TAKING THE HIGHER GROUND BETWEEN WEST AND MIDDLE EAST: THE DISCURSIVE ACHIEVEMENT OF META-PERSPECTIVE IN REPRESENTATIONS OF THE ARAB OTHER

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0. Introduction

It is a principal feature of contemporary post-structuralist analyses to be concerned with the deconstruction of essentialising discourses which circulate in the West. Such analyses suggest that textual persuasiveness depends in large part on the discursive generation of truth-effects which appear to be based on a general, universally valid foundation rather than upon the localised knowledge specific to Western culture. Now, among the devices which create such truth-effects and which we want to single out for detailed consideration here, is one that might be described with a spatial metaphor as the discursive positioning of a viewer (speaker, knower) in a panoptic vantage point that transcends that of the mundane social world which it oversees. By analogy with Foucault's (1977, 1980a, 1980b) analysis of late Nineteenth Century prison architecture, the discursive space to which we refer is one which represents the potential to attain value neutral and non-partisan knowledge. Traditionally, both the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian legacies have identified such a site as that occupied by God; but with the advent of the Enlightenment, the transcendental position once reserved for the Deity has become secularized - that is, occupied by man. Divine knowledge and insight have now been replaced by other sources of pure knowledge such as the value neutral, objective position that Enlightenment discourse seeks to stake out with, for example, the establishment of scientific knowledge.

In this paper, our objective is to examine the creation of this transcendant position - a meta-perspective - for how it takes place in the Western discourse concerning Middle East-West relations. In our analysis, the patterned construction of meta-perspective in Western discourse is not seen as merely an individual matter, a kind of 'natural', unproblematic argumentative device for asserting and positioning oneself in relation to others; rather we view it as a rhetorical strategy which has tremendous social power by virtue of its participation in the tradition of Enlightenment cultural practice. As we shall see, when systematically applied in concrete social situations, the discursive construction of meta-perspective works to foster unequal communicative structures in that some people (including hearers and readers) are drawn into sharing the meta-perspective while others are excluded. The construal, as well as the challenging, of meta-perspective usually indicates the existence of opposing political claims. With regard to Middle East-West identity, a number of critical scholars have demonstrated how the Western construction of a
transcendental vantage point in science and literature has engendered and supported Eurocentric projects of social and cultural domination, and how counterdiscourses have been directed at subverting this Western viewpoint (Fabian 1983, 1991; Said 1978, 1993; Pratt 1992). In this paper, we focus on one particular aspect of discursive meta-perspective, viz. the way in which Western transcendence is attained and strengthened by means of a particular mode of representing and interpreting the perspective of the Arab Other. More specifically, we focus on a question which has been somewhat neglected in previous studies of Western images of the Arab world, viz. the way in which the construction of a such meta-perspective works to bring about the unequal communication structure which so characterises the contemporary relation between the Western and Arab-Islamic worlds. In this paper, we examine two specific examples of discourse: that of popular literature which has as its topic the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict, and that of some conversational data in which America speakers express a concern with Middle East-West relations in the wake of the 1990-91 Gulf Crisis. In pursuing this analysis, we wish to show that the achievement of meta-perspective brings about a particular social effect through a discourse which is both socially grounded and instrumental to the status of speaker, hearer and object of the discourse.

I. The social nature of discourse

In addressing the issue of discourse and its social nature, it is important to be clear what philosophical issues we take up when we say that discourse is socially grounded and instrumental to the social status of both speaker and hearer. One way of doing this is to contrast our approach to the alternatives with which it might possibly be confused. So, for example, in the approach adopted by researchers in ethnomethodology, there is an emphasis upon the in situ constitution of meaning which takes place in the mutual orientation of interlocutors to an encounter. In adopting this approach, ethnomethodologists are emphatic in their position that society and societal structures have no independent status apart from discourse and discursive interaction itself. Thus, it is not that there somehow exists a social structure on the one hand as against discursive interaction on the other hand, rather social structures are seen as constituted upon each and every occasion to which they are interactively oriented (Button 1991; Boden and Zimmerman 1991; Schegloff 1991; Wetherell and Potter 1992).

1 Foremost among the work representative of such an approach is that of Edward Said which is especially noteworthy for its emphasis upon the connection between the appropriation of a Western meta-perspective and the historical project of colonial expansion. In his most recent study (1993: 167-168), he glosses this with reference to 'an invisible point of super-objective perspective, using the protocols and jargon of new sciences to displace "the natives" point of view.'

