy’ and ‘agentive role’ typically associated with exalted office. Summarizing the relevant contrasts that a more systematic account would itemize, we might say that aspects of the situation signal legally defined authority, which is not up for negotiation or reciprocation with respect to its audience (i.e. the audience will accept decisions, not assist in making them). At the same time, Bush plays on the values of ‘inherent roles’, i.e. ‘familial’, as well as ‘peer group’ relations. American audiences may ‘hear’ the words as indicative of complex personal connections (rather than ‘uniplex’) links: certain constructions appear to be motivated to suggest shared ‘local history’ and ‘cultural capital’ in common.

Similar ambivalence can be seen in the values of field (activity) and of mode (organization of channel). This crucial generalization can be gleaned from the large number of sub-specifications from detailed context networks. But at this point, it may be more useful to set out from the following synopsis: the speech brings together values which typically reflect contrastive situations – in field, for example, the speech appears to evoke both ‘institutional’ and ‘individuated’ content, with material actions both immediate and deferred; the mode is written, yet crafted to create a certain figure as spoken delivery, and in both ‘face to face’ and ‘electronically carried’ forms.

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS: LEXICOGRAMMAR

Lexicogrammar is a resource for making meaning as patterns of wording within the three functional domains of language – the ideational, the interpersonal and the textual (Butt et al., 2001; Halliday, 1994; Matthiessen, 1995): (i) ideational resources, including the system of TRANSITIVITY, construe our experience of the world; (ii) interpersonal resources, including the systems of MOOD and MODALITY, enact our social roles and relations; and (iii) textual resources, including the system of THEME, organize ideational and interpersonal meanings as a flow of information that is possible for listeners and readers to process. We present findings from the analysis of the systems of transitivity, mood and modality, drawing out important facets of the style and ideology of the Bush speech.

IDEATIONAL PATTERNS IN TRANSITIVITY

In exploring the field construed by Bush's speech, we are concerned with the world-view that he represents and assumes. One central focus of this world-view is to construe the nature of the 'enemy'. This is partly achieved through the range of ways it is named by means of the grammar of the nominal group: as Al Qaeda, also extended to the Taliban, as 'enemies of freedom', or through the generic category of 'terrorist'. The deployment of the term 'terrorist' has been crucial, and much debated since 9/11. We need also to explore the creation of the category of 'enemy' through considering the kinds of process that the 'enemy' is represented as participating in, since it is through the allocation of participant roles (following Halliday, 1994), such as Actor, Senser, Sayer, Carrier, Token and Value that the category will be built up in the text.

The primary process types are: material, behavioural, mental, verbal, relational and existential. By far the predominant grammatical role for the 'enemy' in Bush's speech is that of Actor in a material process clause. In other words, the category of 'enemy' is defined in Bush's speech through action, rather than through attribute, or through what the 'enemy' says, or means. Not surprisingly, these actions are ones that would typically be viewed as negative (see Table 1 for a selection of material clauses in which the 'enemy' is Actor).

TABLE 1. 'Terrorist/Taliban/Al Qaeda' as Actor

<i>Actor</i>	<i>Process</i>	<i>Goal</i>
[The terrorist directive commands] them	to kill	Christians and Jews
(as above)	to kill	all Americans
It	is not only repressing	its own people;
it	is threatening	people everywhere
They	want to overthrow	existing governments in many Muslim countries, such as Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan
[by them]	have been brutalized	Afghanistan's people

TABLE 2. 'US' as Actor

Actor	Process	Goal
We	will direct	every resource at our command – every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence and every necessary weapon of war
We	will starve	terrorists (of funding)
(by us)	must be coordinated	These efforts
He (Head of Office of Homeland Security)	will lead, oversee and coordinate	a comprehensive national strategy to safeguard our country against terrorism and respond to any attacks that may come
we	will come together to strengthen	our intelligence capabilities

By contrast, the kinds of action in which the US (in all the manifestations we see in the speech: the administration, the congress, the people and named individuals) is a participant are evaluated as largely neutral or positive ones. A particular contrast to note comes when we examine the grammar of the actions that 'will' be taken by the US in direct response to the attack of 11 September. A selection of these is set out in Table 2.

By contrasting Tables 1 and 2, we discover some interesting patterns. The 'enemy' engages in largely negatively evaluated kinds of action, that action is often concrete and physical (*kill, repress, brutalize*), and involves action over human beings (*all Americans, its own people, Afghanistan's people, etc.*). Although we do find the 'US' as Actor in a process in which the Goal is 'terrorists', note that the most ferocious to be found in the speech is *We will starve terrorists of funding*. Otherwise, the US response to terrorism is largely construed in indirect and abstract terms, as exemplified in Table 2. There is also a mental analogue of those negatively valued material clauses where the 'enemy' serves as Actor: [Senser:] *they* + [Process:] *hate* + [Phenomenon:] *us/ a democratically elected government/ freedoms*. This contrasts with [Senser:] *we* + [Process:] *respect* + [Phenomenon:] *Muslims/ your faith*. Not surprisingly, the 'enemy' is denied the role of Sayer; what they have actually said is neither quoted nor reported.

Bush's closing statement in his speech – *Fellow citizens, we'll meet violence with patient justice* – can be seen retrospectively to provide a summary of the semantic characterization his speech offers on the two motifs of explicating the enemy and setting out the US' response to 9/11: what 'they' have done is 'violence', and what 'we' will do is 'patient justice'. Although it might also have been said that the killing would be responded to with more killing, there are many ways to construe any set of events. The grammar provides both concrete and abstract ways of construing violence: both modes can be found in Bush's speech, one used for the

'enemy', the other to construe the future US actions (cf. Halliday and Matthiessen's, 1999: Ch. 6, analysis of an extract from a Pentagon manual).

