

# Registers in Circulation: The Social Organization of Interdiscursivity

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## ABSTRACT

The major outlines of enregisterment as a metasemiotic process are well understood in linguistic anthropology, so we can turn to its further systematic implications. The article explores three “moments” in enregisterment, positing that practices and value projects create registers that act as *clasps*, *relays*, and *graftings*, each producing interdiscursivity and thus circulation. They connect arenas of social action in different ways. The connections are rightly called social organizations of interdiscursivity, since they link and organize not only discourses and registers but also the societal arrangements—NGOs, nonprofits, welfare offices, political platforms, academic circles—that are constituted around registers and through which registers have their powerful effects of connection (and separation) in specific historical moments. The examples, mostly from the politics of Hungary, surely have parallels elsewhere.

Early linguistic anthropology focused on meaning making in face-to-face speech events. But the larger aim was to understand how society is communicatively constituted. That goal motivated questions about how speech events themselves were constructed and has led to the study of linkages among events. In parallel, and at roughly the same time, sociocultural anthropology switched decisively from studying the practices of delimited social groups to wider interconnections. Both moves were in part responses to the increasing salience of global exchange, not least because the end of state socialism meant

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the end of major obstacles to a single, worldwide capitalist market in labor, goods and texts. For analyzing the processes that organize the spread of people, commodities, values, linguistic forms, and cultural practices, “circulation” has been the most powerful image proposed in sociocultural studies. Critics of “circulation” as an analytic have charged that it falsely presumes free “flow,” ignoring opposition, “friction,” and obstacles, or that it merely echoes the interests of a global corporate order.<sup>1</sup> Linguistic anthropology has taken a different critical tack. I join the research of the last few decades in asking instead how circulation happens, with what effects. What are the communicative processes that result in what is seen as circulation, and how do they shape the political and economic organization of social life?

This line of research finds that in “circulation,” texts, messages, utterances, ideas, and practices are not physically or spatially displaced, nor do the semiotically relevant aspects of people and things “travel.” Rather, the effect of movement is the metasemiotic achievement of interdiscursivity; it arises from a perceived repetition and hence a seeming linkage (across encounters) of forms that are framed, reflexively, as being the “same thing, again,” or as yet another instantiation of a recognized type in some cultural framework. Formal features signal similarity, but similarity never inheres in the forms themselves. Framing is therefore a necessary aspect of creating the effect of sameness, repetition, and replication—or that of difference. Put another way: “likeness” (iconicity) across encounters and connection (indexicality) between events are recognizable only through metapragmatic presuppositions and entailments. Linguistic ideologies orient participants to criteria of “sameness.” Building on the fundamental insight that metadiscourses (ideologies) regiment the perceived relationships between events in this way, many aspects of interdiscursivity/circulation have been identified: for instance, forms of reported speech, in culturally specific participation frameworks contribute to defining how (and how much) a performance counts as a token of a genre; they shape how speakers’ responsibility or authority for utterances is attributed or distributed. In making links across semiotic events, signs have the capacity to formulate identities, reputations, genres, and publics.<sup>2</sup>

Also formed in this way are speech registers, the focus of this article. Participants come to perceive that sets of co-occurring forms in some sense “belong

1. Among the most interesting sociocultural discussions of circulation and “flow” are Appadurai (1996) and Tsing (2005).

2. Just some of the notable works in this line of research are Mertz and Parmentier (1985); Bauman and Briggs (1990); Irvine (1990); Briggs and Bauman (1992); Hill and Irvine (1992); Silverstein (1992, 1996, 2005); Lucy (1993); Silverstein and Urban (1996); Errington (1998); Woolard et al. (1998); Kroskrity (2000); Gal and Woolard ([2001] 2014); Bauman (2004); Agha and Wortham (2005); and Agha (2007).

together.” The association has to be constructed in the form of a cultural model that links contrasting and typified features of communicative display to contrasting types of speakers, characteristics, activities, practices, and values. Assembling and conventionalizing such a model is a metasemiotic process of enregisterment. Registers exist for populations of speakers who can recognize such coherence. Co-occurring forms are usually not only linguistic but multi-modal and named with metapragmatic labels. It is with reference to such a model that one set of expressive forms and the social actors who practice them can be linked by participants in-the-know as similar to another set, occurring at some other space-time and in a different participation framework. The effect is constituted by repeated uptakes across events. Although uptakes are always positioned and therefore change the import of expressive forms, various instances can nevertheless be framed as iconically related, as “the same, again,” thus as circulation. Interdiscursivity and enregisterment imply each other.

Now that the major outlines of enregisterment are well understood, we can turn to its further systematic implications. Sociocultural as well as linguistic anthropology can benefit from specifying the broader dynamics of circulation in this semiotic sense. The overall configuration sketched above can be divided into three “moments.” For each of these I suggest we identify more precisely how registers organize different arenas of social life and the relations between them.

First, since expressive registers construct and display cultural stereotypes that categorize people and their activities, I stress that enregisterment links the action arena in which a discourse is made to the arena of the objects that a discourse names and describes. We can say that the register acts like a “clasp” or hinge between arenas. Put another way, there is an active practice of “clasping.” Hacking (2006) has called this “making up people.” Sociolinguistics has documented the effects on the (potential) objects of categorization. But what is the effect on the subject positions and institutions that construct the register? It is not often enough remarked that successful enregisterment is the outcome of struggles among the value projects of those who make the register. Consider a telling case, as discussed by Inoue (2003), of a speech register later labeled “Japanese women’s language.” It was assembled by intellectual and literary men in early twentieth-century Japan, through their debates about language, modernity, and nation. It connected these men with images of women. Let us ask, What did their various views about women’s speech at that historical juncture index about differences among intellectual men, and with what effects? I return later to this example in exploring clasping effects in current Hungarian politics.