2 It is worth noting that the ethnomethodological position regarding the in situ constitution of societal structures has its correlate in a theological issue of longstanding interest concerning the nature of causation and divine intervention. For example, one position taken up within the Islamic mystical tradition of the Medieval Period is that in which God is seen to bring about the events
not only is it the case that if and when interlocutors are oriented to 'the same' kind of structure to which they had been oriented on a previous occasion, are they bringing into existence what is for all purposes a novel version of that structure (if for no other reason than that it is temporally displaced from the 'original' of which it is supposedly a 'copy'); but that the conventionality of that structure - that is, the essential nature of the structure which is said to persist through time - is itself the result of in situ constitution as displayed in the mutual orientation of the interlocutors thereto (Potter et. al. 1990). This 'already-constituted-ness' of convention (upon which a definition of social structure necessarily depends) is itself reflexively constituted through the mutual orientation of the interlocutors to the encounter. This is not to say that convention does not 'really' exist; but that its existence is just as much a result of interlocutor agreement (as displayed in mutual orientation) as is the meaning and creativity of any behaviour viewed in relation to that convention. Thus, all discourse - including discourse such as our own concerned as it is with the meaning created in other discursive interaction - calls into being the very object of its reference (Ashmore 1989).

Now, in marked contrast to this position is one which views discourse as conditioned by the conventions of a social reality which preexists it. In this approach, social reality is not seen as reinvented again and again by interlocutors, so to speak; but rather is regarded as a force which constrains as well as enables discourse. Thus, the emphasis on agency in the ethnomethodological approach is here replaced with an emphasis upon the generation of meaning as enabled by preexisting structure. Inevitably, this approach entails a definition of power which focuses upon the disciplinary force of institutions rather upon the voluntary discursive engagement of interlocutors. Even while an approach such as this one might be seen as an attempt at some sort of mitigation between the two theoretical perspectives in that there is said to exist an element of unconstrained choice in any decision even while that choice derives its significance in relation to the conventions against which it is made, this position nevertheless remains distinct from that of ethnomethodology since in that approach conventionality is itself also held to be constituted by interlocutors as demonstrated in their display of mutual orientation thereto.

Rather than attempting here to advocate one of these two theoretical positions, we instead take up the practically oriented approach adopted by which follow one another in what we observe to be a consistent fashion suggestive of causation (for a related discussion of Al-Ghazali's approach to causation, cf. Leaman 1985: 74-86). It is this same issue regarding the nature of causation which is taken up in the inquiry of modern philosophy such as that expressed in the work of Nietzsche (cf. Strong 1984), and which itself is closely related with the more recent considerations of postmodern inquiry regarding the discursive constitution of subjectivity and the meaning attached thereto (for an overview of issues that are of relevance to the postmodern debate, cf. Smart 1992; for how such issues relate to theological considerations more generally, cf. Berry and Wernick 1992). In its emphasis - indeed, insistence - upon the in situ constitution of social structure, ethnomethodology can be said to constitute a decidedly postmodern discursive sociology.

3 Said (1978) would appear to endorse such an approach in making a distinction between what he calls 'latent' Orientalism as an institutionalised force and the 'manifest' Orientalism which appears in discourse.
Wetherell and Potter (1992) who, while drawing upon ethnomethodological insights concerning the nature of discursive interaction and the in situ constitution of meaning, proceed with the undertaking of analysis as if based upon the assumption that an ontologically preexistent conventionality were in place. Citing the work of Hall (1988a, 1988b), they refer to this as "a commitment to walking forwards while looking backwards", as a useful way of proceeding which is one of "weaving rather than marching" (p. 87). Thus, we do not expect to settle the theoretical and philosophical incompatibility between these two positions with the discussion in this paper. We do, however, wish to make the point that conventionality is inherent to meaning (regardless of the ontological status of that conventionality). In establishing the novelty of a given in situ constitution of meaning, we necessarily must admit to the existence of convention (even if in so doing we establish that convention).

2. Bakhtin, dialogism and monologism

Within the context of this issue regarding discursively constituted social interaction, one body of scholarly work which has emerged as particularly significant is that of the Russian language and literary theorist M. M. Bakhtin. Characteristic of his work is the notion that a given socially constructed perspective always and only ever has meaning as it relates to alternative perspectives within a broader field of perspectives in contrast to which it stands. Referred to as heteroglossia, this concept involves an approach which maintains that in any statement, utterance or piece of writing, there always remains a trace of the contrasting perspective or perspectives to that which is put forward there; and that meaning itself is in fact the result of the creative tension that arises between contrasting perspectives. Without this distinction between perspectives, a statement is literally said to be without meaning (for discussion of an analogous approach developed in recent work in social psychology, cf. Billig 1987). Thus, for any statement to be rendered significant, it must carry within it this sort of contrast no matter how opaquely it may be expressed.

It is the capacity to generate novel meaning from this creative tension between contrasting perspectives (also referred to as voices) which Bakhtin glosses with the term dialogism. In contrast to dialogism, the process of monologism is one in which alternative perspectives or voices are suppressed or colonised, as it were, such that alternative views are seen from within the perspective being advocated. Gardiner (1992: 27) cites a succinct definition of monologism in his monograph on Bakhtin's theory as it relates to ideology:

"Monologism, at its extreme, denies the existence outside itself of another consciousness with equal rights and equal responsibilities, another I with equal rights (thou). With a monologic approach (in its extreme or pure form) another person remains wholly and merely an object of consciousness, and not another consciousness. No response is expected from it that could change anything in the world of my consciousness. Monologue is finalized and deaf to the other's response, does not expect it and does not acknowledge it in any decisive force. Monologue manages without the other, and therefore to some degree materializes all reality. Monologue pretends to be the ultimate word. It closes down the represented world and represented persons." (Bakhtin 1984: 292-293, emphasis in original)
Now, given the brief characterisation above of Bakhtin's notion of heteroglossia as involving the generation of meaning which is necessarily dependent on a contrast between alternative perspectives, it might seem that the idea of monologism is contradictory. After all, if meaning arises from the contrast between alternative voices, then how can a voice which expects no response and which "manages without the other" be said to be meaningful? How could it possibly obliterate alternative voices if a trace of those voices must necessarily remain in order for a statement or text to be significant? The answer to these questions is that monologism does not necessarily take place with the direct or apparent obscuring of alternative voices, rather (and for this reason, it is perhaps more effective) monologism is carried out when such alternative perspectives are addressed directly and explicitly from within the perspective being advanced. Referred to by Berger and Luckmann (1967: 139) as "liquidation by merger", this process is one in which the perspective of the Other is addressed against the background of assumptions that inform the monologising perspective itself. In other words, monologism fundamentally involves the relating of alternative views from within the perspective being advanced by the speaker. This is perhaps a bit difficult to understand without the benefit of some examples and so demonstrative data will be examined below; but before turning to these examples, we can briefly note that what this involves is the relating of alternative perspectives such that what it is which makes them contrastive is essentially neutralised. The fundamental points of distinction between alternative perspectives are thus closed down - obliterated - in monologism; even though the possibility of alternative perspectives existing as such is retained. In this way, the appearance of contrast is sustained, though its essential content is lost; and perspectives are juxtaposed rather than brought into actual dialogue.

Although, in the context of this article, we are not as interested in the origin and development of meta-perspective as much as we are in the discursive constitution and social consequences that meta-perspective has, it may nevertheless be of some preliminary help to provide something of a background to the analytic discussion by distinguishing between two historically consecutive yet interrelated forms of meta-perspectival construction. These can be roughly characterised as conservative and liberal variants. While both variants have had wide application in lending credibility to dominant discourses towards Others inside Europe; in view of our concern with the Western-Arab relationship, we will focus on the way in which they have contributed to the legitimation of the domination over non-Western Others.

Historically, the conservative variant of meta-perspective precedes the liberal

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4 In his study of Dostoyevsky's work, Bakhtin distinguishes between what might be called strong and weak forms of such closing down or finalising of alternative perspectives. The strong form occurs where 'represented' or 'objectified' discourse is employed - discourse which is less credible since it is represented as typical of a person or group. The weak form involves 'double-voiced' discourse - discourse in which an author or speaker employs the voice of another while still remaining in control of that voice. For a particularly interesting and well-written discussion of these issues, cf. Morson and Emerson 1990: 147-154.

5 The contrast here is an adaptation of Pratt's (1992) distinction between informational and experiential discourses about the Other.
one. Originally adopted in the discourse of explorers, ethnographers and missionaries; the conservative meta-perspective served both to normalise and conventionalise the non-Western Other with a detailed description of this Other's landscapes, resources, bodies, customs and languages. The ethnographic method of cataloguing various manners and customs created a discourse which reached a broad European public through popular travelogues and other stories, as well as through international exhibitions which staged living exemplars of non-Western people in orderly miniature reconstructions of their houses and city quarters (Celik 1992; Mitchell 1988). Thus, throughout the Nineteenth Century, the discourse of scientists and travellers was one which adopted a transcendental position that granted a unilateral right to observe the non-Western Other. The mundane situatedness of the Western voice became increasingly insulated from scrutiny, just like the interventionary and motivated nature of the bourgeois project which it advanced. Similarly, the voices of the observed were represented as being mute, non-existent - except when they delivered the necessary information for the construction of their own objectified classification. Normalising descriptions and objectifying expositions thus served to undergird a practice of control over the non-Western Other, helping to legitimise the exploitation of their bodies and resources and engendering a neat hierarchical distinction between the West and its Other within the context of the colonial enterprise. Western audiences, including the working-class, were invited to share in this meta-perspective and to become complicitous with the unequal structures which it entailed.

As long as the Other lacked the power to have its voice heard within the Western public debate, this meta-perspective did not need to change its form. However, when colonial projects increasingly came under pressure at the end of the Nineteenth Century, new generations of travellers and scientists came to adopt something of a more self-conscious voice under the influence of romanticism - a voice in which the description of the Other was narratively intertwined with a description of the Self. The Self was thus shown to be engaged in direct interaction with the Other. Now, although these new accounts did not impair the Western right to represent and interpret the Other, the observers' meta-perspective was no longer taken as a conventional right, but rather was discursively constructed as an achievement. Moreover, in their effort to show their meta-perspective to be an achievement, the authors of this observational discourse created distance between themselves and the Western center to which their descriptions were directed in order to demonstrate that only their ambiguous positioning at the border between the West and the East allowed them to adopt this meta-perspective. As the liberal sister of the imperial eye (Pratt 1992), the 'imperial ear', which was supposedly capable of hearing and understanding the various relevant voices that were present, came to be a new and prestigious instrument for achieving discursive meta-perspective. With the demonstration in narrative and scientific accounts of their ability to confront the Other's voice, these observers not only showed themselves to be aware of the historical presence and increasing impact of this voice; but they also compensated for some of the textual shortcomings which had hindered the effectiveness of the conservative variant of meta-perspective. At the same time, this satisfied a romantic longing for the exotic to come alive by enabling one to step outside the narrow confines of his or her Western Self while simultaneously adhering to the universalism of the Enlightenment as displayed in the apparent
willingness to recognise the Other as a speaking person.