To give the enemy such a material, dynamic grammatical profile through the transitivity selections is often not the choice of leaders speaking of political enemies. But in this case, the powerful, negative actuality of 'them' makes the world (as constructed by the grammar) appear a more dangerous place.

The combination of the process with participants involved in it can be augmented by circumstantial elements of time, place, cause, manner, comparison, etc. (Halliday, 1994). The dominant circumstantial selections in Bush's text are those of place (45%) and time (20%). This may seem unremarkable (cf. the counts for English in general in Matthiessen, 1999, in press); but if we probe the nature of these circumstantial selections, an interesting pattern emerges: almost all of the temporal circumstances construe time which is concrete and 'here-and-now', as in *Tonight we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom*. By contrast, many of the spatial circumstances construe abstract space, for example:

And they will follow that path all the way to where it ends: in history's unmarked grave of discarded lies.

And night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack.

And many concrete circumstances of place are in some way left underspecified, as in *we will drive them from place to place*.

The contrast between the abstract or underspecified nature of the space and the highly concrete construal of time creates a strange kind of tension in Bush's speech. The here-and-now sense of time gives a strongly 'realis' sense to the view of the world being depicted and the actions to be taken. However, the abstract sense of space, in combination with the deployment of a range of abstract concepts such as 'freedom', adds an 'irrealis' or ungrounded feel to the 'reality' Bush explicates.

Time is also construed through tense selections within the verbal group that serves as the Process of the clause. Here the speech is only minimally concerned with the past. Its focus in temporal terms is either the future (largely, 'what we will do'), or an extended present time of habitual patterns. For instance, when Bush says *these terrorists kill not merely to end lives but to disrupt and end a way of life*, the tense selection constructs not an immediate time ('here-and-now'), but habitual time, so that the action of 'killing' is seen as a characteristic behaviour of 'these terrorists'.

In fact, there is a systematic pattern of co-selection, which can be observed in relation to tense selection and the selection of material process. For actions in which the US (in its various manifestations in the speech) has the Actor role, the tense is predominantly future: of concern is not what the US has done in the past, or its habitual activities, but predominantly what the US 'will do'. By contrast, for actions in which 'terrorists' (in their various manifestations in the speech) have the Actor role, the tense selection is likely to be present, and predominantly

habitual present, i.e. the construal of characteristic behaviours. This can be seen to tie in with the role of action as the main mode for construing the nature of the ‘enemy’.

INTERPERSONAL PATTERNS IN MOOD AND MODALITY

In exploring the kind of tenor relations set up by the text, we need to consider the semantic system of SPEECH FUNCTION (Halliday, 1984; Martin, 1992), and its realization in the grammatical system of MOOD, as well as MODALITY (Halliday, 1994).

In relation to speech function, Bush’s speech involves both giving information (propositions: statements), and demanding goods-&-services (proposals: commands). Bush issues commands, more specifically demands for services in the form of action, to three groups – the Taliban, the US military and the American people, with the nature of the command varying from one group to another.

In the case of the Taliban, Bush issues an extensive list of non-negotiable commands, all realized in the grammatically congruent mood of the imperative. In the case of the US military, Bush issues a single command, also in the imperative mood: *Be ready*. In the case of the American people, Bush’s commands are put in less congruent terms; for instance:

I ask you to continue to support the victims of this tragedy . . .

I ask for your patience . . .

I ask your continued participation and confidence in the American economy . . .

Bush also makes statements that are realized by declarative clauses. Only 6 percent of these are modalized. Because most clauses are non-modalized, the effect created is one of categoriality: past, present and future events are presented without any allowance for uncertainty. The interpretation of the world, as he presents it, involves largely only the choice of ‘is’ or ‘isn’t’ (as with Bush’s *Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists.*) – there are few shades of grey. It is not an interpretation of detailed discriminations or qualified forecasts.

Another key interpersonal system is the resource for enacting interpersonal assessments – the system of APPRAISAL, realized in the first instance through positive and negative connotation in lexis (Eggins and Slade, 1997; Martin, 2000; Martin and Rose, 2003). The speech is suffused with appraisal, with a number of motifs running through it as prosodies – for example, decency, freedom, justice, grief, anger, fear, terror, atrocity. While there is no space to present all the patterns of appraisal in Bush’s speech, we have already noted one recurrent pattern: the enemy is represented by nominal groups with negatively evaluated nouns (*enemies [of freedom], terrorist, traitor; regime*), processes involving the enemy as participant are realized by verbal groups with a negatively evaluated verb (*kill, repress, brutalize, aid/ abet/ commit + murder, jail, overthrow, disrupt, sacrifice*) and these are directed against participants realized by nominal groups with positively evaluated nouns (e.g. *our country, American embassies, all Americans, civilians, Christians and Jews, Afghanistan’s people; freedom*).

SUMMARY

Bush's speech both demonizes, and sanitizes: he depicts the 'enemy' as violent and brutal, while the actions to be taken by the US in response are presented in neutral or positive terms, through abstract modes of representation. His speech combines a simple logical structure, in which events are construed as predominantly a set of accumulating 'facts' (see additional analysis on the website). The 'factness' of these 'facts' is created by the virtual absence of modality, so that the world is presented in terms of 'is' and 'isn't'.