Enregisterments make other kinds of connection as well. A second “moment” of this overall process is one in which fragments of a register that are used (but not necessarily assembled) at one arena of social organization are taken up by other, institutionally distant and dependent organizations. At issue here are the effects of registers I call “relays”—and the activity of relaying—as in electrical systems where a spark in one device initiates a spark in another device. When a register acts as a relay, it triggers or strengthens parallel changes across arenas, in linguistic and other practices. A textbook case is that of volunteers in twenty-first-century Italy whose task is helping elderly people. Various nonprofits train volunteers, and these organizations each use different contrasting registers. Some say volunteering is a “sacred gift,” while for others it is “political activism,” and still others say they are “empowering active aging” for volunteers (Muehlebach 2012). Why so many formulations? What registers in other more powerful organizations are sparking these? What connections does the uptake of registers make between speakers? What material links are created among organizations seen as socially distant? In the second section I examine this relay effect in Hungarian women’s NGOs.

Third, registers are sometimes “graftings.” Think of grafting in biology: shoots are inserted into the trunk or stem of a living plant, from which the shoot receives life-giving sap that it uses for its own growth, a different goal from that of the trunk. Both the trunk and the grafting may be changed as a result. A quick example is the way the president of Russia justified the controversial military incursions by Russian forces into Ukraine in 2014. He invoked the “responsibility to protect” and other shibboleths of humanitarian discourse (Dunn and Bobick 2014). More generally, linguistic, social, and material practices that are indexical of existing authoritative personae and organizations (in this case, humanitarian ones) in one arena (international diplomacy) provide the sap (authority) for the graftings (practices) added to them from another arena (in this case, military invasion). The effect is like troping, as in parody. An analogy is formed. However, in parody the ironic or humorous effect comes from the recognition of a difference between two practices interdiscursively framed as “the same.” In graftings, the difference between practices (linguistic and otherwise) is both palpable for many audiences and also solemnly framed as nonexistent, erased or denied by other audiences. The third section below explores politically inflected examples of grafting, some in Hungary.

Drawing on these three “moments” of the overall process of enregisterment—construction, expansion, and transformation—I ask not (only) how registers are made, but what is made with registers. How do the social effects of this se-

miotic process derive from the various ways it connects arenas of action that are socially constituted as separate, thereby constructing or reconstructing social organizations through interdiscursivity.

It is a pleasure to celebrate Michael Silverstein's work with this article, which builds on the notion of enregisterment that he introduced (1992, 1996). But readers will have noticed that other technical terms of the introductory paragraphs also emerged from Silverstein's writings of the last four decades—as aided, abetted, and transformed by colleagues.<sup>3</sup> Together they have become a lexical register that indexes the writer as participant (by-degrees, dialectically, in realtime—ooh, more of them!) in what Crane (1972) long ago called an “invisible college”—a structure of communication that produces knowledge. But this one is visible, widely recognized. It is a social organization of interdiscursivity, constituted by register. This is no surprise to Silverstein, who practices the reflexivity he teaches: we act in the worlds we describe, often through that description and by collective efforts. Historical process, like interaction, is contingent and open-ended and therefore amenable (at least in part) to the semiotically mediated activism of participants.

Accordingly, in this article enregisterment gets an agentive interpretation, in contrast to the study of registers (or “styles”) in classical sociolinguistics, where they are often treated as mechanical signals of demographic categories. As more recent work recognizes, however, speakers are not mere embodiments of person types. Rather, participants enact speaker types by using register fragments conventionally linked to such person typifications, thereby aligning with (or troping on) the cultural model of the relevant register contrasts, and with (or against) interlocutors (Agha 2007). Relatedly, enregisterment implies historical agency since register models are assembled and taken up in specific historical contexts. I attend to ideologies that propose and frame similarity and contrast of registers (Irvine and Gal 2000; Gal 2013) and track how they link arenas of action that have themselves been socially separated and institutionalized as different.

### Interdiscursive Clasps

Where do metadiscourses of register difference come from? Many originate in narratives about types of people, events, and places, making judgments about them by naming, characterizing, and representing the (imagined) category's speech and other semiotic practices, always within a system of contrasts. And

3. For instance: linguistic ideology, metapragmatics, presuppositions and entailment, and regimentation.

semiotic contrasts often organize sociopolitical competition and conflict. Thus, these narratives are not purely descriptive, nor ever innocent. They are part of the ideological projects of the narrators.<sup>4</sup> Returning briefly to the metapragmatic category of “Japanese woman’s speech,” it is clear that the imagined features of this register—consisting of previously gender-neutral verbal endings—did not depict the practices of any actual women. Rather, as Inoue shows, the typification of “school girls’ speech,” which later became “women’s speech,” was the work of Meiji-era intellectual men. It was part of a project to produce a standardized and nationalized Japanese language through new genres like realist novels that represented the new voices of “modern women.”

More to the point, objectified women’s speech expressed a “collective sense of disquietude . . . experienced by the male elite . . . over the perceived collapse of the familiar social and moral order” in the face of rapid modernization along Western lines (Inoue 2003, 176). Inoue notes that: “the male intellectual was . . . constructed as [a] subject” of modernity and progress in part through the activity of creating and writing about “women’s language.” In the terms of this article, “women’s language” was the clasp linking the arena of male intellectuals and the arena of all those—including newly educated women—who learned of the register as an ideal, through magazines, schools, and ads, in the course of many decades. The two positionalities made each other, but not with equal power. My hunch is that intellectuals were divided and disagreed on ways to deal with “disquietude” and “modern” subjectivities. Ways of representing the voice of the “Japanese woman” would have served as indexical signs of men’s differentiated positions.

