

HEART FROM DARKNESS: APOCALYPSE RON

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ABSTRACT

Power implies resistance, no more dramatically perhaps than when whistle-blowers call the tune. In this paper I'll look at one well known example of whistle-blowing from the Vietnam War—Ron Ridenhour's exposé of the My Lai massacre in 1969. Ridenhour's initial letter to the US Department of Defence and Congress contrasts in interesting ways with two additional recounts of the atrocity delivered later in his career. Appraisal theory, attitude and engagement analysis in particular, offers an interesting window on how his rhetoric develops over time—as he wrestles with the twin dimensions of power and solidarity, initially as a recently discharged veteran of the war and later on in his career as an award winning investigative journalist. My choice of data reflects my concern with balancing CDA's usual focus on discourse in the service of power with analyses of discourse that unsettles power—a positive discourse perspective (PDA) on sites of social change.

KEY WORDS: Power, solidarity, appraisal, attitude, engagement, Critical Discourse Analysis.

RESUMEN

En este artículo se ofrece un ejemplo bien conocido de denuncia de la guerra del Vietnam: la revelaciones de Ron Ridenhour sobre la masacre de My Lai de 1969. La primera carta de Ridenhour al Departamento de Defensa y al Congreso de los Estados Unidos contrasta de varias maneras con dos narraciones de la atrocidad, enviadas con posterioridad. La teoría de la valoración—en particular, el análisis de la actitud y el compromiso—ofrece un marco interesante sobre cómo la retórica de Ridenhour se ha desarrollado a través del tiempo, mientras lucha con las dimensiones de poder y solidaridad, inicialmente como veterano de guerra recién licenciado y más tarde como periodista de éxito. La elección de los datos refleja el gran interés por compensar el enfoque habitual del Análisis Crítico del Discurso sobre el discurso al servicio del poder, con el que desestabiliza el poder—una perspectiva positiva del discurso en escenarios de cambio social.

PALABRAS CLAVE: poder, solidaridad, valoración, actitud, compromiso, Análisis Crítico del Discurso.

“If you were to randomly stop people on the street today and ask them if they know what happened at My Lai, the huge majority, if they have any clue, will say something like this: Isn’t that the place where that lieutenant went crazy in Vietnam and killed a bunch of villagers?”
(Ridenhour, “Perspective”)

1. MY TIMES

This paper takes us back to the Vietnam War. But my path there underscores its ongoing relevance. In 2010, as part of research into modern history teaching in Australian secondary school (Martin, Maton, and Matruglio, “Historical”) my colleagues and I were examining various texts interpreting this war for adolescent Australians. These naturally returned me to the issue of the My Lai massacre, long dormant from my own undergraduate student days, and Ron Ridenhour’s celebrated letter which blew the whistle on American atrocities in Vietnam (Ridenhour, “Letter”). It was during this research that I was invited to speak at a discourse conference in Sweden, at the time when the government there was attempting to extradite from the UK a contemporary whistle-blower, Wikileaks’ Julian Assange, to face trial (and possible rendition) to the United States, which was resounding with calls for his execution for treason). I accordingly chose Ridenhour’s intervention as the topic for my presentation, although ironically, few in my audience recognised the domestic relevance of the points I was making (few aware for example that Assange was a fellow Australian). Here, let me try again.

2. HIS TIMES

Ridenhour was an American soldier fighting in Vietnam at the time of the massacre, who heard about it from trusted friends in the armed forces and made it his mission to find out as much as he could about what had happened and alert the relevant authorities. He has left us a number of accounts of what went on, the most succinct of which was published in the Los Angeles Times on the 25th anniversary of the massacre—which I excerpt here to refresh the memories of those around at the time and to provide a synoptic account for other readers:

Shortly after 7 a.m. on March 16, 1968, the first platoon of Charlie Company, one of three U.S. infantry companies assigned to Task Force Barker, began landing just outside a small village in central Vietnam, intent on doing exactly what Thompson and I and most other Americans didn’t think American soldiers would do: massacre an entire community of unarmed, unresisting civilians. Task Force Barker’s GIs knew the village as Pinkville, for both its color on military maps and its reputation as the home base of a particularly fierce Viet Cong battalion. Pinkville was really three adjacent hamlets that were designated under the single name of

My Lai 4 on U.S. Army maps. It was also the home of many soldiers fighting on both sides of Vietnam's civil war.

On the evening before the massacre, the commanding officer of Charlie Company, Capt. Ernest Medina, told his men to expect fierce resistance when they attacked Pinkville the next morning. They instead found no resistance.

Over the 4 1/2 hours of the assault on the village, the men of Charlie Company, supported by the other two Task Force Barker companies and an artillery battalion and a helicopter battalion, all under the direction and the watchful eyes of a chain of command composed of nearly 20 senior American officers, including two generals, systematically slaughtered almost 500 Vietnamese civilians. It did not seem to matter that the vast majority of the villagers they found were women, children and old men. At one point, a young second lieutenant named William L. Calley supervised the shooting of dozens of villagers who were rounded up, forced to stand on the edge of a ditch and then machine-gunned. It was, a friend and fellow GI who had been there later told me, "a Nazi kind of thing." (Ridenhour, "Perspective")

Three longer accounts of the massacre are available on the internet. One is Ridenhour's letter to Congress and the Pentagon ("Letter"). Another is part of his "Jesus was Gook" essay on America's "Perpetual War" ("Jesus"). And a third has been transcribed from a speech he gave at Tulane University ("Talk"). The third text is a detailed recount of his involvement, from being drafted to sending his letter, and will be set aside here in order to focus on the first two accounts, where the events of the story function as part of a text which aims in general terms to get readers to take constructive action in relation to the principles of justice and equality that Ridenhour believed his country was founded upon. Ridenhour's letter is some 2000 words long (see Appendix 1); his essay however is more than 5350 words, too long to reproduce in full here. URLs for each of his texts are provided in the references.

In this paper I am concerned with the rhetoric Ridenhour deploys in these two submissions, the first written as a recently discharged, high-school educated, working-class veteran and the other as an award-winning, professional, tertiary educated, investigative journalist. In particular I want to address the issue of how we model identity as it is performed in genres (Martin, "Genre"; "Tenderness"; "Innocence"), extending work on this theme I have been developing with colleagues (Bednarek and Martin) and in various papers focusing on youth justice conferencing (e.g. Martin, "Realisation"; Martin and Zappavigna, "Beyond"; Martin, Maton, and Matruglio; Martin, Zapavigna, and Dwyer). At the same time I offer the paper as an exercise in positive discourse analysis (Martin, "Interpersonal"; "Grace"; "Mourning"; "Positive"; "Vernacular"; "Intermodal"), by which I mean analysis that focuses on discourses which strive to make the world a better place—an offer I make by way of complementing critical discourse analyses of semiosis in the service of hegemony (e.g. Fairclough).



3. THE LETTER—GENRE

Ridenhour's letter appears in full in the Appendix; its paragraphs have been numbered for ease of reference. Based simply on this instance I am going to suggest a provisional structure for this particular whistle-blowing genre as Revelation (pars 1-11) followed by Exhortation (pars 12-13). The Revelation begins with a synopsis of the massacre (par 1); this is followed by a Background par, documenting how Ridenhour came to be involved (induction, training, deployment); then evidence is provided, comprising 4 iterative Testimony sections—from Gruber (pars 3-6), Mike Terry and William Doherty (pars 7-8), Larry La Croix (pars 9-10) and Bernhardt (par 11). The Exhortation begins with a Plea for an investigation (par 12), followed by a thinly veiled Threat of recourse to the media if Congress does not act (par 13). An outline of this staging is presented as Table 1 below. As this is only the third text of its kind I have analysed in detail (cf. Martin, "Factual"; "Grammaticalising"; "Interpersonal"), I'll refrain from making any further comment on its schematic structure here; further discussion of stages and phases (Martin and Rose, *Genre*), which might generalise this generic structure, would of course depend on analysis of a corpus of comparable data.

Revelation 1

...

<<**Background:** Ridenhour's induction, training & deployment>> 2

...

Evidence

Testimony 1 (*Gruber*) 3-6

[...]

Testimony 2 (*Mike Terry, William Doherty*) 7-8

[...]

Testimony 3 (*Larry la Croix*) 9-10

[...]

Testimony 4 (*Michael Bernhardt*) 11

[...]

Exhortation

Plea 12

...

Threat 13

...

In the model of context assumed here (Martin, *English*; Martin and Rose, *Genre*), genre phases choices in field, tenor and mode together into an unfolding structure of this kind—coordinating ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings as it does so. Ideationally, for example, the text is organised in part through setting in time, moving as it does via circumstances of location in time from March 1967 to November 1968. The first four of these circumstances move Ridenhour through his induction, training and subsequent deployment to Vietnam. The last of these is

given textual prominence as marked Theme, foregrounding the move to E Company that will provide Ridenhour with first-hand accounts from Terry and Doherty.

I was inducted **in March, 1967** into the U.S. Army.

After receiving various training I was assigned to the 70th Infantry Detachment (LRP), 11th Light Infantry Brigade at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, **in early October, 1967**.

That unit, the 70th Infantry Detachment (LRP), was disbanded a week before the 11th Brigade shipped out for Viet Nam **on the 5th of December, 1967**.