The speech helped create the conditions for an ongoing war, with all that that entails (cf. John L. Casti's notion of 'social mood' – what we might interpret as **socio-semiotic mood** – as the cause of war. See Casti, 1991 for early discussions of the ideas leading to this concept): *Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any other we have seen*. Many motifs can, of course, be found in discourses by various US officials both before and after Bush's speech. For example, on 4 June 2001, Rumsfeld said to US troops at the Incirlik Airbase in Turkey: *You're helping to contain Iraq. And you're preventing them from attacking their neighbors and menacing the Kurds in Northern Iraq and threatening vital security interests*. Such motifs are instantiated again and again – they are **habituated** – in a myriad of contexts, and become part not only of the US government's collective meaning potential, but also over time of the general public's collective meaning potential, so that the members of the public are prepared for actions taken by the government – as with *From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime*. But because of Bush's institutional role as the President of the US and his semiotic access to not only the US Congress and people, but also to so much of the rest of the world, his speech was obviously given a high status as a source of meanings for future discourses. Let us now turn to another speech that Bush's speech helped create the context for – another speech given by a leader to his 'constituency', but now on a much smaller scale: the speech given by Lieutenant Tim Collins to his troops before they took part in the attack on Iraq.

*Allaying fears in the theatre of war:
Lieutenant Colonel Tim Collins's address to troops*

Lieutenant Colonel Tim Collins's speech was picked up by the media, thus becoming the node in a number of semiotic paths through other discourses and being assigned value far beyond its immediate sociocultural context – just like Bush's speech. One commentator (Macintyre, *Times on Line* 2/4/03) described Collins as having 'written (*sic*) a simple and stirring prose-poem for the 21st century soldier.' Echoing one move in the oration itself, the commentary concludes: 'You will have to go a long way to find a more decent, generous and upright evocation of what modern war means.' Columnist Alexander Chancellor wrote that the speech was admired by both Prince Charles and President Bush and that Collins's

'overblown eve-of-battle oration is reported to have so entranced the US president that he pinned a copy of it to his office wall' (*The Guardian*, 31 May 2003). If Collins's speech served as a semiotic pin-up for Bush, this would constitute another link of semiotic resonance between the two men whose speeches we have selected for analysis.

Other evaluations are far more ambivalent. BBC News (20/3/03) reviewed the reactions, from effusive in the *Sun* ('worthy of Shakespeare') to more measured speculations on how the words may have sounded to 'cynical civilian ears.' The British Helsinki Human Rights Group claimed that it could incite war crimes (<http://www.bhhrg.org/LatestNews.asp?ArticleID=19>). During the war, Collins and his regiment did not take part in combat, but 'spent most of the war protecting the Rumaila oilfields in southern Iraq and prisoners of war' (*The Guardian*, 23 May 2003). Even so, the Ministry of Defence launched an investigation into how he ran his regiment after a US military officer claimed that captured Iraqis had been abused (*The Guardian*, 23 May 2003). A. Chancellor suggested 'that the Americans have picked on Collins in order to discredit their British allies' (*The Guardian*, 31 May 2003). Later, Collins sued two newspapers over 'war crime claims' (*The Irish Examiner*, 25 June 2003). All these public discourses can be interpreted as semiotic ripples following the speech given by Collins. The speech is set out in Table 3; this is the version presented by the Murdoch Press (via *The Daily Telegraph*) in Australia (other versions on the Web suggest some differences of wording and sequence).

CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The speech – before his regiment's first engagement in the Coalition invasion of Iraq, March 2003 – had to address a number of demanding audiences. Beside his regiment, there are military and political hierarchies monitoring the performance. These are not only the hierarchies of the UK. Then there are the viewers and readers of media more generally. The situation, therefore, involves remarkable extremes in its contextual variables (Butt, 2002): with different phases of the discourse we can see dramatic changes in the parameters of field (the social action and the subject matter evoked by the text), tenor (the social roles and relations) and mode (the role played by the text in its context). For instance, the field is changing between 'action' and 'reflection'; between 'specialized' and 'quotidian' spheres of activity; between 'immediate' and 'long-term' goal orientation. The tenor foregrounds 'hierarchy' while ostensibly articulating 'solidarity'; it draws attention to 'codal sharing' (institutions in common: the 'family' of the regiment) as it highlights the 'repercussive' nature of the paternalistic advisory relationship; and it presents an 'appointed' institutional role as if it were 'inherent'. The mode has characteristics of both the immediate 'phonic' channel and the form of a 'written' medium (i.e. it is also organized for posterity and for 'graphic' distribution, as suggested by the reference above to 'written . . . prose-poem'). We now move to examine how the complex pressures of the context are played out in the semiotic organization of the text.