In my first Hungarian example of such a configuration, the process is more compressed temporally; the case suggests how the separation of arenas as well as their connection is constituted in part by clasping itself. And the competition among the makers of the register is vividly evident. In the “late phase” of Hungarian socialism (1970s–1980s), state guarantees of family subsidies for housing and food were partially replaced by a system that provided, by state regulation, three years of paid leave for all mothers. In addition, some further money was available upon request and dispensed at the discretion of welfare workers. In a historical ethnography, Haney (2002) shows that the decisions about distributing the extra funds were made on the basis of visits by social workers to clients’ apartments. Social workers wrote files detailing the condition of the clients’ rooms, their children, their personal hygiene, what they cooked, and how they

4. Bakhtin’s (1981) meditations on narratives and chronotopes in part inspired interdiscursivity.

talked. Those who spoke and acted in one way got their requests; the others did not. Haney calls the winners “good mothers.” She does not note whether there were metapragmatic terms for distinguishing among clients. But clearly the register concept has been extended in recent years to multisign displays of the kind the social workers described. Thus, the social workers’ language/semiotic ideologies placed clients differentially in consequential categories according to the register they were seen to display.

Central to my argument is that this small instance of “making up people” was the basis for competition among the mostly female welfare workers. Distinctions among them were created according to their abilities to justify decisions about extra funding, which displayed their own ideals (and claimed practices) of proper mothering. The clients’ actions were framed by welfare workers as indexical iconic of “good versus bad mothers.” The making of that metapragmatic distinction became, for the social workers, an index that created distinctions among them, and separated women clients from women social workers in ways the bureaucracy did not require or imagine. The clasping register—what the social workers wrote—connected the arena of social workers (judges) to the arena of clients (the judged), configuring each arena in terms of the other hierarchically. Assembling registers creates arenas, and this can mean contests as much for those who construct the categories and features as for those characterized by them. In sum, a register acts as “clasp” when it comes to index a social position—amid contrasting others—by virtue of how it names and characterizes another social type.<sup>5</sup>

A fuller example from current Hungarian politics highlights how clasping intensifies circulation via the competition in which the register makers engage. In 2014, articles appeared in liberal Hungarian news magazines and websites declaring: “There is no such thing as gypsy-crime.” In Bakhtinian dialogic terms, one is led to ask: who ever said there was? The answer was not obvious because by that year virtually the entire political arena was using the highly pejorative term *cigánybűnözés* (gypsy-crime). Eight years before, when the term first appeared in political discourse, it indubitably indexed a new, extreme-right party—Jobbik<sup>6</sup>—that called for action against this phenomenon, thereby presupposing its existence. They proposed high-intensity policing and segregation-

5. Further detail would make clear that the social workers created a second-order index via fractal analogy, distinguishing among clients (as good versus bad mothers) in the same way they understood themselves to be different from clients.

6. *Jobbik* means “better”; the official name is Movement for a Better Hungary.

ist educational programs that would take Roma children away from their parents. Yet, at that time, in 2006, there were no statistics of any kind about any ethnoracial characteristics of criminals or of crime. In 1989 the Supreme Court had eliminated the gathering of such statistics in a postcommunist civil rights agreement, calling it discriminatory (Bársony 2013). The 2013 study reported in the liberal papers found no “gypsy-crime.” It showed that the settlements with the greatest number of Roma residents also had the lowest crime rate; as it turned out, Roma settlements are mostly rural, and crime is urban.<sup>7</sup>

By that time, however, the use of the term had risen sharply. Hardly detectable in “mainstream” news outlets before 2006, in the next four years it typically numbered 20–40 mentions a month and sometimes went as high as 200 in the mainstream media, and much higher on right-wing websites.<sup>8</sup> The political fortunes of Jobbik rose in synchrony. Formed in 2003, the political party gained seats in the European Parliament in 2009 and won 20 percent of the vote in the Hungarian parliamentary elections of 2014. The many factors that contributed to Jobbik’s success are not my theme. The interest here is focused on the making and indexicality of a register in which the term “gypsy-crime” was a shibboleth. What was its indexical field and how did it circulate as a clasp?

The implication of the Hungarian compound *cigánybűnözés* (gypsy-crime) is not that some Roma commit crimes but that there is some genetic determination or ethnotraditional causal link to crime that defines Roma. As is well known, the modifier—*cigány*—is a centuries-old exonym, with cognates in all European languages, widely used in Hungary, but increasingly pejorative. International organizations (UN, Council of Europe) demand the endonym Roma or Romani, as do others, including those established in Hungary since 1989 to defend the rights of this minority group. The Roma make up a large group (8–10 percent of Hungary’s population) and are heavily disadvantaged in education, employment, and income. Stigmatization and marginalization of Roma go back many centuries and range from romanticized images of poetic nomads, musicians, and artisans to common negative images of laziness, dirtiness, mendacity, and minor theft. Harsh treatment and legislation to force abandonment of their traveling practices go back at least to the eighteenth century. The minority’s economic and employment situation has deteriorated dramatically since

7. Disputing the presupposed referent as inaccurate was the major form of objecting to the discourse, in articles titled “Gypsy crime: The evolution of a lie” or “Gypsy crime just got a big slap in the face.” The quantitative study cited cleverly used the census in combination with regional crime statistics to make estimates.

8. “A ‘cigánybűnözés’ szó politikai karrierje” (“Gypsy-crime”: The political career of a word), blog entry, September 17, 2010, <http://www.politicalcapital.hu/blog/?p=1937578>.



1989, although stigma and segregation were taken for granted even before that in the state socialist period. Studies measuring attitudes toward Roma by Magyars in Hungary between 1994 and 2011 (i.e., postcommunism) find stable and significantly high levels of extremely negative sentiments.<sup>9</sup>

All this concerns, of course, the term and its referent. As Bakhtin suggested, any utterance denotes some “object,” but the utterance is also a response to other ways of naming the phenomenon (registers always exist in contrast). Register use is therefore a self-positioning vis-à-vis the presumed other social positions that characteristically use those contrasting names, even in anticipation of future uses. During most of the communist period (1960s–1980s) the compounds “gypsy-crime” (*cigánybűnöző*) and “gypsy-criminals” (*cigánybűnözés*) had been police terms used in technical criminology and also in a popular novel and a TV show about police work (Berkovits 2010). They were vulgar terms, indexing low-level crime fighters. Some social scientists and activists during this period spoke against the terms and the keeping of such records, arguing that crime was not a correlate of ethnic characteristics or group tradition. Others recommended other terms, such as “survival crime” (*megélhetési bűnözés*) that pointed to poverty as the motivating force. In communist understandings, crime was a “social” or “class” problem, not one of ethnic essences (Dupcsik 2009).<sup>10</sup>