After we had been in Viet Nam for 3 to 4 months many of the men from the 70th Inf. Det. (LRP) began to transfer into the same unit, “E” Company, 51st Infantry (LRP).

The next five circumstances of location in time are all foregrounded as marked Themes, at the beginning of paragraphs 3, 7, 9 and 11; the final three deploy Theme predication to conflate thematic and informational prominence¹—as Theme/New. As suggested by Martin and Rose (*Working*), the circumstantial marked Themes shift our orientation to the field, from one stage of testimony to the next.

[3] **In late April, 1968** I was awaiting orders for a transfer from HHC, 11th Brigade to Company “E,” 51st Inf, (LRP), when I happened to run into Pfc “Butch” Gruver, whom I had known in Hawaii.

[7] **When I arrived at “Echo” Company**, 51st Infantry (LRP)

[9] **It was June** before I spoke to anyone who had something of significance to add to what I had already been told of the “Pinkville” incident. **It was the end of June, 1968** when I ran into Sargent Larry La Croix at the USO in Chu Lai.

[11] **It was in the middle of November, 1968 just a few weeks before I was to return to the United States for separation from the army** that I talked to Pfc Michael Bernhardt.

It is this kind of coordinated interaction between ideational meaning (setting in time) and textual meaning (THEME and INFORMATION) which motivates the kind of structural analysis proposed above for this or any genre. The basic idea, as we add further analyses to the picture, is to ground the staging in configurations of meaning (as opposed to notional readings of what is going on based on intuition). Since the interactions across strata (graphology, lexicogrammar and discourse semantics) and metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal, textual) are so complex, experience tells us, especially for crafted written discourse, to be guided in particular by resources which have evolved to scaffold text structure. These include internal CONJUNCTION, periodicity, text reference, metadiscourse and layout.² We looked at low level periodicity (THEME and INFORMATION structure) and layout (paraphrasing) in relation

¹ The grammar analyses used here are based on Halliday and Matthiessen.

² For the discourse semantic analyses assumed here see Martin, *English*; Martin, “Boomer”; Martin, Maton, and Matruglio, (chapter 7 explains how to move from grammar analysis to discourse semantics); Martin and Rose, *Working*; Martin and White.



to location in time above. Turning to text reference and metadiscourse,³ we see that in paragraph 1 Ridenhour refers forward to Gruver's account (*that first report*) and then to the other three accounts he provides (*similar stories*). All four pieces of testimony are then brought together in paragraph 2 (as *the reports I'm about to relate*).

- [1] ... I received **that first report** with some skepticism, but in the following months I was to hear **similar stories** from such a wide variety of people that it became impossible for me to disbelieve that something rather dark and bloody did indeed occur sometime in March, 1968 in a village called "Pinkville" in the Republic of Viet Nam.
- [2] The circumstances that led to my having access to **the reports I'm about to relate** need explanation. ...

Gruver's account is then further anticipated (*the first of many reports*) and reflected upon (*this account*):

- [3] ... Gruver told me he had been assigned to "C" Company 1st of the 20th until April 1st when he transferred to the unit that I was headed for. During the course of our conversation he told me **the first of many reports I was to hear of "Pinkville."**
- [6] After hearing **this account** I couldn't quite accept it. ...

Terry and Doherty's account is then brought in as confirming Gruver's (*"Butch" Gruver's story*), and presaged with some rather dark humour (*some tasty tidbits of information*):

- [7] ... Instead of contradicting **"Butch" Gruver's story** they corroborated it, adding **some tasty tidbits of information of their own**. ...

La Croix's account is prefaced as verifying Gruver's and Terry and Doherty's ones (*the stories of others*) and as adding something new (*something of significance to add, something new to add*). It is subsequently summed up as confirming the rumours about Lieutenant Calley (*the rumours that Gruver, Terry and Doherty had previously told me about Lieutenant Kally*) as well as the preceding accounts (*the stories that all the men had told*):

- [9] It was June before I spoke to anyone who had **something of significance to add to what I had already been told of the "Pinkville" incident**. ... What he told me verified **the stories of the others**, but he also had **something new to add**. ...
- [10] **This account of Sargent La Croix's confirmed the rumors that Gruver, Terry and Doherty had previously told me about Lieutenant Kally.**⁴ It also convinced me that there was a very substantial amount of truth to **the stories that all of these men had told**. ...

³ By text reference I refer to the use of textual meaning (deixis) to refer to preceding or succeeding parts of a text (e.g. *this account*, *similar stories*); by metadiscourse I refer to the use of ideational meaning to name pieces of text (e.g. *many reports*, *some information*).

⁴ The correct spelling for this lieutenant's name is Calley.

Finally, Bernhardt's account is presented as substantiating the preceding testimony (*the tales told by the other men*) and adding something of his own (*this*):

[11] ... "Bernie" substantiated **the tales told by the other men I had talked to** in vivid, bloody detail and added **this**. ...

In consort with a range of process types referring to the testimony (*relate, told, told, telling, assured, describe, contradicting, corroborated, adding, told, verified, add, told, convinced, told, substantiated, told, talked, added*), the interaction of text reference and metadiscourse just outlined organizes the global information structure of the text as a rhetorical sandwich—with par 1 as Macro-Theme and par 13 as Macro-New. The Macro-Theme announces where we're going; the Macro-New reflects on where we've been. For filling we have Ridenhour's explanation of how he came to access the testimony, following by five slices of the testimony itself (with Gruver's testimony sliced in two)—each introduced with a Hyper-Theme, and all but the first and last closed with a Hyper-New (two upside-down "Danish" and four "western" sandwiches as filling for the "Dagwood" sandwich in other words). This pattern of information flow is outlined below. Figure 1 (section 4 below) schematises the prospective and retrospective periodicity of crafted written texts of this kind, suggesting that higher levels of Theme predict where a text is going (its method of development) as they scaffold genre structure while higher levels of New replay where it has been (its point) as they develop field (Fries; Martin and Rose, *Working*).

Macro-Theme ⇒⇒

[1] It was late in April, 1968 that I first heard of "Pinkville" and what allegedly happened there. I received that first report with some skepticism, but in the following months I was to hear similar stories from such a wide variety of people that it became impossible for me to disbelieve that something rather dark and bloody did indeed occur sometime in March, 1968 in a village called "Pinkville" in the Republic of Viet Nam.

Hyper -Theme ⇒

[2] The circumstances that led to my having access to the reports I'm about to relate need explanation.

[...]

Hyper -Theme ⇒

[3] ... During the course of our conversation he told me the first of many reports I was to hear of "Pinkville."

[...]

⇐ **Hyper-New**

[5] When "Butch" told me this I didn't quite believe that what he was telling me was true, but he assured me that it was

Hyper -Theme ⇒

and went on to describe what had happened.

[...]



⇐ **Hyper-New**

[6] After hearing this account I couldn't quite accept it. Somehow I just couldn't believe that not only had so many young American men participated in such an act of barbarism, but that their officers had ordered it. ... [7] ...Instead of contradicting "Butch" Gruver's story they corroborated it,

Hyper-Theme ⇒

adding some tasty tidbits of information of their own.

[...]

⇐ **Hyper-New**

[9]... What he told me verified the stories of the others,

Hyper-Theme ⇒

but he also had something new to add.

[...]

⇐ **Hyper-New**

[10] This account of Sargent La Croix confirmed the rumors that Gruver, Terry and Doherty had previously told me about Lieutenant Kally. It also convinced me there was a very substantial amount of truth to the stories that all of these men had told... [11]... "Bernie" substantiated the tales told by the other men I had talked to in vivid, bloody detail...

HyperTheme ⇒

[10] If I needed more convincing, I was about to receive it... [11] and added this.

[...]

⇐⇐ **Macro-New**

[12] Exactly what did, in fact, occur in the village of "Pinkville" in March, 1968 I do not know for certain, but I am convinced that it was something very black indeed. ...

The scaffolding provided by these patterns of layout, periodicity, text reference and metadiscourse thus steers readers around the text, flagging its structure by anticipating what is coming and/or summing up what has been done. This reinforces the shift of gears as other meanings reconfigure from one phase to another. Identification for example moves from witnesses in general in pars 1-2 to focus on Gruver, then Terry and Doherty, then la Croix and then Bernhardt in pars 3-6, 7-8, 9-10 and 11 respectively (see Table 1 below). Ideation co-articulates verbal processes of saying by the witnesses, material processes of killing by C Company, and mental processes of cognition with various Sensers—in pars 3-6, 7-8, 9-10 and 11. In pars 1 and 3 on the other hand it's Ridenhour who does the reporting and hearing; and in pars 11 and 12 it's Winston Churchill reporting and Ridenhour thinking (see Table 2 below). The gears shift as the meanings realign as the scaffolding supports.