TABLE 3. *Phases in Tim Collins's speech*

<i>Number</i>	<i>Semantic Phase</i>	<i>Grammatical realization – Clauses #</i>
(I)	Engagement: personal survival [Exordium – Introduction]	[1.1] It is my foremost intention to bring every single one of you out alive, [1.2] but there may be people among us who will not see the end of this campaign. [2.1] We will put them in their sleeping bags [2.2] and send them back. [3] There will be no time for sorrow.
(II)	Proposition 1: justice and retribution – [Inventio]	[4.1] The enemy should be in no doubt [4.2] that we are his nemesis and [4.3] that we are bringing about his rightful destruction. [5.1] There are many regional commanders who have stains on their souls [5.2] and they are stoking the fires of hell for Saddam. [6] He and his forces will be destroyed by this coalition for what they have done. [7.1] As they die [7.2] they will know [7.3] their deeds have brought them to this place. [8] Show them no pity.
(III)	Proposition 2: liberate not conquer	[9.1] We go [9.2] to liberate, [9.3] not to conquer. [10] We will not fly our flags in their country. [11.1] We are entering Iraq [11.2] to free a people [11.3] and the only flag which will be flown in that ancient land is their own. [12] Show respect for them.
(IV)	Proposition 3: choice and enemy deaths	[13] There are some who are alive at this moment who will not be alive shortly. [14] Those who do not wish to go on that journey, we will not send. [15.1] As for the others, I expect [15.2] you to rock their world. [16.1] Wipe them out [16.2] if that is what they choose.
(V)	Homile: ferocious and magnanimous	[17.1] But if you are ferocious in battle, [17.2] remember to be magnanimous in victory.
(VI)	Warning: killing, Caine, and the law	[18] It is a big step to take another human life. [19] It is not to be done lightly. [20] I know of men who have taken life needlessly in other conflicts. [21.1] I can assure you [21.2] they live with the mark of Caine upon them. [22.1] If someone surrenders to you [22.2] then remember [22.3] they have that right in international law [22.4] and ensure that one day they go home to their family. [23] The ones who wish to fight, well, we aim to please.
(VII)	Conditions: regiment as 'family' history	[24.1] If you harm the regiment or its history by over-enthusiasm in killing, or in cowardice, [24.2] know [24.3] it is your family who will suffer. [25.1] You will be shunned [25.2] unless your conduct is of the highest, [25.3] for your

		deeds will follow you down through history. [26] We will bring shame on neither our uniform nor our nation.
(VIII)	Interlude: chemical weapons analysis	[27.1] It is not a question of if – [27.2] it's a question of when. [28.1] We know [28.2] he has already devolved the decision to lower commanders, [28.3] and that means he has already taken the decision himself. [29.1] If we survive the first strike [29.2] we will survive the attack.
(IX)	Elaboration: us 'steeped in history'	[30] Iraq is steeped in history. [31] It is the site of the Garden of Eden, of the Great Flood and the birthplace of Abraham. [32] Tread lightly there. [33.1] You will see things that no man could pay to see [33.2] and you will have to go a long way [33.3] to find a more decent, generous and upright people than the Iraqis. [34.1] You will be embarrassed by their hospitality [34.2] even though they have nothing. [35.1] Don't treat them as refugees, [35.2] for they are in their own country.
(X)	Extension: us in children's future	[36] Their children will be poor. [37.1] In years to come they will know [37.2] that the light of liberation in their lives was brought by you.
(XI)	Codicil: give dignity in death	[38.1] If there are casualties of war [38.2] then remember [38.3] that when they woke up [38.4] and got dressed in the morning [38.5] they did not plan to die this day. [39] Allow them dignity in death. [40.1] Bury them properly [40.2] and mark their graves.
(XII)	Coda: optative of our survival and our action	[41.1] As for ourselves, let's bring everyone home [41.2] and leave Iraq a better place [41.3] for us having been there. [42] Our business now is north.

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS – SEMANTIC PHASES

Linguistic evidence suggests the following **rhetorical phases** in the speech (Table 3). These phases are the 'units' of meaning within which choices can be identified – for instance, imperative mood is motivated by different purposes at different points in the flux of the speech.

LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS

As in the case of Bush's speech, we carry out a multifunctional analysis; but here we say something about semantic patterns and, in addition to ideational and interpersonal patterns, we also attend to patterns within textual resources, focusing on the flow of themes and of news in the text.

Textual patterns

Collins selects as the point of departure of his address to the troops his intention to bring them all back alive together with the concession that some of them may die ([1] to [3]). This is the **macro-Theme** of the text (cf. Martin, 1993) – the soldiers' fate in relation to their leader's intention. He picks this motif up again at the end of the speech, making it the **macro-New** (Martin, 1993) that everyone can take away from the speech ([41] to [42]): [41.1] *As for ourselves, let's bring everyone home. . .* The very last clause indicates their agenda and fate: *our business is north*, with the destination *north* as the final clausal news.

Within this global flow of information, Collins sets up more local textual patterns, one for each of the semantic phases discussed earlier. Thus, the first four phases are organized as shown in Table 4. As we have seen, the first phase is the 'macro-Theme' of the whole text. The next three phases start with a statement as Theme, and end with a command to the troops as New.

What emerges is thus a **hierarchy of periodicity** in the organization of the flow of information. This pattern is also achieved locally, within each clause and each clause complex (orthographic 'sentence'). The selections of Theme and New information make sense locally, enabling the listeners to track the development of the text. For example, in [6] to [7.3.] there is a consistent thematic motif concerned with the enemy: *he and his forces – they – they – their deeds*. But these local patterns also **accumulate** as the text unfolds, and they set up powerful textual combinations of Theme + New. Let's consider the most significant ones.

The most common clausal Theme is 'we' – Collins and his troops: clauses [2.1], [2.2], [4.2], [4.3], [9.1], [9.2], [9.3], [10], [11.1], [11.2], [26], [28.1], [29.1], [29.2], [41.1], [41.2], [41.3], [42]. This gets paired with a number of points of news taken from the fields of war (*liberate, conquer, destruction, strike, attack; nemesis*), location and movement in (concrete or abstract) space (*back, home, better place, there, north; go*), patriotism (*uniform and nation*), and (the people of) Iraq (*their country, a people, Iraq*).