Historically speaking, this second tendency to appropriate the Other’s voice by seemingly being prepared to take it into account, stands at the basis of our analytic interest in how discursive techniques can promote monologism with the appearance of dialogism. In order to make clear what this involves, it will perhaps be useful to delineate some of the discursive strategies whereby this is brought about. Two such strategies which we will discuss at length below are those in which a speaker: (1) momentarily adopts or concedes the validity of another’s perspective while at the same time sustaining his or her own perspective as distinct, and (2) redefines his or her own (that is, the speaker’s individual) perspective in relation to the group for which she or he supposedly speaks. One feature that both of these strategies have in common is that they work to create a discursive space which transcends that of the Other and even of the Self - a meta-perspective from which a speaker can comment upon both his or her own as well as the Other’s perspective. In doing so, this transcendant position renders a degree of credibility to the speaker which is at the same time necessarily denied to the Other whose perspective is limited in a way that the speaker’s is not (since, in the latter case, the speaker is able to take on both represented perspectives - that of the Self and the Other - as well as a meta-perspective). It is with the achieving of this meta-perspective accomplished in the very act of speaking itself that monologism takes place. In what follows, we will examine data from two widely dissimilar sources (that of best-seller novels and tape-recorded interview material) in order to demonstrate how meta-perspective is employed in denying a credible voice to the Arab Other.

3. The popular literature of spy thrillers

In this next section, we consider a piece of text about a political conflict which, being at the center of Western-Arab relations for decades, has become the focus of sharply contradictory views, viz. the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. As is well-known, and has been documented in a number of different studies (for a recent survey, cf. Suleiman 1988), Western attitudes toward this conflict have for some time been polarised around the notion of Israel as a progressive, civilising and pro-Western society in contrast to its Arab neighbours. In other words, Israel is seen as moral and competent, as against an image of the Arabs and Palestinians as cowardly, immoral, and conspicuously incompetent in military affairs. More recently, however, these views have become somewhat flexible. Beginning at the end of the 1970s and in the face of developments which apparently either undermined the image of Israeli morality and competence (e.g. the 1982 invasion of Lebanon) or which challenged familiar stereotypes of Palestinians as terrorists or impotent refugees (as with the recent Palestinian uprising in the Occupied Territories), Western discourse could no longer take it for granted that these assumptions would remain tenable. Against this background, it is interesting to consider closely how two fictional bestsellers,

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6 Toine van Teeffelen would gratefully like to acknowledge the financial assistance of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) in support of the dissertation research upon which the analysis in sections 3.0-3.2 of the present article is based.
appearing at this particular time in Western countries, deal with these challenges to the prevailing views, and how meta-perspective and its concomitant strategies function here to contain the discourse of the Arab Other.\(^7\)

As we approach fiction here, we should take into account the methodological point that the voices described are not only embedded within the intra-narrative relation between the fictional speaker and recipient but also within the quite different relation between the text and the reader. What might be an effective rhetorical strategy in the context of a persuasive attempt of one narrative character to another, does not necessarily mean that it will be so for the reader. On the contrary, a reader may well feel distanced from both speaker and recipient, and thus may be inclined to reject a particular line of argumentation. In what follows, we will limit our analysis to a consideration of the possible rhetorical effects on the (implied) reader.

Another aspect of this material which has a direct bearing on the issues at stake here is one that involves the specifics of the formulaic structures employed in popular fiction. Adventure, crime and spy stories often feature prototypes of a popular hero who seems to be particularly suited to enact a meta-perspective in the sense that we have defined above. This hero - be he or she a cowboy/girl, detective, spy or other lone adventurer - is usually shown to display a non-partisan concern for human beings, and to be inclined to identify not only with the interests of a delineated social group or organisation, but also with humanitarian interests on a more general level. In his or her display of individualism, the hero stands and fights as a relative outsider on the frontier of society. Of no little significance, the hero demonstrates a great deal of competence, included among which is knowledge of the adversary and in some cases (spy stories) the skill to impersonate the Other.