TABLE 1: IDENTIFICATION IN THE LETTER (WITNESSES ONLY)

	GRUVER	TERRY, DOHERTY	LA CROIX	BERNHARDT
1-2	(a wide variety of people)	(a wide variety of people), (many of the men)	(a wide variety of people)	(a wide variety of people)

3-6	Pfc "Butch" Gruver, Gruver, he, he, (our), he, Gruver, (they), "Butch," he, he, "Butch," He, he, He, Gruver, he, Gruver, Gruver	(other men), (them)		
7-8	"Butch" Gruver's, Gruver	the first men, Pfc Michael Terry, and William Doherty, Both, they, their, Terry and Doherty, they, the two soldiers', Billy and I, Terry, us, Billy and I, we, Terry, he and Doherty, their packs, He, Doherty, Terry, Doherty, Pfc Terry, Terry	-	-
9-10	Gruver, (all of these men)	Terry and Doherty, (all of these men)	Sargent Larry La Croix, La Croix, he, he, He, La Croix, he, Sargent La Croix, Sargent La Croix's (all of these men)	-
11	(the other men)	(the other men)	(the other men)	Pfc Michael Bernhardt, Bernhardt, he, "Bernie," "Bernie," he, me ("Bernie"), me, my, Bernhardt, he, He
12-13	-	-	-	

TABLE 2: PROCESS TYPES IN THE LETTER (SENDER KEY: R = RIDENHOUR, G = GRUVER, T = TERRY, D = DOHERTY, M = MEDINA, C = CALLEY, L = LA CROIX, BOY = WOUNDED VICTIM, B = BERNHARDT)

	VERBAL, BEHAVIOURAL (TELLING)	MATERIAL (VIOLENCE)	[SENDER] MENTAL
1			[R] heard, [R] hear, [R] disbelieve
2	relate		[R] heard
3-6	told, told, told, telling, assured, describe, asked, said, said, told, ordered	had sustained (casualties), destroy, destroy, kill, killed, put a burst of fire, shot, participate (in the slaughter), machine-gunned, participated (in such an act of barbarism)	[R] known, [R] hear, [R] believe, [G] recalled, [G] seeing, [Boy] staring (in shock and disbelief), [Boy] saw, [Boy] understand, [Boy] believe, [G] seen, [G] considered, [G] estimated, [R] hearing, [R] accept, [R] believe



7-8	contradicting, corroborated, adding (some...information), said, say, received (orders), stated, issued (the order), concurred	shot, shot, finished...off, slaughter, (the destruction)	[T] guess, [T] estimated, [D] thought, [R] believed, [M] want
9-10	spoke, add, told, verified, add, said, ordered, refused, ordering, told, order, confirmed, told, told, talked, substantiated, told, talked, added, refused	gunning down, slaughtering, killed, open fire, ceased fire, fire, recommence firing, finished shooting, shot down	[C] felt, [L] bore witness, [R] convinced, [R] (more convincing), RR] (receive it = more convincing)
11	substantiated, told, talked, added, refused, told, write, assured	take part (in the massacre), fighting	[B] thought, [B] felt
12	said, (informed)		[R] know, [R] convinced, [R] persuaded, [R+] believe, [R] think, [R] feel, [R] hope, [R] know
13			[R] considered, [R] feel, [R] (have no desire), [R] feel

Space precludes a more detailed analysis here. But enough have been offered, I hope, to show the ways in which genre structure is configured through interacting patterns of meaning, with shifts in meaning flagged by various resources in a carefully crafted edited text such as Ridenhour's submission.

4. THE LETTER—IDENTITY

In the preceding discussion we have, as noted, left many configurations of meaning in the letter unexplored. But one pattern that needs to detain us here is the opportunity the higher level Themes and News offer for evaluation—of both the truthfulness of the testimony and the morality of what went on (Martin and White).

What happened is appreciated by Ridenhour as *rather dark and bloody, barbarism, bloody* and *very black* (bold below); these inscribed appreciations of events of course invoke⁵ judgements of morality of the soldiers involved. The testimony itself is appreciated by Ridenhour along a rising scale of conviction, moving from disbelief to substantiation (*allegedly; skepticism; impossible for me to disbelieve; I didn't quite believe...true; I couldn't quite accept it; instead of contradicting... corroborated; verified the stories of others; confirmed the rumours; a very substantial amount of truth; substantiated; If I needed more convincing, I was about to receive it*—bold underline below); these inscribed appreciations of the credibility of the accounts also invoke judgements, in this case of the credibility of the witnesses. Significantly however it

⁵ For inscribed and invoked attitude see Martin and White (61-68).

is the accuracy of the testimony that Ridenhour directly adjudicates, rather than the character⁶ of the witnesses themselves.

- [1] It was late in April, 1968 that I first heard of “Pinkville” and what *allegedly* happened there. I received that first report with some *skepticism*, but in the following months I was to hear similar stories from such a wide variety of people that it became *impossible for me to disbelieve* that something **rather dark and bloody** did indeed occur sometime in March, 1968 in a village called “Pinkville” in the Republic of Viet Nam.
- [5] When “Butch” told me this *I didn’t quite believe* that what he was telling me was **true**, but he assured me that it was.
- [6] After hearing this account *I couldn’t quite accept it*. ... Somehow I just couldn’t believe that not only had so many young American men participated in such an act of **barbarism**, but that their officers had ordered it. ...
- [7] *...Instead of contradicting* “Butch” Gruver’s story they *corroborated* it,
- [9] It was June before I spoke to anyone who had something of **significance** to add to what I had already been told of the “Pinkville” incident. ... What he told me *verified the stories of the others*, but he also had something **new** to add. ...
- [10] This account of Sargent La Croix’s *confirmed the rumors* that Gruver, Terry and Doherty had previously told me about Lieutenant Kally. It also convinced me that there was *a very substantial amount of truth* to the stories that all of these men had told. *If I needed more convincing, I was about to receive it*.
- [11] ... “Bernie” *substantiated* the tales told by the other men I had talked to in vivid, **bloody** detail and added this. ...
- [12] Exactly what did, in fact, occur in the village of “Pinkville” in March, 1968 I do not know for certain, but I am convinced that it was something **very black** indeed. ...

As we can see, Ridenhour’s revelations put tremendous pressure on engagement resources as far as managing the play of voices around the atrocity and its cover-up is concerned (Martin and White 134). Both the Macro-Theme and Macro-New are highly charged with this tension. Ridenhour begins by positioning the first news he received as one voice among others—acknowledging the news as allegations (*allegedly*), which he found hard to believe (*scepticism*). These early misgivings are then countered (*but*) by closing down doubting voices through his proclamations that what happened had to be believed (*impossible...to disbelieve*) whatever objections might be raised (*did indeed occur*).

Macro-Theme

It was late in April, 1968 that I first heard of “Pinkville” and what allegedly happened there.

I received that first report with some skepticism,

but

in the coming months I was to hear similar stories from such a wide variety of people that it became impossible for me to disbelieve that something rather dark and bloody did indeed occur...

⁶ Compare Gruver, who directly judges character: *...people he considered trustworthy*.



He closes by reiterating a lingering element of doubt about the precise details of what went on (*not know for certain*), which he then balances (*but*) by proclaiming his conviction about how it should be evaluated (*I am convinced*).

Macro-new

Exactly what did, in fact, occur...I do not know for certain,

but

I am convinced that it was something very black indeed

Testimony by Gruver, Terry and Doherty, and La Croix performs exactly the same expand then contract rhetoric:

[Gruver]

I didn't quite believe that what he was telling me was true

but

he assured me that it was

[Terry & Doherty]

I couldn't quite accept it, I just couldn't believe that what he was telling me was true...

instead of contradicting "Butch" Gruver's story

they corroborated it

[La Croix]

If Terry, Doherty and Gruver could be believed⁷...

What he told be verified the stories of the others...

[Bernhardt reinforcing La Croix]

If I needed more convincing,⁸

I was about to receive it.

Overall then Ridenour is working very hard to get readers to believe him. He's not just chronicling what happened; he's trying to foster a community that appreciates what he is revealing as true. Appraisal resources are marshaled to invite readers to join a group that values his chronicle as fact, not opinion. The rhetoric of his engagement and attitude as the letter unfolds champion a belonging of this kind (*true, corroborate, verified, confirmed, truth, substantiated*). Higher-level periodicity is used to privilege the scope of appraisal resources as outlined in Fig. 1.

⁷ *If* is treated here as modalised cause, following Martin, *English*.

⁸ Cf. *I might have need more convincing but I was about to receive it*.

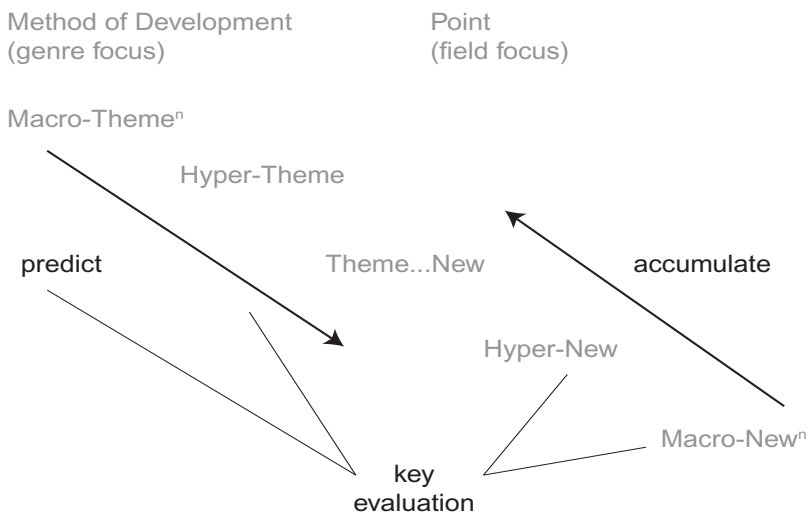


Fig. 1: Interaction of evaluation and periodicity in relation to genre structure and field.