In 2006, Jobbik used “gypsy-crime” in their campaign for parliament. The immediate occasion was an unusual incident in which Roma villagers killed a non-Roma motorist they (mistakenly) believed had run over a little Roma girl of the village.<sup>11</sup> Introducing the term into political discourse, Jobbik also created the stereotype of Roma that it named. Rather than objects of contempt (lazy, dirty), Roma were pictured as dangerous, aggressive, and violent: “Magyar adults are in dread, afraid of even 8- to 10-year-old Gypsy children,” wrote one blog in 2009. Jobbik’s official campaign literature in 2009 and 2010 presented the term as a technical “criminological concept,” not political. Yet, in their more frequent citational practice they rejected the technical. “Gypsy-crime” was framed as a shibboleth in the political arena, indicating the distinctive position of Jobbik. Jobbik spokespersons hailed it as a “historical breakthrough” (*történelmi áttörés*)

9. One would expect Hacking’s “looping effects.” And there have been responses by Roma individuals and groups as well as research centers and NGOs committed to aid them, thus perhaps future interactive effects will change the classification.

10. A survey of the history of research about Hungarian Roma (Dupcsik 2009) shows that in the communist period there were serious difficulties for police, charged with tracking “gypsy-crime,” to actually identify whether or not an accused or convicted perpetrator could be called Roma. Police instructions included attention to various features of lifestyle, appearance, clothing, location, none of which was considered satisfactory.

11. That murder was highly publicized. But killings of Roma in the following year, mentioned in a later section, were reported in newspapers but produced no scandal.

of “truth,” that only they dared to say that “gypsy-crime” in Hungary is “running wild” (*burjánzik*), while the other parties stayed silent about it. Thanks to Jobbik, they claimed, the “problem of ‘gypsy-crime’ is no longer a tabu topic.” They said further that this is “not prejudice . . . it is the truth,” and the majority of people know it. In campaign programs, Jobbik talk about crime and Roma also had other features. Those held responsible for “gypsy-crime” included the liberal supporters of globalization and “big capital” who created unemployment. “Gypsy-crime” is how Roma deal with a lack of jobs, Jobbik claimed. Liberals deny this immorality, Jobbik asserted, or excuse it with false labels like “poverty crime.” In reality, Jobbik said, the Roma are the dangerous instruments (or despised victims) of those bent on using them to destroy Magyars and Hungary (Juhász 2010).<sup>12</sup>

Jobbik’s “gypsy-crime” register is as much about distinguishing Jobbik’s position from its liberal and other political opponents as it is about Roma. What are the different relations of this clasp to various categories of speakers? And what connections does it create among them? It names (refers to) crime as typical of a particular minority group that has an action arena outside of politics, as it tensely cohabits with other groups in various walks of life. From the perspective of that minority group, this register, available in mass media, intensifies the stigmatization of the minority by formulating and solidifying an image of it and its supposed activities.<sup>13</sup> At the same time, for listeners in the political arena, use of the register indexes its creators and constructs their qualities, distinguishing them from their political competitors as more moral, more Magyar, more truthful, and tough. In 2006, Jobbik established a website around the term, claiming it. The following year, in a striking instance of clasp—creating effects in both

12. One quotation from Jobbik’s program taken from its official campaign website in 2010 will give the flavor: “Jobbik is creating a historical breakthrough, we declared and declare what everyone knows but in the spirit of ‘political correctness’ denies: there is ‘gypsy-crime’ in Hungary, indeed it is running wild. And it has to be stopped with a strong intervention. For saying all this, Jobbik is called extremist by exactly those who, with their extremist neoliberal political economy, have created such a decrease in employment that increasingly fewer of the upcoming generation of Gypsies can see work as their first source of ‘survival’ [*megélhetés*]. Then with the lying category of petty criminality liberals made up—‘criminality for survival’ [*megélhetési bűnözés*—an earlier liberal term] they gave an ethical absolution for most forms of crime.” Big capital and globalization are, in turn, often equated with Jews, as in this statement from 2008: “Why do all the powers in a position to make decisions stay silent on the issue of ‘gypsy-crime’ in Hungary? Don’t they see that there is an ethnic bomb ticking in Hungary? Don’t they see that our gypsies are being led by figures who are under police investigation or already convicted? Of course they do! But presumably they have an interest in making a reality out of the declaration of Simon Peres, Israel’s leader, that Hungary will come completely under Jewish influence. So, what in the end is ‘gypsy-crime’? Let us not delude ourselves, it is a biological weapon in the hands of Zionism.”

13. Jobbik websites and affiliated ones also provide evidence for a deeply offensive lexical register, in addition to the term “gypsy-crime,” for talking about Roma.

arenas—"gypsy-crime" was the slogan Jobbik used to justify establishment of a uniformed militia (later outlawed) that marched in Budapest and on village streets, inciting discord between Roma and non-Roma, threatening Roma villagers, claiming to protect Magyars.<sup>14</sup>

But increased use of the term in 2006 and its continuing importance in Hungarian public discourse are not due to Jobbik alone. Further circulation depended on uptake among competitors in the political arena. Jobbik's opponents, challenged variously by Jobbik and other political actors as too tolerant, too supportive of welfare, or simply in denial, could have responded in many different ways. In the event, socialist, liberal and centrist parties, even the ombudsman for minority affairs, took up the term. Tellingly, even those who disagreed with Jobbik's policies on Roma praised it for speaking "truth" where others dared not. Jobbik had created a second-order indexicality, so that use of the term also could be heard in politics as a sign of honesty. They played on a fragment of language ideology, a valued Magyar self-stereotype as *szókimondó* (outspoken, plain-spoken, blunt) that stood in a very old contrast with the stereotype of Roma as deceitful.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, uptakes are always historically contingent. In the key year 2006, Hungary celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the 1956 revolution against Soviet rule. Rejecting or denying a presupposed "truth" may have echoed self-censorship under communism.<sup>16</sup> Even more contingent was the scandal that erupted in 2006 when a recording was leaked of the then prime minister telling his socialist party in a closed meeting that he and they had been lying to the electorate for years. This scandal plus the broader echo of communism and the long-standing language ideology all shaped uptakes of Jobbik's shibboleth, resulting in its circulation, as clasp. One astute observer noted:

The spread and change in meaning of "gypsy-crime" is significant not only as campaign slogan in party politics. . . . It is evident that in the past decades deeply rooted older modes of speech and [public] positions are

14. The nativist and masculinist imagery hardly needs emphasis. Recent reports suggest that Jobbik, like many other extreme-right groups in the EU, are being funded by the Russian state, get some support from the EU as a member party, probably from émigrés in the West, and perhaps also from Iran.

15. The outcome of this process is an encompassing fractal recursion (Irvine and Gal 2000) in which, from Jobbik's perspective, all of Jobbik's opponents are together equated with Roma as dishonest; only Jobbik is "really" Magyar, as has sometimes been explicitly claimed. The verb *cigánykodik*, still widely used, means to "lie," "cheat," "deceive," "wheedle."

16. Indeed, in later campaigns Jobbik called the rejection of "gypsy-crime" a matter of buckling under to "political correctness," a self-censorship; see the earlier quotation from the 2010 election.

being reshaped through new discourses about the relation between Gypsies and non-Gypsies. (Juhász 2010, 18)

Later, a new ruling party (called Fidesz) also took up “gypsy-crime,” blaming it on liberal immorality. The details of this process are specific to Hungary, but the logic can be recognized in other polities.<sup>17</sup>

### Relays and Relaying

The last phase of the Jobbik story, as told above, recounted circulation of a register via competition within one arena, national politics. By contrast, a register acts as a “relay,” triggering uptakes across arenas recognized by participants as institutionally distinct. In this configuration, social actors take up practices that are understood to be indexical of personae across some conventionally significant social border. Of course, all semiosis across encounters—whether called citation, quotation, voicing, calibration—signals utterance “sources” or “targets” in some other event or participation framework. My point is to emphasize that when register contrasts signal distinctions among organizations, that difference may be the most salient thing about them, for some participants. When this happens, the material effect is to establish what might be called outposts across conventionally understood institutional boundaries.

Some aspects of the Italian case, mentioned in the introduction, can serve as an example. Retired workers in twenty-first-century northern Italy have been recruited to be unpaid volunteers in the relatively new social sector of nonprofit organizations. As pensioners themselves, volunteers provide emotional care and companionship for even more elderly pensioners, as the Italian state withdraws from welfare services, in accord with neoliberal economic guidelines. The terms in which volunteers understand their work are not entirely of their making. Muehlebach (2012) suggests that several strands of discourse are entangled in training workshops for volunteers and in official and mass mediated discussion of volunteering. One strand extols volunteer work as a sacred “free gift” (*gratuità*) of service to the person (*servizi alla persona*) who is suffering, thus meeting the “needs of the soul” (*bisogni dell’anima*) that the public sector supposedly cannot. Catholic teaching is evident in this, and Muehlebach notes the general sacralization of volunteer work. But another strand emphasizes the sense of “engagement” (*impegno*) and “self-determination” that come from the “soli-

17. The ruling party later built on Jobbik’s claspings, blocking entry into Hungary of migrants and refugees from the Middle East, justifying this action by equating migrants and Roma, reviling both.

arity” (*solidarietà*) and “active citizenship” (*cittadinanza attiva*) of helping others in relations of equality. This clearly echoed Italian communist ideals. A third formulation lauds volunteer work as a “free choice” of “self-fulfillment” and “empowerment” (given in English), for volunteers, a kind of mental health.

Citing and thereby recontextualizing fragments of Catholic doctrine, leftist philosophy, and individualist psychotherapy, the registers connect volunteering to these three great institutions. Muehlebach (2012, 58) argues persuasively that together these ways of formulating ethical conduct make a new kind of privatized welfare thinkable. Reanalyzing her rich materials, I would say these registers are outposts in volunteer land. They index the Catholic Church, trade unions, and therapeutic social science. At the same time, the registers are intertwined in public discourse, never mere replications. Material connections as well as discursive ones were forged by these registers. For instance, agencies of the Catholic Church (e.g., Caritas) and of major labor unions (e.g., Italian General Confederation of Labor) have contributed to funding and staffing the training, though the registers interdiscursively sourced from those institutional sites were also used in the more numerous state-funded and municipal workshops.

For recruits, different registers index different social selves. The many thousands of volunteers who are retired leftist industrial workers are careful to explain: “They [the Catholics] do *gratuità*. We instead do solidarity, which is quite different. . . . It’s a whole different way of behavior” (Muehlebach 2012, 185). The volunteers index their subject positions through terms for their work, enacting their connection to those they recognize as using the same lexical register. This is certainly a vector of circulation. Yet as this quote suggests, distinction is key. Volunteers recognize all the various ways of formulating what they do, which is not surprising since Italian public life has long and famously been constituted by Catholic, leftist, and, more recently, neoliberal stances. That enables yet another connection, as the intertwined registers of the volunteer sector can be heard as a small-scale fractal projection of Italy writ large. The nonprofit volunteer arena and the imagined wider society seem mirrors of each other, making volunteering recognizable as distinctively Italian. When the state claims that elderly volunteers can make all Italians “ethical citizens,” the volunteer sector seems to provide experiential evidence.