In turning to examine the role of the Israeli (usually Mossad agent) heroes in bestseller fiction, we should first of all note the deep and mature humanity attributed to them by virtue of their experience as victims of war, either in the context of the Nazi perpetrated holocaust or in various regional wars in the Middle East. Such experience is portrayed as enabling them to identify with other victims independently of their origin or affiliation, and of enabling them to adopt a meta-perspective toward the Arab-Palestinian Other. In addition, the bestsellers draw upon stereotypes of the clever Israeli agent who is able to take on the Other's perspective for manipulative purposes, having acquired detailed knowledge of the Other's way of life. This hero-agent displays a loyal-but-critical attitude toward superiors, thus indicating an independent stance which supposedly typifies Israeli society and politics in general.\(^8\)

\(^7\) The two bestsellers we have in mind here are not, of course, isolated instances of popular fiction which employs meta-perspectival strategies. The analysis presented in this paper is informed by van Teeffelen's (1992) dissertation research concerned with a broad range of popular fiction involving Israel that appeared on the New York Times Review of Books published in the period from 1945 to 1986.

\(^8\) Novels employing such a hero image include: Leon Uris' Exodus (1958) and The Haj (1984), Harold Robbins' The Pirate (1974), Thomas Harris' Black Sunday (1975 Morris West's The Tower of Babel (1968), Abraham Rothberg's The Heirs of Cain (1966), A.J. Quinnett's Snap Shot (1982); and to a lesser extent, Gay Courter's Code Ezra (1986) and Andrew Osmond's Saladin!
In order to illustrate how the strategies for achieving monologism operate in such literature, we turn to an examination of passages taken from two bestsellers - Ken Follett's *Triple* (1980) and John Le Carre's *The Little Drummer Girl* (1983), both known for their substantial impact on Western popular images regarding Israel and the Palestinians in the period mentioned above. Both of these novels build their story around a typical Mossad hero. In the analysis which here follows, the first passage (taken from *Triple*) illustrates the strategy involving a redefinition of one's relation with the ingroup, while excerpts from *The Little Drummer Girl* provides a good example of the strategy whereby one takes on the perspective of the Other.

### 3.1. *Triple*

In the following passage, a discussion is described between Borg, a Mossad superior, and Dickstein, a Mossad agent-hero with a personal history involving concentration camp internment. The story unfolds against a narrative background in which Egypt is portrayed as having briefly acquired nuclear weapons in the period just following the 1967 war with Israel - an event which leads Israel to step up the development of its own nuclear program. The passage here follows one that involves an exchange in which Borg asks Dickstein to devise a plan to steal uranium from a European country. In response, Dickstein, unnerved by a vision of the Middle East being transformed into the site of a nuclear holocaust, shows some reluctance and launches into a political discussion which casts doubt upon the Israeli government's real intentions.

"... I think our people want the bomb anyway. I think they're glad of the excuse."
"And maybe they're right!" Borg said. "We can't go on fighting a war every few years - one of these days we might lose one."
"We could make peace."
Borg snorted. "You're so fucking naive."
"If we gave way on a few things - the Occupied Territories, the Law of Return, equal rights for Arabs in Israel."
"The Arabs have equal rights."
Dickstein smiled mirthlessly. "You're so fucking naive."
Listen!" Borg made an effort at self-control. Dickstein understood his anger: it was a reaction he had in common with many Israelis. They thought that if these liberal ideas should ever take hold, they would be the thin edge of the wedge, and concession would follow concession until the land was handed back to the Arabs on a plate - and that prospect struck at the very roots of their identity. "Listen," Borg said again. "Maybe we should sell our birthright for a mess of potage. But this is the real world, and the people


For extensive contextual analyses and appraisals of *The Little Drummer Girl* and *Triple*, cf. Terry 1985 and Breines 1989, respectively.

The enlargement of an Arab threat contrary to historical record is a not uncommon fictional elaboration employed in such bestsellers in order to justify subsequent Israeli or Western reactive measures (cf. van Teeffelen 1992).
of this country won't vote for peace-at-any-price; and in your heart you know that the Arabs aren't in any great hurry either. So, in the real world, we still have to fight them; and if we're going to fight them we'd better win; and if we're to be sure of winning, you'd better steal us some uranium."

Dickstein said, "The thing I dislike most about you is, you're usually right."

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Borg said, "You know, with most of my people I don't feel obliged to argue politics every time I give them an assignment. They just take orders, like operatives are supposed to."

"I don't believe you," Dickstein said. "This is a nation of idealists, or it's nothing."

"Maybe."

"I once knew a man called Wolfgang. He used to say, "I just take orders." Then he used to break my leg."

"Yeah," Borg said. "You told me."