But getting people to believe him is not all Ridenhour has in mind. He also wants them to act on his convictions. Accordingly the nature of his evaluation shifts⁹ as he moves from his retrospective account of what went on (Revelation) to his prospective suggestions about what is to be done (Exhortation). At this point character does become an issue, as Ridenhour appeals to the ethical principles of his readers (*justice, equality, however humble, conscience, without a soul, without a soul, conscientious, further besmirch*—bold below, with intensification bold underlined). The tone of the appeal is elevated through an invocation of the moralizing words of an iconic leader—Churchill (iconisation via scripture and guru in Tann’s *Semogenesis* and “Language” terms). In addition Ridenhour pleads for a thorough investigation (appreciated as *widespread, public, positive, appropriate, constructive, direct*—italics below).

[12] Exactly what did, in fact, occur in the village of “Pinkville” in March, 1968 I do not know for certain, but I am convinced that it was something very black indeed. I remain irrevocably persuaded that if you and I do truly believe in the principles, of **justice** and the **equality** of every man, **however humble**, before the law, that forms the very backbone that this country is founded on, then we must press forward a *widespread* and *public* investigation of this matter with all our combined efforts. I think that it was Winston Churchill who once said “A country **without a conscience** is a country **without a soul**, and a country **without a soul** is a country that cannot survive.” I feel that I must take some *positive* action on this matter. I

⁹ From the perspective of instantiation this involves a shift of key, from something akin to reporter voice in media discourse to a commentator position (Martin and White 164-184).



hope that you will launch an investigation immediately and keep me informed of your progress. If you cannot, then I don't know what other course of action to take.

[13] I have considered sending this to newspapers, magazines and broadcasting companies, but I somehow feel that investigation and action by the Congress of the United States is the *appropriate* procedure, and as a **conscientious** citizen I have no desire to **further besmirch** the image of the American serviceman in the eyes of the world. I feel that this action, while probably it would promote attention, would not bring about the *constructive* actions that the *direct* actions of the Congress of the United States would.

As the process types in Table 2 above show, Ridenhour's Exhortation is a very personal one, with every proposition and proposal clause prefaced by a first person mental process or state. This isolation of his voice against others reflects the fact that in discussions with his friends, relatives and mentors all but one advised him not to act on what he knew (Ridenhour, "Talk"). And of the 30 Congressman (Senators) who were sent the letter, only one, Morris Udall (from Arkansas, where Ridenhour was living at the time) took up the cause. Udall called on the House Armed Services Committee to ask the Pentagon to conduct an investigation and they did so (the Pentagon responded two weeks later, claiming they were acting independently of Congress).

[12]

I do not know for certain...
 I am convinced...
 I remain irrevocably persuaded...
 (you and) I do truly believe...
 I think...
 I feel (I must)...
 I hope...
 I don't know...

[13]

I have considered...
 I somehow feel...
 I have no desire...
 I feel

Clearly the community of concerned Congressmen and Pentagon officials Ridenhour manages get involved was initially a small one—the "you and I" of his plea embracing just Ridenhour and Udall. Of the agencies canvassed in his Threat (the media, Congress, citizens, servicemen, the world), only two men stood tall—in spite of Ridenhour's bid for them to join the company of Churchill and America's own founding fathers.

[12] ...**you and I** do truly believe in the principles, of justice and the equality of every man, however humble, before the law, that form the very backbone that this country is founded on, then **we** must press forward a widespread and public investigation of this matter with all **our** combined efforts. ...**I hope that you** will launch an



investigation immediately and keep me informed of your progress. If **you cannot, then I** don't know what other course of action to take.

[13] newspapers, magazines and broadcasting companies... the Congress of the United States... a conscientious citizen... the American serviceman... the world... the Congress of the United States

As Ridenhour comments in 1993, there are many sobering realities to face when involved in whistle-blowing activities of this kind:

There were several important lessons in this for me, personally. Among the most important and disappointing of them was that some people—most, it seems—will, under some circumstances, do anything someone in authority tells them to. Another is that government institutions, like most humans, have a reflexive reaction to the exposure of internal corruption and wrongdoing: No matter how transparent the effort, their first response is to lie, conceal and cover up. Also like human beings, once an institution has embraced a particular lie in support of a particular coverup, it will forever proclaim its innocence. (Ridenhour, "Perspective")

In his tribute to Ron Ridenhour, Randy Fertel, one of the founders of the Ridenhour Prizes, also counts the cost:

One half to two-thirds of all whistleblowers lose their jobs. <<Near the end of his life, Ron—an investigative reporter par excellence—did personality profiles for *People* magazine, because he needed the money.>> They often lose their colleagues and friends; they sometimes lose their families. ...

But the greatest shock, as one commentator writes, is learning that nothing he or she believed is true. That an open society is open. That our neighbors and colleagues care about truth. That our friends and family will be loyal. We need to believe these things. The whistleblower learns they are not always so... [Fertel. n.d.]

This raises the issue of how the identities performed by Ridenhour changed over time, as he pursued a career as an investigative reporter—including being honoured with the George Polk Award (for excellence in print and broadcast journalism) in 1987 for exposing a tax scandal in New Orleans (Ridenhour, "Tax").

5. THE ESSAY—GENRE

Just over a quarter of a century later, in 1994, Ridenhour wrote an essay about the racial prejudice underpinning what he calls America's 'Perpetual War' (Ridenhour, "Jesus"). This essay is organised in broad outline as an Exposé followed by Condemnation; the Exposé begins with discussion of the racism Issue, and goes on to deal with three sites of Discrimination (Vietnam, the Pima Indian Reservation Arizona and Latin America). By far the longest stage deals with Ridenhour's experiences in Vietnam.



Exposé

Issue (racism)

Discrimination 1 (Vietnam)—3967 words

[Ron's experience of Vietnam, mainly with Mike Terry]

Discrimination 2 (Arizona)—453 words

[Ron's first hand experience of Pima reservation]

Discrimination 3 (Latin America)—462 words

[Ron's vicarious account]

Condemnation (Perpetual War)

By 1994 Ridenhour would have reflected long and hard about the impact of his letter. The investigation of the atrocity and its cover-up arguably helped intensify opposition to the Vietnam War, and laid some ground for the paranoid misdemeanours of the Nixon presidency, leading to its ultimate downfall. Of the soldiers and chain of command implicated in the massacre, however, only one soldier was convicted (Lieutenant Calley) and his subsequent pardon by Nixon meant that he served just four months in a military prison for his crime. Colin Powell, then a 31-year-old army major and ready as ever to do the bidding of his superiors, was directly involved in early stages of the cover-up (he is considered by some as having white-washed the massacre). One can well imagine Ridenhour's chagrin had he lived to see Powell rise to his position as US Secretary of State in 2001, culminating in his infamously fallacious address to a plenary session of the United Nations Security Council in February 2003, which precipitated international participation in the Iraq War—yet another phase the Perpetual War on which America's economy depends (Ridenhour died of a heart attack in 1998, at the age of just 52). His "Jesus was a Gook" essay is an attempt to dig behind atrocities such as My Lai to see what it is that makes it easy for the American public to turn a blind eye to what is going on, some of it "too strong for the stomachs of discerning adults" (Ridenhour, "Jesus"). As the word count above shows, Vietnam still looms very large among Ridenhour's concerns.

Exposé

Issue (racism)

Gooks. I know, I know. It's a dirty word. When you come right down to it, through, the world is filled with gooks. Gooks, gooks, gooks. The poor motherfuckers are everywhere. Doesn't really matter what you call them, of course. They're there. ...

Discrimination 1 (Vietnam)

I first came face to face with my own intimate knowledge of gooks in Vietnam. First time I heard the word was on the way to Vietnam. ...

Discrimination 2 (Arizona)

Ten years later, sometime in 1978, a woman came to me. I had been doing some investigative reporting for a local hippie rag in Phoenix for several years by then and people with trouble sometimes found their way to my door. This woman was a Native American, a member of the Pima Tribe. ...

Discrimination 3 (Latin America)

The theaters have changed now, of course. We no longer call it Vietnam—because it is not. It is a new, much grander era. ...Today, in Latin America, the U.S. pays for and sponsors “Vietnamized” wars of one kind or another in roughly half the countries from Mexico south. ...

Condemnation (Perpetual War)

The Perpetual War will be bigger than the Vietnam War. And longer, of course. It already stretches from Mexico south to Bolivia, a reach that covers eleven countries...

This text is too long to explore further from a generic perspective here. But the persona Ridenhour enacts in it bears consideration, by way of opening up more theoretical space in SFL as far as users in uses of language are concerned (Martin, Zappavigna, and Dwyer).

6. THE ESSAY—IDENTITY

One big shift from the letter to the essay is that in the essay Ridenhour dwells on his own personal experience of the Vietnam War. In spite of being more than two and a half times as long as the letter, there are fewer reporting processes and most of these replay a conversation with Mike Terry in just one part of the text. The witnessing in the essay comes overwhelmingly from Ridenhour, monoglossing his story (other voices not in play), with just the occasional proclamation (e.g. *actually*) as exemplified below:

In five separate cases I **actually** saw, the poor bastard who was killed just happened to be home when the grunts arrived. In other instances, we’d fly over moments after some infantry company or Vietnamese patrol had blown holes in a bunch of civilians for no apparent reason. They’d be laying there, three, four, maybe as many as half a dozen, bleeding and dying, some piece or another of them flopping around in the road. No weapons. Travel was hazardous for gook civilians.