A look at Hungarian women’s NGOs suggests a similar process gone international. After four decades of communism, in which the few existing women’s groups were arms of the state, the 1990s saw many new groups formed, of which forty are currently still active. Most are concerned with moving the boundary

between matters considered public versus private, like social welfare, family policies, and domestic violence. All the groups were started and maintained by Hungarian women within their own localities, yet contacts with other arenas—often in other countries—are evident. Groups in close touch with American liberal women's groups emphasized that violence is caused by gender inequality and is counteracted by fighting for women's independence. Those with links to the EU formulated their goals as opposing violations of international norms for human rights. Those funded or allied with the Hungarian government or conservative political parties in Germany focused on children's welfare as their main concern. They used gender-blind terminology about the domestic abuse of children and elders, not mainly women. Groups allied with political parties—Socialist versus Christian—differ in framing their work as matters of humanity and solidarity versus charity and faith. Nationalist groups emphasized women's contribution to values understood as traditional (Fábián 2009). These are all sparked by relays; they mirror the palette of existing political stances even in small details like styles of dress, amount of English used, work patterns, office routines (tough or lax record keeping; borrowing a Dutch group's charter). Just as for Italian volunteers, these contrasting expressive registers identify groups and distinguish between them.

Yet, the example of women's groups in Hungary also reveals processes not immediately evident from a glimpse at the Italian case. First, it might seem that in Italy the church and unions were not only interdiscursive sources for registers but—together with the state—also imposed registers on workshops and hence on volunteers. In Hungary, by contrast, women's groups since the 1990s have sometimes approached institutionally distant funders (foreign and domestic) with requests for support. Part of the strategy in such networking and formal applications is to display practices that can be recognized by the potential donor as evidence of shared values. This is done by self-presenting as already talking the talk and walking the walk of potential patrons. In short, the Hungarian women's groups have sometimes taken the initiative, even if the register has been sparked (as relay) by registers heard from potential donor patrons.

A second feature more evident in the Hungarian case is that registers as relays are not replications. They are recontextualized and so reindexed when taken up among Hungarian women. One small instance is the term "feminist" (*feminista*) that has a century-long history in Hungary. Yet, contemporary groups very rarely use it. The issue is not philosophical or political disagreements with those who label themselves feminists. Rather, in Hungary the term points to a distant arena: Western women's groups. The boundary crossed is national and civ-

ilizational; the term evokes an East/West divide and hierarchy. Used among Hungarian women it indexes foreign influence, recalling stories of condescending encounters between US women and Hungarian women in the 1990s or between Hungarians and Western Europeans at the 2008 meeting of the European Women's Lobby in Lyon. In Hungary, the "feminist" self-label indexes the speaker as antinational and vulnerable to charges of abjectly following Western models.

A similarly revealing metapragmatic issue surrounds the terms *egyenlőség* (equality) and *egyenrangúság* (equal rank, or on the same footing), as these are used in public discussions of gender relations. The unfolding of this lexical difference reminds us of the way uptakes are generative. "Equal rank" is newer, not appearing at all in nineteenth-century dictionaries. In twentieth-century dictionaries, the two terms are denotationally identical. But, whatever its dictionary definition, use of "equality" evokes the communist period and the supposedly unnatural divisions of labor (women in men's roles) that pretended to equalize gender roles but did not. Or, ironically, it can point to aggressive Western feminism. "Equal rank" became popular in self-definitions in the post-1989 period. Although denotationally identical to "equality," it was available for enregisterment by women's groups as a way of indexing distance from both Western and communist images. In interviews with leaders of women's groups, Fábíán found one comment ubiquitous, "I am supporting equal rank rather than [gender] equality" (2009, 137). That is, in ethno-metapragmatic discourse, "equal rank" now contrasts with "equality." It has developed new and distinctive denotations, embracing many ideological shades of women's groups: essentialist positions of natural differences between the sexes, specifically maternalist views; family-first stances, gender-neutral discourse of universal rights, women's autonomy. These are positions that would be mutually exclusive for many Western or American activists, who are, however, usually not aware of the Hungarian distinction.

"In the postcommunist context . . . many women's NGOs have used [the term "equal rank"] to avoid alienating those in their immediate environment while at the same time connecting to Western feminists and funding sources" (Fábíán 2009, 139). In short, the term now also indexes a novel social position it enacts and presupposes, one that is sometimes the object of distrust and rancor in the postcommunist world: the position of leaders who, by virtue of elite education and network connections, can mediate between foreign agencies, charities, or foundations and Hungarian women's NGOs. The details are from Hungary, but once again, this logic is widely evident elsewhere in the world (Hrycak 2006; Gal et al. 2015).



### Graftings

A third “moment” of enregisterment—a way registers make connections—is an analogical move. In the introduction, I gave the example of Russian discourse equating incursion into Ukraine with the actions of international humanitarian agencies both being a “responsibility to protect” populations in crisis. This raises the questions of whether Russian speakers in Ukraine needed or requested protection and to what extent long-term annexation is the same as, say, emergency medical help. But questioning the terms of the analogy fails to analyze its effects and how it works. Analogies are ubiquitous in social life, so it is useful to distinguish different types. Graftings are registers indexical of one social arena that are “implanted,” as analogies, in another arena that is conventionally considered widely different, even opposed. In contrast to irony or sarcasm, the citational practice of graftings denies that there is a difference between the two terms of the analogy. While all analogies allow us to understand the juxtaposed phenomena in a new way, graftings also change or attempt to change authority relations. The grafting is added—as yet another instance—to practices already endowed with hefty cultural legitimacy, thereby capturing authority for the grafted activity that would otherwise be rejected or opposed in powerful arenas. Russian incursion is included in the discourse of humanitarian aid, thereby equated with it, for some audiences. Linguistic as well as nonlinguistic practices can be graftings, and both the “tree” and the new “shoot” are changed in some way.

The concept of “transduction” as distinct from translation is helpful in further specifying grafting. In transduction, the indexical linguistic system of one linguaculture is rendered in the materials of another linguaculture with the goal of signaling the same effect, for instance “deference” or “honorification” (Silverstein 2003). Transduction identifies an indexical, contextually interpretable system of expressive forms and roles in one linguaculture and finds (rough, partial) parallels for that system in an indexical, contextual system of another language in culture. The difference in arenas (i.e., the linguacultural systems) is acknowledged; transductions are recognized as approximate. The goal is finding some (always partially same) effect for the observers or for participants who are moving between linguacultures.