In addition to being included with Collins as 'we', the soldiers also figure on their own as Theme – either in terms of 'you' in statements or in terms of actions

TABLE 4. *Flow of information in the first four phases of Collins's speech*

Phase	'Theme'	'New'
I	[1] It is my foremost intention to bring every single one of you out alive but there may be people among us who will not see the end of this campaign.	[3] There will be no time for sorrow.
II	[5] The enemy should be in no doubt	[8] Show them no pity!
III	[9] We go to liberate not to conquer.	[12] Show respect for them!
IV	[13] There are some who are alive at this moment who will not be alive shortly.	[15] I expect you to rock their world!

in commands: clauses [8], [12], [15.2], [16.1], [17.1], [17.2], [22.2], [22.4], [24.1], [24.2], [25.1], [25.2], [25.3], [32], [33.1], [33.2], [33.3], [34.1], [35.1], [38.2], [39], [40.1], [40.2]. The pattern of pairings with *New* is different from that of ‘we’. The third major thematic motif – the enemy – is combined with yet another kind of news: clauses [4.1], [6], [7.1], [7.2], [7.3], [22.1], [22.3], [23], [28.2], [38.3], [38.4], [38.5].

Interpersonal patterns

The textual analysis reveals how Collins has made selections to create a flow of information in the text. At the same time, he is also making interpersonal meanings – enacting social roles and relations. The text is interpersonally very complex, partly because Collins has to constrain his troops at the same time as he incites them to action in battle. At one level, the text is a macro-command serving as a protocol for the troops in their warfare: the soldiers’ conduct is regulated through a series of commands where they are assigned modal responsibility for complying by actualizing processes within their mental, as well as their material, realm: [8], [12], [15], [16], [22], [24], [32], [35], [38], [39], [40].

These commands are almost all realized **congruently** (‘directly’) by ‘imperative’ clauses. There only a few metaphorical (‘indirect’) realizations of commands.

- 1 In [15], the command is ‘projected’ by Collins’s desire (*I expect*).
- 2 The conditional clause in [24] can be interpreted as meaning ‘Don’t harm the regiment. . .!’.
- 3 Finally, the negative-conditional clause in [25] (*unless your conduct is of the highest*) also embodies a command, with the undesirable state-of-affairs presented as the main clause: ‘Conduct yourselves superbly, otherwise you will be shunned!’.

This thus involves the regulatory strategy of emotional blackmail; cf. a parent’s controlling technique: *if you do that again, I’ll be cross with you*. The commands become increasingly frequent as the speech proceeds, culminating with [38] to [40] in the penultimate phase. In the final phase, Collins becomes inclusive, adding two inclusive commands ([41]) to one he has issued earlier ([26]).

The commands tend to be supported by statements that will motivate the troops to comply. For example, the command in [35.1] is supported by the statement in [35.2]; and the whole passage of [30] to [34] is a series of statements giving positively evaluated information about (the people of) Iraq.

The interpersonal congruence in the realization of commands produces some counterpoint with the experiential selections in process type discussed later. The frequency of clauses that are interpersonally imperative and experientially mental results in the unreal or hypothetical experience that the text creates, despite its role in a context of extreme (albeit incipient) action. The troops are commanded to adopt a ‘mental’ state or attitude – compare Bush’s speech: *I know many citizens have fears tonight, and I ask you to be calm and resolute*.

As noted, the commands assign the troops (‘you’) the modal responsibility of

complying. This modal responsibility is embodied in the interpersonal function of Subject in the clause (as would be shown explicitly by tags and responses, e.g. *tread lightly there, will you! – no, I won't*). The troops figure prominently as Subject in 'imperative' clauses, and this naturally sets them apart from the other referents in the text. Their service as Subject in other mood types is much more restricted. They serve as Subject in two 'bound' clauses of condition and one 'declarative' clause associated with conditionality of conduct in Phases V ([17]) and VII ([24], [25]) and in three 'declarative' clauses in Phase IX ([33], [34]), which are predictions of what the soldiers will meet in Iraq (as in an advertisement for travel).

Interpersonally, Collins thus leaves no doubt: the soldiers' conduct is entirely regimented – even their mental conduct. He enacts the hierarchy of command through his speech.

At the same time, he also enacts the solidarity of group membership in a large number of clauses in which he assigns modal responsibility to himself plus his troops (Subject = *we [us], let's*): [2.1], [2.2], [4.2], [4.3], [9.1], [9.2], [9.3], [10], [11.1], [11.2], [14], [23], [26], [28.1], [29.1], [29.2], [41.1], [41.2], [41.3], [42]. These clauses are predominantly 'declarative' or 'bound'; but there are two 'imperative' ones in the last phase of the speech, the Coda – clauses [41.1] and [41.2].

The choice of mood and the assignment of modal responsibility create an ongoing exchange between Collins and his troops. Other members of the immediate audience – and all those of us who access the text from a safe distance – become, in effect, eavesdroppers: the interpersonal relationship of interaction is between Collins ('me') and his troops ('you'); all others are non-interactants. At the same time, Collins also charges his text with **interpersonal assessments**. He achieves these assessments through a combination of grammar and lexis (appraisal). For example, in clause [4.1] the lexical items *enemy* and *doubt* have negative connotations; but when they are combined with the grammar's contribution of modality – either probability or obligation (*should*) – and negative polarity (*no* in *no doubt*), the net lexicogrammatical effect is positive assessment. Similarly, *destruction* is negative, but when it is modified by the positive *rightful* and involves the enemy, the net effect is positive. Lexically, the main contrast is 'snarl' versus 'purr', and these are manifested in a number of interpersonally important domains (such as human relationships – 'snarl': *enemy, nemesis*; justice – 'purr': *rightful, right, international law*). These two poles of assessment are woven through the whole text, with the exception of Phase VIII – the Interlude.