The essay’s first-hand perspective affords very detailed, “literary” circumstantiation (of the jungle environs) and attribution (of the soldiers involved), as Ridenhour invites readers to share the experience of “being there” at the time:

We went into the landing zone led by a pair of shark gunships and followed by an empty slick. The LZ was a stinking, abandoned, overgrown rice paddy cupped into the wrinkle beyond the crest of the ridge. A small finger forked north from the ridge there, away from the valley. We’d lifted off from Camp Baldy at daybreak that morning, nosed over and lifted out, floating high above the paddies towards the mountains to the west. Thirty miles from the coast we descended to the treetops and began to wind west along the side of a slender finger of low, jungled hills that wandered along the north side of a huge valley. The valley, a huge green mouth that opened towards the coast until it looked like it might swallow the sea, progressively narrowed away from it, eventually melting into the mountains in the distance, a



thin crack in the horizon. It was said to be a major route of gook infiltration west to the coast from the Ho Chi Minh trail.

A few miles past where the first fingers of the mountains stretched east, our ships turned away from the valley floor, popped over a ridge, and dropped into the small rice paddy nested in the cup two-hundred feet below the hill's crest. We were out of the chopper in less than five seconds. Six figures in camouflage, boonie hats, grenade-laden web-belts and full field packs, pounding heavily through thigh-high grass, lumbering toward the relative safety of the jungle at the edge of the paddy. The sharks and trail ship circled once, the insertion bird lifted up to join them and all four peeled out back toward the sea. It was still less than an hour after daylight. It had been a nearly perfect insertion—except for one thing.

Of the witnesses in the letter, one figure, Mike Terry, looms large. From the letter we know only that he was a veteran of Charlie Company and the massacre. Now we learn that Terry was in fact Ridenhour's best friend in the service—both were working class kids and athletes, from the west, drafted on the same day, and separated only for the four months Terry spent in Lt. Calley's platoon. His Mormon character is judged (*pure; didn't cuss, discuss women, lie, cheat, steal or speak badly of anyone; wasn't even that sanctimonious; just sort of determinedly innocent; determined; buoyant, white optimism*) in some detail:

Mike was an intensely religious Mormon guy. He had also been the state wrestling champ in his high school weight class—which may have been as much as 133 pounds—and had gone on to a full scholarship at BYU, where he was drafted. He was nineteen. And he was pure. He didn't cuss, discuss women, lie, cheat, steal or speak badly of anyone. It was enough to make most people sick. It did, too. And he wasn't even that sanctimonious about it. Just sort of determinedly innocent. And Mormon. People hated him for his purity—that and the fact that he seemed determined to convert every soul he met to the buoyant, white optimism of the Church of the Latter Day Saints.

It is this character profile of course that made it especially hard for Ridenhour to believe the stories he had heard about Terry's participation in the massacre. It also explains the sudden burst of expanding engagement in the essay, prefacing the relay of Terry's detailed account:

It was a reunion of sorts, but things had changed. Charlie Company had been through Pinkville by now. Although **I knew** he'd been there, **I did not ask** Mike about it right away. **I'd heard** a couple of versions of the massacre by then—and what Mike had done that day. It was tough stuff. First time **I heard** it, **I didn't believe** it, **didn't believe** he would do what **they said** he'd done. **I would not believe** it, **I guess**, until **I'd heard** it from him. **I thought** the odds were higher that **I would** do what **they said** Mike had done. Me first. Mike Terry? **Never**.

As revealed in the letter, Terry and Doherty interrupted their lunch to “finish off” wounded Vietnamese that Calley and his platoon had gunned down:

Terry and Doherty had been in the same, squad and their platoon was the third platoon of "C" Company to pass through the village. Most of the people they came to were already dead. Those that weren't were sought out and shot. The platoon left nothing alive neither livestock nor people. Around noon the two soldiers' squad stopped to eat. "Billy and I started to get out our chow" Terry said, "but close to us was a bunch of Vietnamese in a heap, and some of them were moaning. Kally (2nd Lt. Kally) had been through before us and all of them had been shot, but many weren't dead. It was obvious that they weren't going to get any medical attention so Billy and I got up and went over to where they were. I guess we sort of finished them off." Terry went on to say that he and Doherty then returned to where their packs were and ate lunch. He estimated the size of the village to be 200 to 300 people. Doherty thought that the population of "Pinkville" had been 400 people.

Recall that in the letter this account was verified by La Croix, but not immediately judged. The essay provides a more detailed, even more gruesome account, which I will spare readers here. This time round the massacre is immediately judged, metaphorically by Ridenhour (*my head felt like it must feel when someone is scalping you alive*). Terry however makes a distinction between his own behaviour and that of others. Calley and company are judged as having been involved in *a Nazi kind of thing*:

As Mike told me the story, my head felt like it must feel when someone is scalping you alive. Even as it is actually happening, you can't bring yourself to believe it. But yes, yes, yes, he said on every detail. It was all true. He hadn't shot into the people when Calley first had them all crowded into the ditch. That was awful. The whole thing was like a bad dream. "It was like a Nazi kind of thing," he said.

But Terry excuses his own behaviour as *mercy killings*:

But he made a distinction between what Calley had done at the ditch and the coups de gras he and Billy administered later. The people he and Billy polished off, Mike said, were mercy killings. Those people were going to die anyway. No need for them to suffer. How many were there? He didn't know. A dozen. Maybe two. It was hard to count.

After a long silence Ridenhour tries to negotiate Terry's judgement, ending their friendship by suggesting it was wrong:

Finally, after what seemed forever, I whispered the last question I ever asked him about My Lai.

"Mike, Mike," I asked. "Didn't you know that was wrong?"

"I dunno man," he said and a change came over him. It was as if I saw a wall roll down behind his eyes. "I dunno. It was just one of those things."

He rolled over at that and a few minutes later I could hear the regular hum of his breath. He was asleep. We never talked about My Lai again after that, though we pulled four more LRRP missions together and finished the remaining seven months of our tours in Vietnam in the same company. We continued to be cordial, but we were not close after that.



My question had taken me over the line, beyond a limit I should not have crossed, a line a friend should have known was there. While we did not yet know it, there would be plenty of time for judges in our lives. Life is filled with them. He did not need me to be his. It seems like such an obvious, stupid question now, in retrospect, but I could not help myself at the time. It was, I thought, such an extraordinary and awful tale, especially for it to come tumbling from the lips of pure, Mormon Mike Terry.

This is a telling tale of friendship's dependence on shared values, and the shattering of long-standing relationships when certain lines are crossed. But for Ridenhour, the essayist, there are larger issues at play. The next stage of the essay deals with Ridenhour's trip to the Pima Indian Reservation and his realization that his sergeant in the Long Range Reconnaissance Patrol mission recounted in part above was in fact an Indian from that reservation. His nickname during much of the campaign was *Gook*, a racist term used by American servicemen to refer to non-Americans since the very beginning of their colonial wars (in the Philippines, where they betrayed the independence move against the Spanish they had previously supported). Ridenhour bridges from the Terry episode just considered to the Pima Reservation with an account of the outburst from Sergeant Juan that put an end to the nickname *Gook*:

A few days later, back on the beach of the South China Sea at Chu Lai, someone on the team called Juan by his nickname again. "Hey Gook," he said. Maybe it was Gruver. It could have been me. "When we going out again?"

Juan turned. Real sudden. Not just pissed. Really pissed.

"Listen motherfucker," he said, a furious, steely anger in his voice, "Don't you ever call me that again! You hear? Don't none of you motherfuckers ever call me that again!"

We didn't. Clearly, it had the potential to be a killing offense. I was, strangely, almost as shocked by Juan's burst of anger that day, in a certain way, as I was by Mike Terry's revelations to me a few days earlier. Perhaps I was a slow learner. It took me years to understand why.

The juxtaposition of these two liminal events suggests that more than bonds of friendship and collegial responsibility are at play. The third "Discrimination" stage of the essay turns to Latin America:

Today, in Latin America, the U.S. pays for and sponsors "Vietnamized" wars of one kind or another in roughly half the countries from Mexico south. Every one of the drug war countries, for instance, is currently involved in some variation of a Vietnam-style counterinsurgency campaign. Some are disguised as "drug wars," others as counterinsurgency campaigns separate from simultaneous drug wars, or as in El Salvador and Nicaragua, as an outright counterinsurgency or insurgency operation. Each country has a MILGROUP, the modern variation on MACV, boatloads of traveling TDY (temporary duty) advisors, American military and/or drug war aid, and tons of American training. Other similar wars are also being waged in Africa and Asia.

And “in every case,” Ridenhour comments, “amazingly enough, the enemy happen to be citizens, usually large numbers of them, who oppose the government we support. Gooks, I guess you’d say.” The stories he tells about Terry and Sergeant Juan are thus clearly to be read as exemplums (Martin and Rose, *Genre*), bringing the master identity of ethnicity into play. The Perpetual War is between Americans and Gooks, involving the ongoing slaughter of Gooks (= non-Americans) throughout the world:

The U.S. is nevertheless still orchestrating the slaughter of gooks throughout the world. Massacres, assassinations, disappeared ones, forced relocation of the rural poor, government “secure” zones, death squads, the torture of prisoners, the labeling of any and all opposition as “terrorists”—all have a familiar ring. Call it Nixon’s revenge. It is Vietnamization that seems to work. We provide the money, the guns, the strategies, and plenty of on-the-scene advisors to our friends, the good gooks. They in turn steal most of the money, do the dirty work on the bad gooks, and if someone gets caught, take all the blame. A whole continent with gooks on one side and potential Lt. Calleys on the other. Gooks and Lt. Gooks. What could be more perfect in a world of perpetual war?