The notion of grafting extends this to a broader semiotic plane that includes nonlinguistic practices. The separate arenas juxtaposed are culturally distinct categories of activity marked by register differences. They might all use the same standard language. Law and medicine are examples, each with its own technical register. Currently these are not very controversial, but the definition of arenas is always open to change, and the registers that index them often become matters



of dispute. Transduction, like grafting, regularly introduces novelty into the “receiving” linguaculture. However, matters of differential authority of arenas are not so relevant to transduction but are central in the analogical process of grafting. Therefore, it matters a lot who creates graftings, for what kinds of addressees, how framed, and the state of play in the historical moment of production and uptake.

A historical example of what I have been calling grafting is a famous analogy proposed by John Locke in the 1690s.<sup>18</sup> He argued that authority grounded in old writings would never lead to true knowledge. He proposed, rather, an experiential warrant for knowledge, based on the legal model of testimony, dispensing with truth claims that relied on “copies” or quotation from previous writings (like traditional literary authority). He suggested restricting claims to what could be part of “original” perception, hence experiment. Locke’s colleague Boyle also called on this legal analogy to establish the authority of experiment: “If knowledge was to be empirically based, as Boyle and other English experimentalists insisted it should, then its experimental foundations had to be attested to by eye witnesses. . . . In natural, as in criminal law, the reliability of testimony depended crucially on multiplicity” (Shapin 1984, 487). Experimental results could be taken as fact if witnessed by two or more reputable people, as in matters of life and death or estate in criminal law. “The thrust of the legal analogy should not be missed. It was not just that one was multiplying authority by multiplying witnesses (although this was part of the tactic); it was that right action could be taken, and seen to be taken, on the basis of these collective testimonies. The action concerned the positive giving of assent to matters of fact” (488). Difference between legal and scientific witnessing was in practice elided. Matters once witnessed, would—as in court—gain the status of fact, this time natural fact, not social.

Law was of course a far more authoritative discourse and practice in seventeenth-century English intellectual life than the fledgling experimental science that Locke and Boyle were trying to establish. The analogic strategy of Locke and Boyle can be seen as a small grafting on the giant tree of English law, tapping into its authority for their own purposes. A current example also involves empirical science, but now in the role of the more authoritative discourse, as party to the long controversy that has opposed scientific teachings of evolution to the biblical narrative. Even the name of the Institute for Creation Research—established by fun-

18. I have discussed this in Gal (2015).

damentalist Christians in 1972—is a grafting.<sup>19</sup> Located near San Diego, it has sponsored research, training, publication, and legislation, adopting practices perceived as scientific: employing research scientists with standard PhDs, hosting debates with evolutionary scientists at secular universities, publishing research reports. It “articulated the case for special creation and the case against evolution within the intellectual apparatus of science—using its language, its evidentiary rhetoric and paraphernalia” (Harding 2000, 214–15). The institute also constructed a Museum of Earth and Life History filled with fossils, samples, and labels, like a natural history museum, but it “transmogrif[ied] . . . secular science[s] origin stories” into Genesis (Harding 2000, 222). The museum’s objects, propositions, and assumptions were recognized by Christian believers as scientific—the differences between registers was denied—but understood as scientific support showing the Bible, and not science, to be true.

I have put these instances together as examples of grafting because it is tempting to see the Creation Museum and the Russian declaration as merely parodic imitations of powerful registers, while it is harder to read Locke and Boyle in this way. Considering them together demands a more complex analysis, as do the Hungarian examples I will discuss later. Some of Locke’s and Boyles’s contemporaries might have found their claims ridiculous; and educated secularists doubtless find the Creation Museum laughable, just as some liberal observers have argued that Putin’s declaration “satirize[d] the moral and legal arguments used by Western states” (Dunn and Bobick 2014, 405). These would be recognitions of a difference between the two practices interdiscursively framed as “the same” by their promoters. But just as surely, some of the addressees of Locke and Boyle in the Royal Society took them seriously; devout fundamentalist Christians were confirmed in their belief by visits to the Creation Museum. And Putin’s declaration has been defended as credible by many in Russia, Ukraine, and the United States who see the claim as an extension of a powerful discourse to a new case. In short, the ideological position of the uptake across arenas in ideologically polarized situations is crucial in interpreting these graftings. There are many kinds of imitation and it is worthwhile to distinguish them according to the framings of citation presumed by uptakes.

Contrast with the late Soviet genre of *stiob* is instructive. *Stiob* was a form of imitation reliant on an ironic aesthetic, yet it was unlike sarcasm, cynicism, de-

19. Recall that this was a period of fundamentalist resurgence, in opposition to mainstream Protestant churches that had accepted scientific narratives of creation and a metaphorical reading of Genesis.

risation, or absurd humor in that it required such a degree of “over-identification with the idea, object, person at which it was directed, that it was impossible to tell whether it was a form of sincere support, subtle ridicule or a peculiar mixture of both” (Yurchak 2006, 250). Like *stiob*, my examples also lack metacommentary for how to interpret them. Soviet as well as American versions of *stiob* were “‘straight’ deep caricature” usually of official registers of authoritative discourse that “inhabited the norm” but did so parodically. According to observers, *stiob* thereby showed “all political doctrines and sentiments . . . as equally corrupt, deformed and hypocritical” (Boyer and Yurchak 2010, 181, 184).

The analysis offered here is different from that of Boyer and Yurchak in that it pays more attention to the positionality of diverse uptakes. For the creators of the analogies in my examples the graftings are nonparodic—and exist in a polarized world with opposed perspectives. The graftings are implants from one arena into another. Those aligned with the grafting—that is, early scientists, Christian fundamentalists, Putin’s allies—accept the authority of the powerful register they cite, thereby capturing that register’s authority and turning it to their own purposes. With their analogical graftings they claim to seamlessly enfold their own practices into those of the more powerful norm. In this way their register is ostensibly strengthened (legitimated) by the very terms of the established, authoritative norm—in law, empirical science, humanitarianism. This enrages (or amuses) those aligned with the authoritative practices, for whom the graftings are illogical or impermissible analogies, self-serving and duplicitous.