The passage suggests Dickstein's willingness and capacity to momentarily distance himself, with rhetorical wit and acrimony, from the perspective of the Israeli ingroup. He expresses a suspicion of motivatedness on the part of his own leadership and in so doing pleads the case for a deviant political option. At the same time, he ironically disqualifies his superior with a dismissively cutting remark ("You're so fucking naive"). Most significantly, the potential for dialogue is briefly opened up with the exchange concerning a number of concrete and acute political themes ("the Occupied Territories, the Law of Return, equal rights for Arabs in Israel"). This challenge, with its implicit invitation to consider alternative political options, is contained however by the raising of the arguments and discussion toward a meta-level which eventually stabilises, fixing the initial dialogical exchange of themes. This takes place first when the concrete arguments are restated as instances of familiar and generalisable types of political discourse expressive of rather predictable attitudes and ideologies. Dickstein summarises the typical political attitude of Israelis which Borg personifies. In so doing, he shows both the competence and willingness to adopt a view which transcends his own perspective. Employing the stylistic register of the Israeli mainstream, he is able to paraphrase that selfsame mainstream understanding of his own "liberal" ideas. In this way, he demonstrates the capacity to understand his counterpart's way of thinking and to take a perspectival stand outside the center of the Israeli Self. In a similar fashion, Borg, from his perspective, understands Dickstein's argument to be an instance of "the peace-at-any-price" position. In typifying each other's position as either "liberal" or realistic, the discussion is taken to a level whereby the pros and cons of the juxtaposed perspectives are presupposed as already understood and therefore not in need of further articulation or scrutiny. In this way, the sting is taken out of any challenge to these views, and the initial potential for dialogue is effectively foreclosed.

In addition, there is a generalisation made concerning the validity of the political discussion as such. The final part of the passage relates a discussion about the need for discussion itself in circumstances where operatives are requested to follow orders. Here, Borg not only opposes Dickstein's viewpoint, but denies the relevance of the discussion as such. Not without some rhetorical force however (in his references to Nazi Germany and his own camp experiences), Dickstein maintains that the interrogation of realist political options by "idealistic" Israelis is essential, not because such interrogation might lead to a change in politics but rather to serve Israel's self-image ("This is a nation of idealists, or it's nothing"). By taking the
critical sting out of the discussion and failing in any significant sense to oblige Israeli politics, the double generalisation as well as the adoption of a self-scrutinising meta-level serve to imbue the Israeli political position with the semblance rather than the reality of dialogism. The reader is not really required to think through the specifics or consequences of the political issues at hand, but rather is invited to share in a common concern for and admiration of the Israelis in their capacity to embody a general principle - that is, to constitute a "nation of idealists". 

In general, the bestsellers tend to represent political discussions among Israelis or Jews in terms of a realist-moralist dichotomy. This dichotomy is traditionally regarded in Western political discourse as exhausting the available range of legitimate political options. Popular narratives cast these dichotomies in an allegorical way by showing women to be associated with the liberal, moral and 'soft' position; while men are associated with the conservative, realist and 'strong' position. Usually a Jewish woman is portrayed as calling the violence of a Mossad agent or military man to task. In these cases, the gender framework, with its connotations of both tension and complementarity, serves to generalise and naturalise an impression of Israelis engaged in an intense and yet controlled dialogue between the realist and liberal positions. In this way, the liberal stance is shown to be somewhat left of center and less effective because it is considered not to be pertinent to the prerequisites of military or undercover action (for a detailed description, cf. chapter ten, van Teeffelen 1992). The passage above shows Israelis as capable of rising above their internal divisions. Dickstein, while feeling himself part of one wing of the political spectrum, is nevertheless able to cast a sideward glance, as it were. What is interesting is that the more elevated and generalised his view becomes, the more that the capacity for dialogue is diminished.

3.2. The Little Drummer Girl

In contrast to how it is that the various Israeli actors are shown to be capable of taking on one another's viewpoints, the bestsellers show fewer instances of the other strategy we mentioned with regard to meta-perspective, viz. one in which Mossad

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11 Bakhtin refers to this in terms of an "objectivized and finalized image of a dialogue, of the sort usual for every monologic novel" (Bakhtin 1984: 63; cited in Morson and Emerson 1990: 243).

12 This brings to mind the opening quotation in Said's (1992) recent work taken from Conrad's Heart of Darkness:

"The conquest of the earth, which mostly means taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much. What redeems it is the idea only. An idea at the back of it; not a sentimental pretence but an idea; and an unselfish belief in the idea - something you can set up, and bow down before, and offer a sacrifice to ..."

13 Examples of other such work include: Thomas Harris' Black Sunday (1975), Nelson de Mille's By the Rivers of Babylon (1978), Gay Courter's Code Ezra, Leon Uris' Exodus (1958), Cynthia Freeman's No Time for Tears (1981), and Morris West's The Tower of Babel (1968).
heroes identify with the Arab Other. In fact, this actually only ever occurs in spy novels where Israeli agents impersonate an Arab and in the process begin to display an ambivalent sympathy toward the Arab cause (e.g. *The Tower of Babel*, *The Little Drummer Girl* and *Code Ezra*). In such cases, a somewhat greater degree of tension is created between the perspectives of the Self and the Other; although, as we shall see below, the rhetorical advantages of a discursive meta-perspective are even greater here than they are in the case of the moral challenges to the Israeli center of agency considered above.