All legitimized, from Ridenhour’s perspective, by the racism of “us and them:”

It’s funny how people are. I never heard Mike Terry say the word “gook.” If you’d have called him a racist, he would have denied it with the purest conscience. Sometimes I wonder, though, what Mike would have done if the people in that ditch at My Lai had been Mormons, white Mormons? Would he have put them out of their misery? Maybe, but I doubt it.

Of course the Perpetual War goes on; now we also have hoards of Muslim gooks—who are also not moaning loudly enough for most of us to hear:

That’s kind of the way it is with the people trapped in the Perpetual War. We only catch occasional glimpses of the victims moaning from the ditch during our lunch. The audible sound of human agony is less obtrusive for us than it was for Mike and Billy that day at My Lai. We don’t actually hear them. We still do not feel compelled to make a choice. Instead, we turn the page on the three-inch story at the back of the news section in the *New York Times*, down at the bottom just before the crossword puzzles begin, and barely have a second thought about the massacre of more villagers in some remote spot in some Latin American country. It doesn’t even dawn on us that we’re leaving them all to die in the ditch. Perhaps, if they were white Mormons, people would be pissed.



7. MODELLING IDENTITY IN SFL

As we have indicated above, Ridenhour draws on different resources in his letter and essay; some key differences are summarised in Table 3 below. Ideationally these reflect the fact that in the letter Ridenhour is for the most part reporting on what he has heard, to an audience that includes informed military and not so well informed non-military personnel; in the essay on the other hand he relates mainly first-hand experience, to an audience treated as relatively familiar with the Vietnam War. Interpersonally the differences reflect the fact that in the letter Ridenhour is concerned that people he doesn't know believe him; whereas in the essay, he takes his authority for granted and foregrounds his solidarity with servicemen, then and now. Textually the main difference is the carefully constructed layers of periodicity in the letter, with Ridenhour constantly forecasting where he is going and reviewing what he's said; the essay unfolds much less predictably, with elements of suspense and surprise. Taken together these differences of course reflect the different social purposes of the two genres—Ridenhour has different work to do and gets on with the job. But however far we push genre theory as an explanation of the choices at risk, we will not have explained how it is that Ridenhour is positioned to perform the genres the way he does at different stages of his careers. His whistle blower persona makes way for his investigative reporter one; his identity changes, not just the genre.

TABLE 3: CONTRASTING DISCOURSES—LETTER AND ESSAY

	RIDENHOUR WHISTLE-BLOWING	RIDENHOUR COMMENTATING
ideational	minimal attribution	detailed attribution
	minimal circumstantiation	detailed circumstantiation
	military ranks; units (<i>Lt.</i> ; <i>51st Inf.</i>)	Vietnam War acronyms (<i>LRRP</i> , <i>LZ</i> , <i>GI</i> , <i>VC</i> , <i>NVA</i>)
	setting in time (<i>in late April</i>)	sequence in time* (<i>after the largest group disappeared...</i>)
	more reporting processes	more mental processes
Interpersonal	appreciation: truth	judgement: propriety (+ ongoing affect, appreciation)
	targeting testimony about events	targeting events
	heteroglossic	monoglossic
	expand/contract engagement	occasional proclamations
	polite (<i>Gentlemen</i>)	swearing; slang (<i>shit</i> , <i>fuck with</i> ; <i>zapped</i> , <i>cherry</i>)
	full names (<i>Pfc Michael Terry</i>)	first names; nicknames (<i>Juan</i> , <i>Mike</i> ; <i>Gook</i>)
Textual	foreshadowing	suspense/surprise
	layered sandwich periodicity	serial unfolding

* In the essay sequence in time is not usually made explicit with a temporal linker, but is inferred from the juxtaposition of clauses realising a recurrent military activity sequence (e.g. *The sharks and trail ship circled once, the insertion bird lifted up to join them and all four peeled out back toward the sea*).

One way to approach this identity shifting is through Bernstein's notion of reservoir and repertoire (157). By 1994 Ridenhour has a different range of semiotic resources at his disposal than he had in 1969; and he has mastered the recognition rules to know when he can perform them and the realisation rules to compose them when suitable occasions arise (Bernstein 104f). But as we have seen, over and over again above, identity is something we negotiate with reader/listeners. Chatting with Terry, Ridenhour tries to share the bond that what Terry did was wrong; Terry refuses the coupling of judgement and ideation at stake here, and their friendship never recovers. The persona Terry has adopted to put the past behind him cannot rally around this particular bond. Similarly Sergeant Juan's nickname functions as such as long as it is read simply as a solidary vocative¹⁰—i.e. read as not proposing a racist slur. But the ongoing use of the term as a negative judgement of non-Americans in Vietnam, and as concomitant legitimization of their slaughter, eventually overwhelms Sergeant Juan, who forbids anyone in his patrol to ever use the name again (forbids it with extreme prejudice, Ridenhour believes, as a "killing offense"). Values in other words don't just perform identity; they are always negotiating the alignment of persona into communities as well. Personae are only ever personae as affiliating members of a group.

Seen in these terms, and simplifying wildly, Ridenhour's letter persona involves someone with vicarious experience of the massacre and cover-up he is blowing the whistle on, and a desperate need to share the truthfulness of what he is saying with a relevant authority—involving a rhetoric of persuasion. Ridenhour's essay persona on the other hand by and large involves someone with first-hand experience of what he is talking about, and a not quite forlorn wish to get people ignoring the Perpetual War to confront the racism underpinning it—a wake-up call involving a rhetoric of "shock and awe," as the title of his essay, "Jesus was a Gook," forewarns. A topological perspective on these personae is offered as Fig. 2. The vertical "witnessing" axis positions personae along a scale of personalised through vicarious experience; the horizontal "judging" axis positions personae along a scale of evaluation from a concern with truth at one end to a concern with propriety at the other. As we can see, this places Ridenhour the essayist in the upper right-hand quadrant and Ridenhour the whistle-blower in the lower left. Michael Terry the confessor, as construed by Ridenhour in the letter, might be placed in the upper left-hand quadrant; he gives a true account of what he did, but makes no proposal there about it being wrong. Morris Udall, the Senator who acted on Ridenhour's letter, performed a persona from the lower right-hand quadrant.

¹⁰ Indeed it is precisely the use of derogatory terms such as *Gook*, as vocatives by insiders, that gives them their bonding power (see Caldwell, "Making"; *Rhetoric*, for discussion in relation to rap music)—since outsiders cannot use them without running the risk of being heard as proposing a racist and/or gendered slur.



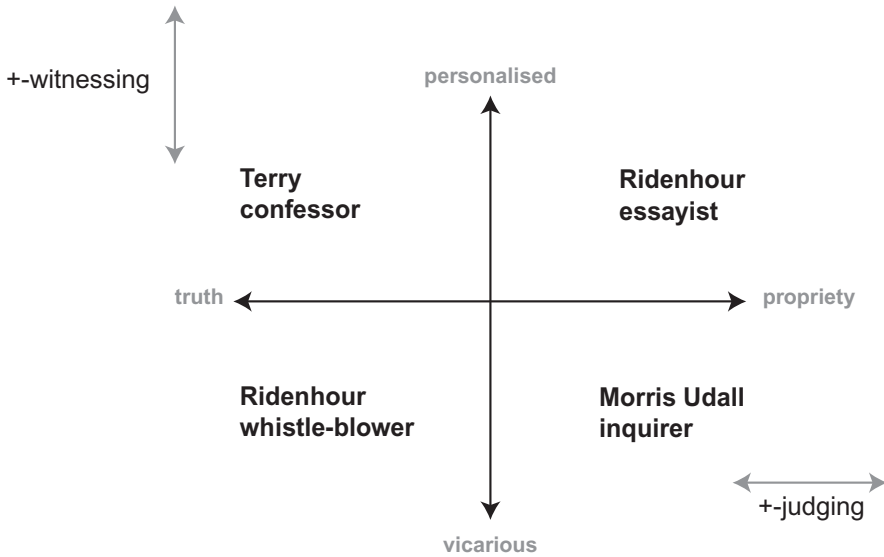


Fig. 2: A topological perspective on personae performed in Ridenhour's letter and essay.