Hungarian practices of recent years show this grafting pattern, the typifying logic enacted, for instance, in speeches by Krisztina Morvai, a representative of Jobbik in the European Parliament. Formerly a human rights lawyer, educated in Hungary and at the University of Wisconsin Law School, she had worked for the UN before joining Jobbik. She is an articulate speaker of English, a stylish mother of three. As noted earlier, Jobbik is the extreme right nationalist party that, shortly after forming itself, established a uniformed paramilitary organization called the Hungarian Guard. At one point, the Hungarian government had limited the militia’s activities. Morvai spoke up in the European Parliament and angrily demanded the censuring of the Hungarian government for police suppression of demonstrations by the Guard. The militia had been marching in force in Budapest streets, outfitted in black uniforms, threatening and beating up Roma and other residents. Meanwhile, Amnesty International was investigating a series of machine gun attacks, arguably the work of the militia, that had killed six people in a Roma settlement. Famously, Jobbik’s militia had also

attacked gays and harassed women on Budapest's streets. We must see Morvai's invocation of human rights in this historical context. Police, she charged, victimized gays, women, and Roma. Then she grafted the Guard onto that list of police victims, thereby equating the Guard with their own victims. This move accepted the authority of human rights discourse, a powerful EU register, while tapping into its legitimacy to justify her demand for support of Jobbik's activities, which some would find have opposed claims and purposes.

Equally striking is the upsurge in reports in Hungary as elsewhere in Eastern Europe that "gender equality," spread by international bodies like the United Nations and the European Union, is an elaborate colonialist plot coordinated by (neo)liberal Western elites and aimed at disempowering the poor and eventually depopulating the planet through homosexuality and contraception. As Graff and Korolczuk (2018) show, in many ways the register is entirely recognizable as a long-standing, left-liberal, anticolonial form of talk that has usually indexed leftist projects and political arenas. The authority of anticolonial discourse is recognized and retained, indeed presumed and built upon. Grafted onto concepts from anticolonial theory—and, I argue, capturing authority from them—are narratives about new dangers, ones coming once again from colonizing Western elites. Protests, organizations, and activism against gender equality (against what in Poland is known as "genderism") legitimate themselves as resistance to colonialism. Among the sources and promulgators of this register are the Vatican, the Russian state and its allied websites, the US-based but transnational World Congress of Families (which met in Budapest in 2017), and other conservative and nativist organizations. Neither Morvai's invocation of human rights, nor these uptakes of anticolonial discourse are parodic; they are dead serious.<sup>20</sup>

In thinking about the grafting logic, it seemed to me that organizational arrangements can also be seen in this light. Graftings can be spotted, for instance, in the changes that the current party in power in Hungary (Fidesz) has initiated in the last five years. The existing palette of cultural institutions—Academy of Sciences with its Institutes of History, Linguistics, Ethnography; the National Museum and Exhibition Center; the Association of Artists; the Opera; the National Theater—are among the producers of liberal political registers that have opposed the current self-styled "illiberal" government. These academic and artistic organizations, highly prestigious across the country, have not been elimi-

20. Noticing these juxtapositions is not (only) the work of outside analysis. Morvai, for instance, with her experience in the UN, EU, and an American law school, was surely aware that her call for human rights for Jobbik was an analogy—as in legal precedent.

nated. But a series of institutes with the very same mandates have been established and added to the historically recognized cultural arena. They are staffed by ruling party loyalists and receive impressive funding. The old ones are starved of support and moved to the urban periphery out of their longtime headquarters in Budapest's city center. Yet the maintenance of the older institutions, however backgrounded, assures the traditional authority of the cultural field, which is then diverted, along with its material support, to new associations that mimic the old ones, but with nativist politics. Once again, this time as organization and discourse, a grafting process is in play. The details are specific to Hungary, but the logic is familiar in other countries, other politics.

### Conclusion

The overall process of enregisterment is relatively well understood. Building on that to explore further dynamics, I have outlined the way registers both presume separation and then connect arenas of social action by circulating as clasps, relays, and graftings, via active, socially positioned projects of clasping, relaying, and grafting. I have listened in to the virtual conversations of the immediate participants who are much engaged in critiquing and metacommenting about each other, learning from and engaging with their counterparts and opponents. Although I have views on the disputes discussed here, my uptake in this article has focused rather on exemplifying linguistic anthropological concepts for a scholarly audience. The semiotic analysis that has resulted should also clarify the disputes, but it is unlikely to be of interest to immediate participants. Yet, all analytical comments become in some way part of the circulations they describe. And, like all participants' uptakes in creating registers, mine too is a metacommentary. In many cases academic practice has been a source and resource for nonacademic arenas, a fact that has also undermined borders that were seemingly firm between arenas and between their characteristic registers.

This is important to keep in mind because the processes described here are open-ended and dynamic, so we can surely expect further moves. There will be future political activism that builds on Jobbik's current claims, trying out new clasplings; there will be more relays to pave the way for connections among organizations of every kind. And graftings will continue to extend categories across practices, connecting arenas, just as earlier ones created the categories of activity and arena taken as self-evident at this historical moment, by various audiences. Although in this article I have separately discussed the three "moments," it is evident that they are all part of the overall process of enregisterment, operating together. The results of clasplings can spread via relays and

be the basis of graftings which in turn can create new clasps. Nevertheless, the three moments are worth separating to highlight the different sorts of connections they make. One might call this the social organization of interdiscursivity, since I have been concerned not only with discourses and registers but also the societal arrangements—NGOs, nonprofits, welfare offices, political platforms, even visible academic circles—that are constituted around registers and through which registers have their power effects of connection (and separation) in specific historical moments. The examples, mostly from the politics of Hungary, surely have parallels elsewhere.

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