*The Little Drummer Girl* contains a salient and extensive description of the adoption of the Other's perspective in the context of a story involving espionage training. In this novel, an English actress named Charlie is lured into a Mossad headquarters in Europe. She is fascinated by, and seems to have fallen in love with a Mossad agent by the name of Joseph. This brings her to take on a spying role the carrying out of which requires her to pose as the girlfriend of a Palestinian commando. As a result of the operation in which Charlie takes part, this commando, named Michel, eventually falls into Mossad hands while *en route* to an operation in Europe and is subsequently killed. Now, in order to become acquainted with the commando group of which Michael had at one point been a part, Charlie is required to rehearse and memorise an imaginary love affair with Michel whose role in this rehearsal is played by Joseph. In the course of the rehearsal session, Joseph - alias Michel - tells Charlie about the village he and his Palestinian family inhabited before its destruction in 1948, and about the support by Charlie's native Britain for the Zionist colonisation of Palestine. In the course of this discussion, he also provides details about the way in which certain scenes supposedly took place as a way of preparing Charlie for the possibility of her being interrogated by the Palestinians. During these rehearsal sessions, Michel is said to bring all his charms to bear, including his "animated, passionate voice and his beautiful Arab face" (p. 223), in order to pressure Charlie to identify with the Palestinian cause. Charlie's trainers expect that she will be enthralled by Michel's giving "new life to the old cliches" of Palestinian discourse (ibid.).

"He ignores entirely that you are already in theory on his side; he demands your total obsession with his cause, a new conversion. He throws statistics at you as if you had caused them yourself. Over two million Christian and Muslim Arabs driven from their homeland and disenfranchised since 1948. Their houses and villages bulldozed - he tells you how many - their lands stolen under the laws they had no part in making - he recites the number of dunams - one dunam is a thousand square metres. You ask him and he tells you. (p. 224)

Subsequent to this discussion, Charlie "marvels[s] inside herself at the paradoxes of a man who could dance with so many of his own conflicting shadows, and still stand up." (p. 225). Michel then describes his love for the village of his birth, and for his father "who admired the Jews" and who "had studied their Zionism and ... liked to summon them to our village and speak with them." (p. 226)

"The Zionists will tell you we had no culture, that we did not exist. They will tell you word for word the things that were formerly said of the Jews by the anti-Semites of Europe. The truth, in both cases, is the same: we were a noble people."

A nod of the dark head suggested that his two identities had agreed upon this point of fact. (ibid.)
Joseph recounts how during the 1948 war the Zionist army shot his - that is, Michel's - grandfather.

"They made my father stand beside them while they did it. My father who had believed in them."
"Is that true too?"
"Of course."
But she could not tell whether Joseph or Michel was replying, and she knew he did not mean her to. (p. 227)

Joseph, still in his role as Michel, subsequently describes the war and bitterly questions its justice.

She felt his glance and wondered whether he was aware of her inner withdrawal, or whether he was determined to ignore it. Only afterwards did it occur to her that he was deliberately encouraging her away from himself, and into the opposing camp. (p. 228)

Following all of this rehearsal, Joseph then engages Charlie more directly, out-of-role, as it were.

"And you, Charlie, you listen. Overawed. Amazed. By his romanticism, his beauty, his fanaticism."
[...]
"And his English is up to all this, is it?" she asked, buying time.
"He has a jargon-ridden vocabulary and an impressive store of rhetorical phrases, questionable statistics, and tortuous quotations. Despite this, he communicates the excitement of a young and passionate mind, and an expanding one." (p. 230)

Regardless of the persuasiveness of the 'Palestinian' argumentation presented by Joseph - alias Michel - we can assume that for many Western readers this description of Palestinian village life, the 1948 war, and the accusations toward Israel and Britain will appear as an understandable challenge to Israeli political practice as well as a challenge to the legitimation of Israel's existence as such. Many readers will share Charlie's confusion as to Joseph's real opinions about Israeli-Palestinian history. A high dialogic tension seems to be generated by Joseph's voicing of Michel's discourse which, it would seem, should contradict his 'real' political opinions and perspective.

Despite this apparent engagement of alternative perspectives, however, dialogism remains limited. This is so because the extent to which Joseph is sincere in what he says is not entirely clear, and also because neither Michel's discourse nor Joseph's own opinions are challenged and tested. Joseph does not let Charlie enter the talk, and refuses to let her address her remarks to his own 'real' opinion. According to the scenario he develops for her, Joseph expects that Charlie will be "overawed". In contrast to the previous passage from *Triple*, there is here much more probing of the specificities of Israeli politics; yet at the same time, the observations that Michel - alias Joseph - makes are, in a sense, somewhat free-floating. The extent to which his discourse is true to Joseph's intentions as well as true to the facts remains suspended in doubt since the "facts" are divested of their critical potential by being rendered ambiguous. In the single instance when ambiguity is momentarily resolved - when Joseph reveals his agreement with the
principle that both Jews and Arabs are a "noble people" - we can again detect the move toward generalisation as discussed with regard to the previous *Triple* passage - one which insulates the dialogue from concrete political issues. This means that during the remainder of the conversation, a strong yet unfulfilled dialogical tension is preserved. (This particular feature, it may be added, is rather characteristic of the more 'mature' kind of literature in association with which a critically acclaimed author such as Le Carre is known).