Ultimately what we want of course is to fill in each quadrant as a complex of bonds (shared ideation/attitude couplings), ideationally construed, interpersonal enacted and textually composed (Tann, "Imagining")—through a "swarm" of interacting features such as those outlined in Table 3 above (Martin, "Realisation"; Zappavigna, Dwyer, and Martin, "Just like"). This level of detail is well beyond the scope of my paper here (cf. Martin and Zappavigna, "Beyond Redemption"; Martin, Zappavigna, and Dwyer, for exemplars from another genre). What does need to give us pause however is the place of persona analysis of this kind in a functional model of language such as SFL. The topological modelling strategy in Fig. 2 is in fact adapted from Maton's sociological work on knowledge, his work on what he calls Specialisation in particular ("Knowledge-Knower"; "Progress"; *Knowledge*). Maton is interested in the way in which intellectual and educational fields comprise both knowledge and knowers, and models identity in these fields topologically in terms of strengths of what he calls epistemic relations (between socio-cultural practices and the part of the world they are oriented to) and social relations (relations between sociocultural practices and their actors or authors). This allows him to map four principal modalities: a knowledge codes (ER+, SR-) for which legitimacy depends on what you know; knower codes (ER-, SR+) where what matters is who you are; elite codes (ER+, SR+) where it matters both what you know and who you are; and relativist codes (ER-, SR-) through which everyone's voice and knowledge is equally valid. Adapting this for SFL, we can treat this as roughly analogous with plotting an ideational epistemic dimension against an interpersonal axiological one, as in Fig. 3 below. As proto-typical exemplars of personae positioned in this way we might recognise Wallace, whose scientific expertise afforded his vision of evolution

(knowledge code; ER+, SR-); Darwin, whose expertise and gentlemanly social status afforded both this vision and its promotion (elite code; ER+, SR+); Leavis, whose cultivated sensibility has shaped generations of literary scholarship (knower code; ER-, SR+); and bloggers who opine freely on the web without recourse to privileging expertise or sensibility (relativist code; ER-, SR-).

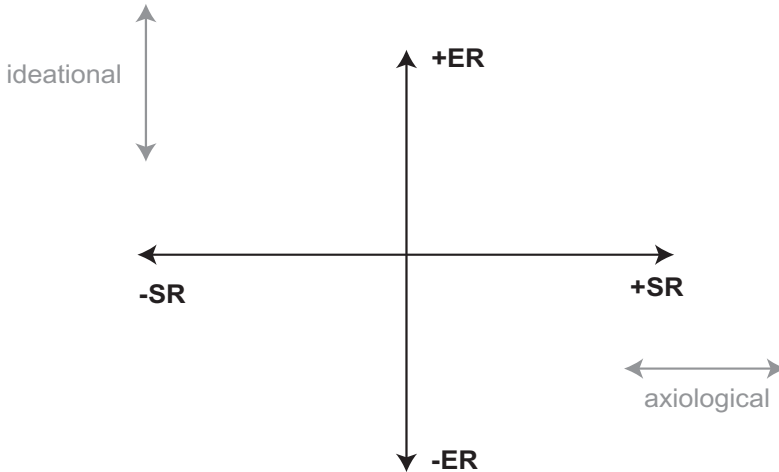


Figure 3: An SFL perspective on Maton's identity topology for intellectual fields.

Maton's approach underscores the need to focus on knowers alongside knowledge in social fields, which in SFL terms we can perhaps recontextualise as a concern with both people and practices—both personae and genres in other words. This suggests that we need to supplement work on realisation and instantiation in SFL by proposing a third hierarchy, individuation, to bring a focus on users of language back into the picture (alongside SFL's ongoing concern with uses—as parlayed in register and genre theory). To date, SFL has explored two complementary ways of thinking about individuation. One, inspired by Hasan's work on semantic variation (Hasan, *Language; Semantic*), interprets individuation as a hierarchy of allocation whereby semiotic resources are differentially distributed amongst users—both in terms of which options are available and of those available, which are likely to be taken up in specific contexts of instantiation. As noted above Bernstein uses the metaphor of reservoir and repertoire to describe the semiotic affordances of users in relation to their communities as a whole along these lines:

I shall use the term *repertoire* to refer to the set of strategies and their analogic potential possessed by any one individual and the term *reservoir* to refer to the total of sets and its potential of the community as a whole. Thus the *repertoire* of each member of the community will have both a common nucleus but there will be differences between the *repertoires*. There will be differences between the *repertoires* because of the differences between members arising out of differences in members context and activities and their associated issues. (157)



A second, complementary perspective on individuation looks at how personae mobilise social semiotic resources to affiliate with one another—how users share attitude and ideation couplings, in Knight’s 2010 terms, to form bonds, and how these bonds then cluster as belongings of different orders (including relatively “local” familial communes; less immediate collegial, professional, religious and leisure/recreational affiliations; and more “general” fellowships reflecting “master identities” including social class, gender, generation, ethnicity, and dis/ability). As with realisation and instantiation, it is difficult to find a neutral term which privileges neither a “top-down” nor a “bottom-up” perspective. I’m adopting the term individuation for this hierarchy here, keeping in mind that it is concerned with both how semiotic resources are distributed among users (allocation) and how these resources are deployed to commune (affiliation). An outline of this user-oriented hierarchy is presented as Fig. 4. Our main challenge at this point in time lies in finding ways of mapping identity as bond complexes right along this cline—as couplings of shared values at ever higher levels of abstraction, configuring sub-cultures and eventually master identities organised by gender, ethnicity, class, generation and dis/ability. For topological explorations along the lines of Figures 2 and 3 above see Caldwell, *Rhetoric*; Martin and Zappavigna; Martin, Zappavigna, and Dwyer. Can this or relate modelling strategies be generalised up the cline?

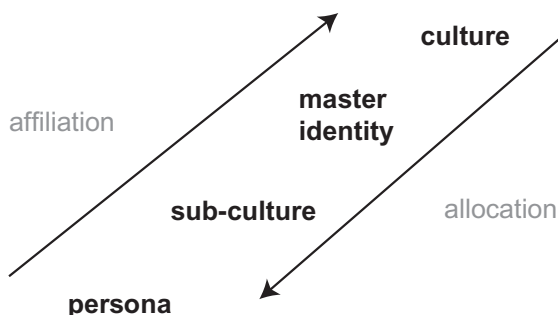


Fig. 4: Individuation hierarchy (culture as a network of personae).

More generally, what is at stake here as far as modelling semantic variation is concerned is a need for three hierarchies—realisation, instantiation and individuation. The realisation hierarchy formalises the resources which vary at various levels of abstraction (phonology, lexicogrammar and so on; Figure 3 above). Processes of instantiation then actualise each stratum on this hierarchy as text (variation according to uses of language), at the same time as processes of individuation deploy resources from each stratum, in each instantiation, to perform the personae through which communities align (variation according to users of language). Given the iconic role of metafunctions (ideational, interpersonal and textual) in mapping semiotic resources in SFL one crucial responsibility of both instantiation and individuation will be that of mapping these three complementary stands of meaning onto one another—as apparently seamless discourse (instantiation) and apparently coherent

personae (individuation). We'll have to wait and see how the tyranny of metafunctions is overcome.

An outline of the cartography we need to foster research into users alongside uses of language is suggested in Figure 5 below. As we can see, it takes a lot of theory to understand how Ridenhour draws on the reservoir of meaning in the culture to instantiate his genres and at the same time negotiate his identity in relation to a community where he belongs. Based on more than 50 years research in SFL we know something about modelling resources in terms of realisation (via strata, metafunction, rank and axis; Matthiessen and Halliday, *Systemic*). But comparable work on instantiation is barely underway; and work in individuation has just begun (for preliminary suggestions see Bednarek and Martin; Martin, "Genre"; "Vernacular"; "Tenderness"; "Innocence"; "Realisation"; "Semantic"; Martin and Zappavigna; Martin, Zappavigna, and Dwyer). A long row still to hoe, where Firth has led the way.

The unique object of Saussurian linguistics is '*la langue*', which exists only in the *collectivité*. Now at this point I wish to stress the importance of the study of persons, even one at a time, and of introducing the notions of personality and language as in some sense vectors of the continuity of repetitions in the social process, and the persistence of personal forces. (Firth 183)

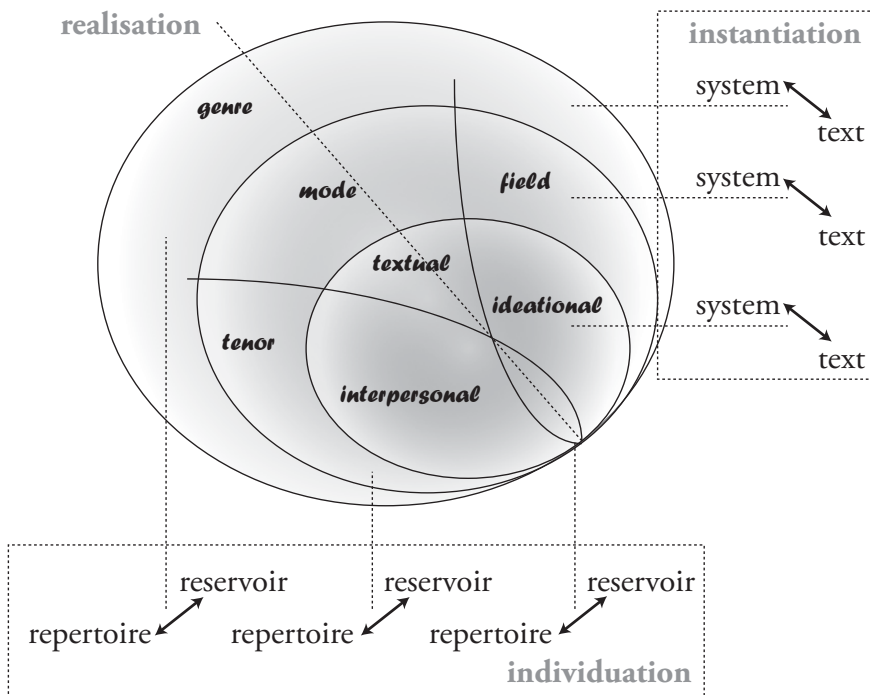


Fig. 5: Realisation, instantiation and individuation—a challenge for SFL.