Interpersonal assessments are always **calibrated against a characteristic setting of tenor values**. For example, in enacting his assessments in the exchange of meanings with his troops, Collins can assign negative value to Saddam Hussein and his armed forces as *nemesis* to be *wiped out*. Here Collins is no doubt both relying on a shared view and also reinforcing it: such value systems are of course created, maintained and negotiated through language in the first instance – though on this occasion there is no room for negotiation since you are expected to share the value system to be a member of Collins's troops. Thus when Collins speaks of the enemy's *rightful destruction*, he draws on volumes of

discourse produced since the Gulf War and in particular since 9/11: he relies on politicians such as Bush and other opinion-makers having done the semiotic work needed to make something as profoundly and unambiguously immoral as killing a fellow human – immoral according to all the systems covered by Aldous Huxley's notion of the 'Perennial Philosophy' that is our collective human inheritance and treasure – seem acceptable as 'rightful destruction'.

But there is a disjunction here: while 'the enemy' in Phase II is evaluated negatively, Iraq and the people of Iraq are evaluated positively in Phase IX:

Phase II – enemy: enemy, nemesis, rightful destruction, fires of hell for Saddam, destroy, die, no pity

Phase IX – (people of) Iraq: steeped in history, Garden of Eden. . . , decent, generous, upright, hospitality

The chasm that is created between 'the enemy' and the people of Iraq echoes Bush's speech – '*The United States respects the people of Afghanistan. After all, we are currently its largest source of humanitarian aid, but we condemn the Taliban regime*', and it is maintained in Collins' speech: he moves from '*Show them no pity!*' via '*We go to liberate not to conquer*', where the Goal of liberating and conquering is left implicit, to '*we will not fly our flag in their country*' and '*we are entering Iraq to free a people*'. The referent of them in '*show them no pity*' is clearly 'Saddam and his forces'; but by the time Collins gets to '*their country*', the referent has shifted covertly to 'the people of Iraq'. This kind of chasm between 'the enemy' and the people of a country is bridged by a single clause in Wolfgang Borchert's haunting Second World War short story *An diesem Dienstag* ('On this Tuesday'; see e.g. <http://www.primacom.net/pittelkau/archiv/Wolfgang%20Borchert%20-%20An%20diesem%20Dienstag.pdf>) – *Im Krieg sind alle Väter Soldat*: in war, all fathers are soldiers. This relational clause which brings out the identity of the role of father (somebody of the people) with that of soldier (somebody of the enemy) is repeated several times in Borchert's short story; but it is a point that is excluded from Collins's speech – one that has to be, because the notion of destroying and wiping out fathers while showing them no pity is not tenable.

Experiential patterns

While Collins's speech creates a largely congruent relationship between the grammar of mood and the enactment of the social roles and relations – in particular, the hierarchy of command, his experiential choices create a number of metaphorical patterns: the relationship between the experience of the world of warfare and Collins' construal of it in the grammar is often 'indirect'. One reason for this is of course that the speech is concerned with a protocol for warfare, not a procedure. But the protocol is a fairly 'indirect' one, involving abstraction and metaphor – *show + pity, respect; rock + world; allow + dignity in death*. Let us consider the experiential features of the speech in general, and then return to the key motif of how warfare is construed.

The speech is framed by two ‘equations’ – two identifying relational clauses, with the verb *be* as the Process:

[1.1] It is my foremost intention [[to bring every single one of you out alive]]

[43] Our business now is north.

The first one says ‘to bring every single one of you out alive represents what I primarily want’. The second one says ‘north represents what we must do’. Both thus serve to interpret something for the troops in terms of processes – Collins’s desire and their collective action, respectively. What Collins wants is given the status of macro-Theme, whereas what he and his troops must do is given the status of macro-New. Both clauses are metaphorical in the way they construe experience. The first is a metaphorical variant of ‘I primarily want to bring every single one of you out alive’. The second is also metaphorical; but finding a congruent variant is harder. It means something like ‘we must act in the north’, suggesting that *business* embodies a sense of obligation as well as activity. Because of the metaphor, persons are not construed as congruent participants, but rather as ‘properties’ of reified processes – *my + intention* (cf. ‘I intend’) and *our + business* (cf. ‘we + act’). Instead, Collins’s intention is represented as the meaning of action, and collective action is represented as the meaning of *north*.

These two identifying clauses frame Collins’s representation of his troops’ conduct. Interpersonally, many of these are commands where the troops are held

TABLE 5. *Troops as ‘commanded’ participant in material, mental and relational clauses*

TYPE	participant: troops	process	other elements, or projected ideas
material	[Actor/ Agent:] you	show	them + no pity ‘destroy them [enemy]’
		rock, wipe out show, allow	their world, them them + respect, dignity ‘respect them [casualties, the people of Iraq]’
		bury mark	them + properly their graves
		not + treat	them + as refugees
mental	[Actor/ Medium:] you	tread	lightly
	[Sensor/ Medium:] you	know	that: ‘undesirable consequence’ that: ‘enemies’ rights’, ‘daily life’
relational	[Carrier/ Medium:] you	remember to be	magnanimous in victory
	[Attributor/ Agent:] you	ensure [‘make certain’]	that: ‘enemies’ safety’