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APPENDIX: RON RIDENHOUR'S LETTER

Mr. Ron Ridenhour
1416 East Thomas Road #104
Phoenix, Arizona

March 29, 1969

Gentlemen:

It was late in April, 1968 that I first heard of "Pinkville" and what allegedly happened there. I received that first report with some skepticism, but in the following months I was to hear similar stories from such a wide variety of people that it became impossible for me to disbelieve that something rather dark and bloody did indeed occur sometime in March, 1968 in a village called "Pinkville" in the Republic of Viet Nam.

The circumstances that led to my having access to the reports I'm about to relate need explanation. I was inducted in March, 1967 into the U. S. Army. After receiving various training I was assigned to the 70th Infantry Detachment (LRP), 11th Light Infantry Brigade at Schofield Barracks, Hawaii, in early October, 1967. That unit, the 70th Infantry Detachment (LRP), was disbanded a week before the 11th Brigade shipped out for Viet Nam on the 5th of December, 1967. All of the men from whom I later heard reports of the "Pinkville" incident were reassigned to "C" Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 11th Light Infantry Brigade. I was reassigned to the aviation section of Headquarters Headquarters Company 11th LTB. After we had been in Viet Nam for 3 to 4 months many of the men from the 70th Inf. Det. (LRP) began to transfer into the same unit, "E" Company, 51st Infantry (LRP).

In late April, 1968 I was awaiting orders for a transfer from HHC, 11th Brigade to Company "E," 51st Inf. (LRP), when I happened to run into Pfc "Butch" Gruver, whom I had known in Hawaii. Gruver told me he had been assigned to "C" Company 1st of the 20th until April 1st when he transferred to the unit that I was headed for. During the course of our conversation he told me the first of many reports I was to hear of "Pinkville."

"Charlie" Company 1/20 had been assigned to Task Force Barker in late February, 1968 to help conduct "search and destroy" operations on the Batangan Peninsula, Barker's area of operation. The task force was operating out of L. F. Dottie, located five or six miles north of Quang Nhai city on Viet Nemesse National Highway 1. Gruver said that Charlie Company had sustained casualties, primarily from mines and booby traps, almost everyday from the first day they arrived on the peninsula. One village area was particularly troublesome and seemed to be infested with booby traps and enemy soldiers. It was located about six miles northeast of Quang Nhai city at approximate coordinates B.S. 723795. It was a notorious area and the men of Task Force Barker had a special name for it: they called it "Pinkville." One morning in the latter part of March, Task Force Barker moved out from its firebase headed for "Pinkville." Its mission: destroy the trouble spot and all of its inhabitants.

When "Butch" told me this I didn't quite believe that what he was telling me was true, but he assured me that it was and went on to describe what had happened. The other two companies that made up the task force cordoned off the village so that "Charlie" Company could move through to destroy the structures and kill the inhabitants. Any villagers who ran from Charlie Company were stopped by the encircling companies. I asked "Butch" several times if all the people were killed. He said that he thought they were, men, women and children. He recalled seeing a small boy, about three or four years old, standing by the trail with a gunshot

wound in one arm. The boy was clutching his wounded arm with his other hand, while blood trickled between his fingers. He was staring around himself in shock and disbelief at what he saw. "He just stood there with big eyes staring around like he didn't understand; he didn't believe what was happening. Then the captain's RTO (radio operator) put a burst of 16 (M-16 rifle) fire into him." It was so bad, Gruver said, that one of the men in his squad shot himself in the foot in order to be medivac-ed out of the area so that he would not have to participate in the slaughter. Although he had not seen it, Gruver had been told by people he considered trustworthy that one of the company's officers, 2nd Lieutenant Kally (this spelling may be incorrect) had rounded up several groups of villagers (each group consisting of a minimum of 20 persons of both sexes and all ages). According to the story, Kally then machine-gunned each group. Gruver estimated that the population of the village had been 300 to 400 people and that very few, if any, escaped.

After hearing this account I couldn't quite accept it. Somehow I just couldn't believe that not only had so many young American men participated in such an act of barbarism, but that their officers had ordered it. There were other men in the unit I was soon to be assigned to, "E" Company, 51st Infantry (LFP), who had been in Charlie Company at the time that Gruver alleged the incident at "Pinkville" had occurred. I became determined to ask them about "Pinkville" so that I might compare their accounts with Pfc Gruver's.

When I arrived at "Echo" Company, 51st Infantry (LFP) the first men I looked for were Pfc's Michael Terry and William Doherty. Both were veterans of "Charlie" Company, 1/20 and "Pinkville." Instead of contradicting "Butch" Gruver's story they corroborated it, adding some tasty tidbits of information of their own. Terry and Doherty had been in the same squad and their platoon was the third platoon of "C" Company to pass through the village. Most of the people they came to were already dead. Those that weren't were sought out and shot. The platoon left nothing alive, neither livestock nor people. Around noon the two soldiers' squad stopped to eat. "Billy and I started to get out our chow," Terry said, "but close to us was a bunch of Vietnamese in a heap, and some of them were moaning. Kally (2nd Lt. Kally) had been through before us and all of them had been shot, but many weren't dead. It was obvious that they weren't going to get any medical attention so Billy and I got up and went over to where they were. I guess we sort of finished them off." Terry went on to say that he and Doherty then returned to where their packs were and ate lunch. He estimated the size of the village to be 200 to 300 people. Doherty thought that the population of "Pinkville" had been 400 people.

If Terry, Doherty and Gruver could be believed, then not only had "Charlie" Company received orders to slaughter all the inhabitants of the village, but those orders had come from the commanding officer of Task Force Barker, or possibly even higher in the chain of command. Pfc Terry stated that when Captain Medina (Charlie Company's commanding officer Captain Ernest Medina) issued the order for the destruction of "Pinkville" he had been hesitant, as if it were something he didn't want to do but had to. Others I spoke to concurred with Terry on this.

It was June before I spoke to anyone who had something of significance to add to what I had already been told of the "Pinkville" incident. It was the end of June, 1968 when I ran into Sargent Larry La Croix at the USO in Chu Lai. La Croix had been in 2nd Lt. Kally's platoon on the day Task Force Barker swept through "Pinkville." What he told me verified the stories of the others, but he also had something new to add. He had been a witness to Kally's gunning down of at least three separate groups of villagers. "It was terrible. They were slaughtering the villagers like so many sheep." Kally's men were dragging people out of bunkers and hootches and putting them together in a group. The people in the group were men, women and children of all ages. As soon as he felt that the group was big enough, Kally ordered an M-60 (machine-gun) set up and the people killed. La Croix said that he bore witness to this procedure at least three times.

The three groups were of different sizes, one of about twenty people, one of about thirty people, and one of about forty people. When the first group was put together Kally ordered Pfc Torres to man the machine-gun and open fire on the villagers that had been grouped together. This Torres did, but before everyone in the group was down he ceased fire and refused to fire again. After ordering Torres to recommence firing several times, Lieutenant Kally took over the M-60 and finished shooting the remaining villagers in that first group himself. Sargent La Croix told me that Kally didn't bother to order anyone to take the machine-gun when the other two groups of villagers were formed. He simply manned it himself and shot down all villagers in both groups.

This account of Sargent La Croix's confirmed the rumors that Gruver, Terry and Doherty had previously told me about Lieutenant Kally. It also convinced me that there was a very substantial amount of truth to the stories that all of these men had told. If I needed more convincing, I was to receive it.

It was in the middle of November, 1968 just a few weeks before I was to return to the United States for separation from the army that I talked to Pfc Michael Bernhardt. Bernhardt had served his entire year in Viet Nam in "Charlie" Company 1/20 and he too was about to go home. "Bernie" substantiated the tales told by the other men I had talked to in vivid, bloody detail and added this. "Bernie" had absolutely refused to take part in the massacre of the villagers of "Pinkville" that morning and he thought that it was rather strange that the officers of the company had not made an issue of it. But that evening "Medina (Captain Ernest Medina) came up to me ("Bernie") and told me not to do anything stupid like write my congressman" about what had happened that day. Bernhardt assured Captain Medina that he had no such thing in mind. He had nine months left in Viet Nam and felt that it was dangerous enough just fighting the acknowledged enemy.

Exactly what did, in fact, occur in the village of "Pinkville" in March, 1968 I do not know for certain, but I am convinced that it was something very black indeed. I remain irrevocably persuaded that if you and I do truly believe in the principles, of justice and the equality of every man, however humble, before the law, that form the very backbone that this country is founded on, then we must press forward a widespread and public investigation of this matter with all our combined efforts. I think that it was Winston Churchill who once said "A country without a conscience is a country without a soul, and a country without a soul is a country that cannot survive." I feel that I must take some positive action on this matter. I hope that you will launch an investigation immediately and keep me informed of your progress. If you cannot, then I don't know what other course of action to take.

I have considered sending this to newspapers, magazines, and broadcasting companies, but I somehow feel that investigation and action by the Congress of the United States is the appropriate procedure, and as a conscientious citizen I have no desire to further besmirch the image of the American serviceman in the eyes of the world. I feel that this action, while probably it would promote attention, would not bring about the constructive actions that the direct actions of the Congress of the United States would.

Sincerely,