TABLE 6. ‘The enemy’ as participant in material, mental and relational clauses

TYPE	Agent	Process	Medium	other	
material	we	are bringing about	his rightful destruction	‘we/you destroy them’	
	we	will not send	those [[who do not wish to go on that journey]]		
	you ‘you’ ‘you’	to rock wipe . . . out show	their world them no pity	Beneficiary: them	
	their deeds	have brought	them	Location: to this place Benefit: for Saddam	‘they destroy themselves’
	who [‘regional commanders’]	are stoking	the fires of hell	Behalf: for Saddam	
mental		die choose	they they	Phenomenon: what	‘they die’ ‘they choose/know’
	relational		know should be	they the enemy	Attribute: in no doubt [i.e., ‘mental’; ‘should not doubt’]
		are	we	Value: his nemesis	‘we = their enemy’

modally responsible for complying. Here the troops (‘you’) are construed either as Actor in a material clause (a clause of action, activity, happening), as a Senser in a mental clause (a clause of conscious processing) or as a Carrier or Attributor in a relational clause (a clause of being); see Table 5. As Table 5 indicates, there are two motifs here, representing the balancing act needed for warfare covered by media, including ‘embedded’ reporters: one is ‘you + destroy + them’ and the other is ‘you + respect + them’. Interestingly, there are many more instances of the second. This is the regulation of conduct – including mental conduct.

The ‘enemy’ is construed in quite a different way from the troops. As shown in Table 6, they are never construed as an Agent that causes the process to occur – except when they act on themselves. Instead, they are either the Medium through which the process occurs – typically because of the agency of Collins and his troops – or else involved as Beneficiary or circumstance. This is true of ‘material’ clauses, but also of ‘mental’ and ‘relational’ ones. The relationship that is construed between Collins and his troops, on the one hand, and the enemy, on the other hand, is thus one in which Collins and his troops are reassuringly in control. This is also true later in Phase XI when the enemy re-emerge in the

speech as *casualties of war*: now that they are dead, they are to be handled with care by the troops (*allow them dignity in death, bury them properly, and mark their graves*).

The representation of ‘you + destroy + them’ is somewhat oblique. The most direct representation is *wipe them out*; but this is part of a conditional sequence with a qualifying clause – *if that is what they choose*. In other words, they will choose to be killed by Collins’s troops! This relates to *show them no pity* (*pity* rather than the usual collocate, *mercy*): if you kill them, you don’t have to pity them because they have chosen to be killed. The third representation of ‘you + destroy + them’ is superficially gentler – (*I expect*) *you to rock their world* (cf. *rock + cradle*).

Outside the domain of his commands to his troops, Collins construes killing so that it is kept at an experiential distance. He does this by means of downranking (‘embedding’) and metaphor:

downranking

[18] [[to take another human life]]; [20] men [[who have taken life needlessly in other conflicts]]

[13] some [[who are alive at this moment who will not be alive shortly]]

metaphor

[14] we will not send those [[who do not wish to go on that journey]]

Discussion and conclusions

Those about to wage war typically make offerings to gods. Yet the first spirit invoked is not that of Ares or Apollo; rather, those prosecuting wars – in particular, wars with distant battlegrounds – need the intervention of Hypnos and Morpheus, the gods of sleep and dreams. The anxieties of your own community must be laid to rest. The chief instrument in this laying to rest is the deployment of grammatical choices. For it is by grammar that the activities and motivations for war can be reconstrued so as to anticipate the concerns and prejudices of different groups in the nation state.

Waging war makes a crucial demand on the rhetorical resources of any government, which needs to reconcile the action with principles and rights espoused elsewhere in its public institutions. But these resources themselves need to be deployed on a number of social levels. First of all there is the situation in which the government convinces the constituency that its incipient actions are necessary. Second, there are institutional environments in which specific funding and personnel must be assigned to the venture. Third, there are contexts, closer to the exigencies of war, in which humans must be prepared for the fact that they must kill other people and may be killed themselves.

Our article has considered two semiotic acts relevant to all three of these steps of persuasion. The question arises as to what role the choices (seen above) play in allaying fears in different war-related situations and communities. It is said that

the central players in prosecuting a war understand that in order to win the war, they must win 'hearts and minds'. This category – 'hearts and minds' – applies to those undertaking the campaign as well as those being 'liberated'. Grammatical choices, as latent, unconscious patterns, approach this aim most directly in that they pass beneath our thresholds of censorship and monitoring.

The speech by Lieutenant Colonel Collins does not demonize the culture and people that his soldiers are about to meet. Nor does he represent them, and the anticipated killing of opposed soldiers in a direct, congruent way. By contrast, Bush's post-9/11 speech creates a category of opponent which is demonic by historical, ideological or religious association. This position was firmed up in his subsequent State of the Union address, when he invoked the 'axis of evil' as a frame by which to refer to Iran, Iraq and North Korea, and, as Rampton and Stauber (2003: 115–116) note, 'the term has played an influential role through which the public has perceived the problem of terrorism and whether or not to go to war with Iraq'.

Collins's emphasis on the historical achievements and personal qualities of Iraq works against the most critical factor in the causes of war crimes: the racist construction of the opponents as 'Untermenschen' (Bartov, 2001), a lower form of creature, whose values threaten the ideals and survival of some higher mission (religious, racial, or pseudo-practical, like 'Lebensraum'). Terms like 'gooks' and 'slopes' in the Vietnam War were indices of this kind of posture by American servicemen. The emergence of terms such as 'towel heads' and 'rag heads' in the current climate should be taken seriously as small signs of the linguistic dehumanization that have been the harbinger of genocidal wars, as distinct from merely brutal wars (Bartov reviews a variety of cases going back to the Thirty Years' War: 2001). In this way, the Collins speech is carefully targeting the nub of past military disgrace, from Barbarossa to My Lai: nihilism about a category of human lives. By invoking the significance and generosity of Iraqi culture, Collins appears to combine the rhetorically crucial strands of archaism, historicism (including of the regiment) and humanism (with a drop to his demotic idiom – e.g. *you'll have to go a long way to find. . .*).

Collins can be seen as moving his troops to a view not typical of the current period of conflicts since the terrorist plane bombs of 2001. But the situation is paradoxical for another reason. President Bush has legitimated demonization. In this sense, his speeches are a return to patterns of incitement that became so notorious in the twentieth century. The post-9/11 semiotic milieu is not remarkably new in its discourses – it is the astonishing acceptance of wiping out opponents (chiefly aerial bombardment) that is remarkable. This pride in mission and technology has a chilling affinity with twentieth century campaigns. We should remember that, even in the world's biggest battlefield (the Barbarossa Campaign 1941–5), German soldiers had some material evidence to believe that they were liberators of peoples from Stalin's tyranny.

The role of language in genocidal barbarity was emphasized by the philologist Klemperer, who kept a careful account of the deep habituation of Nazi thinking through the automatization of their linguistic formulations (Klemperer, 2001;

Bartov, 2001). The use of terms by us in this regard – habituation; automatization; Weltanschauung – are a considered attempt to link the linguistic issues of war and propaganda to linguistic theories which have addressed the ideological impact of patterns of grammar. In the first instance, we cite Whorf's (1956) treatment of grammar and 'covert categories'. For Whorf, grammar most often worked 'crypto-typically' on its users – the overt (or 'phenotypic') signs of difference were more a feature of words (Whorf, 1956). Most deeply, covert categories were selections which had consequences (or 'reactances') in the form of the text, but for which there were no consistent signals in the expression to alert the outsider. Following Whorf, and the Russian formalist treatments of automatization (O'Toole and Shukman, 1977), we have stressed in this enquiry the 'behavioural compulsiveness' (Whorf, 1956) of the grammar in setting up the latent patterns of political discourse.

Ideology is a function of the fact that we can construct multiple versions of the 'same' physical, biological, social and semiotic events (cf. Figure 1). It is not that language can be used ideologically, it is that the very use of language is ideological. This is because the use of language necessitates choices between different modes of meaning (Hasan, 1996b: 34). As Hasan argues:

Language is a fearsome resource through which we not only do seemingly trivial things, e.g. greeting, gossiping or buying a loaf of bread, but through it we can also have the power of doing enormously momentous things, e.g. monopolizing resources, putting others down, cutting them off from the road to personal fulfillment. We not only use language to shape reality, but we use it also to defend that reality, against anyone whose alternative values might threaten ours.

Language is a highly plastic resource (Hasan, 1996b). It is this characteristic which allows us to do so many different things, from chatting up a date to modelling our expanding universe. Language is organized not as rules, but as a 'potential for meaning' (Halliday, 1975, 1978; Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999), and as such it is in its nature that it evolves under various and competing contextual pressures.

The plasticity and change of language are not, however, reasons for despair. If language can be used to defend one version of reality, then, by the same token, it can be used to examine the very reality created by its own power. This is, Hasan suggests, the motivation for linguistics – linguistics can disrupt the 'suspension of disbelief' which the everyday practices of a community perpetuate' (Hasan, 1996b: 34). What we build with language we can better understand by 'turning language back on itself' (Firth, 1957). This, we suggest is the task of the discourse analyst – to make overt the covert operations of grammar. The task demands a specialized approach – it cannot happen if left to popular observation.

NOTE

1. 'Macro-theme' (Martin, 1993) describes the elements, expressed as a clause or combination of clauses, which predict the pattern of development in a text through prefiguring a number of 'Hyper-Themes' in the ensuing paragraphs.

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DAVID G. BUTT is Director of the Centre for Language in Social Life, which currently investigates discourse pattern across specialized contexts – in surgical care, in psychotherapy, in service industries, in capital markets, in technical and scientific explanations, in verbal art, as well as in relation to debates concerning 'language, brain and culture'. Of particular significance in the centre is the parametric description of the semantic consequences of changes in the social setting. ADDRESS: Centre for Language in Social Life, Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109, Australia. [email: dbutt@ling.mq.edu.au]

ANNABELLE LUKIN completed her PhD in Linguistics in the Centre for Language in Social Life, Macquarie University in 2003. Her research interests include: language and ideology, media discourse, stylistics, pedagogic discourse, child language development, language evolution, and the mapping of semantics. She has also worked in the TESOL area, as a teacher, classroom researcher, and in curriculum and materials development. ADDRESS: Centre for Language in Social Life, Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109, Australia. [email: alukin@laurel.ocs.mq.edu.au]

CHRISTIAN MATTHIESSEN has contributed to a number of domains relevant to language modelling – the mapping of lexicogrammar; the development of Rhetorical Structure Theory; and natural language processing more generally. His current work also encompassed language typology, semantics, and the development of electronic tools crucial to corpus-based and statistical descriptions of language. In the Centre for Language in Social Life he presents these resources for modelling as tools for social research. ADDRESS: Centre for Language in Social Life, Department of Linguistics, Macquarie University, Sydney, NSW 2109, Australia. [email: cmatthie@ling.mq.edu.au]

Butt, Lukin and Matthiessen are co-researchers on a number of projects, including investigations of the meaning of intonation in Australian English, the development of a corpus of spoken Australian English, and the modelling of language-based intelligent systems with RIKEN Institute Tokyo.