The unfulfilled dialogue evoked in the mind of Charlie and the reader is controlled by Joseph in a dual fashion. First, in the very fact that he does not demonstrate a desire to one-up Michel's point with the last word, he shows himself capable not only of articulating the Other's perspective, but also of abstaining from a predictable refutation while in a position of meta-perspectival control. His meta-perspectival capacities even make it possible for him to concede the ability of the Other himself to make a limited discursive use of meta-perspective (although this is rather obviously motivated, and therefore does not appear open-ended). This is demonstrated when Joseph relays Michel's strategic emphasis on the Palestinian community's initial positive stance toward the coming of Zionist settlers. It is this concession which finally causes Charlie to suspend her nagging doubts about Israel's history and to positively admire Joseph. In contrast to the monologic perspectives of the prejudiced or the partisan - those perspectives presumably adopted by Arabs - Joseph's views are presented as having a certain depth and maturity as demonstrated in his capacity to incorporate conflicting voices while simultaneously being capable of maintaining control over the entire process. In other words, admiration for the control over the features of dialogue itself comes to replace a critical interrogation of the content of that dialogue; admiration for the principle of dialogism paradoxically comes to replace genuine dialogue itself.

There is also a second device which controls the critical potential of the Other's voice in this passage. Both at the beginning and the end of the conversation Joseph gives some brief characterisations of the type of argumentations which Michel manages to pursue. To a large extent, Michel's talk is considered to be aimed at seducing Charlie, and in general to be rhetorical and propagandistic ("a jargon-ridden vocabulary and an impressive store of rhetorical phrases" etc.), although Joseph nonetheless still demonstrates his ability to achieve meta-perspective by conceding that Michael has an "expanding" mind. In this way, the Other's voice is captured on a general level in discourse types which can be easily discounted with an accusation as to their motivatedness, whereas the Self's discourse is, by implication, to be regarded as genuine.14

By way of summary, in our treatment of the two expressions of meta-perspective - the one involving the adoption of a critical but loyal attitude to one's own group; the other, a more far-reaching adoption of the Other's viewpoint - we have discussed two major devices which function to establish a discursive position of transcendence. These involve the generalisation of political views and the apparent suspension or ambiguation of those views. In these passages, we have seen how the narratively constructed Israeli speakers evoke the semblance rather than

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14 For a discussion of how popular literature ascribes a range of such objectified discourse types to Arab Others, cf. van Teeffelen 1991.
the reality of dialogue by showing themselves capable of making self-reflexive
generalisations about conflicting political views or of preserving a controlled
ambiguity toward them. When such meta-perspectival capacity is given positive
salience as it is in Triple and The Little Drummer Girl, the reader's attention is
directed away from a dialogue concerning the negative consequences of
controversial political and military actions and on to a liberal and admirable image
of the Self.

4. Conversational interaction among western expatriates

In taking up the question of the discursive means for achieving what we have been
calling meta-perspective, we have explored how the two different strategies
identified previously are employed in written material by examining excerpts from
works of popular fiction concerned with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In what
follows, we will turn our attention to a somewhat different kind of discursive
product: that of spoken conversation. One of the features that this material has in
common with the fictional data we have seen previously is the way it works to
construct Arab ethnic and cultural identity. Unlike that data, however, this material
addresses these concerns within the context of a discussion about very different
political and social events. Broadly speaking, the principal topics of interest in this
material are: (1) the relative social status of women in Western and Middle Eastern
societies, (2) the diplomatic contact between the United States and Iraq just prior
to the Gulf War, and (3) a concern with what the speaker glosses as "a certain way
of thinking (...) where everything has some hidden meaning" (lines 18-19, section 4.1
below) - thinking attributed to Arab speakers. Now, upon initial inspection, it might
seem that these topics are of quite widely divergent interest; but as we shall see
below, what ties them together is how it is that they are employed by the speaker
to situate his own perspective within the broader range of perspectives with which
it is compared. It is as if these topics provide the material, so to speak, with which
the speaker works to locate his own voice in relation to the specifics of the Arab
cultural perspective with which his remarks are concerned. The speaker thus works
in a very elegant fashion not only to situate his own voice, but also to convey the
content of what he construes to be the specifics of the Arab social and cultural
perspective as well. Interestingly, the specific content with which his remarks are
concerned is, in fact, expressive of some rather commonplace representations of
Arab social and cultural values as shared among the community of Western
expatriates (judging by the frequency of their occurrence throughout the entire
corpus of data from which this extract is taken), and the occasioning and systematic
variation in accounts regarding these issues (especially concerning the first issue -
that of women's status in society) is itself a matter of some interest (Moors, 1991).
For purposes of the present discussion, however, we will limit our observations to
how it is that the speaker works to bring about the discursive formation of a
meta-perspective with his remarks. Our only reason for pointing out the distinction
between semantic content and the situating of perspective at this point is primarily
to provide some context for an understanding of the extract itself.
4.1. Data and analysis

Bearing this in mind then, consider the following analytic data. This material was taken from a longer, open-ended interview that was recorded in Kuwait City in early February 1992. The principal speaker here was, at the time, working as a junior level diplomat at the American Embassy in Kuwait, contributing to efforts at reestablishing a diplomatic presence in the country in the wake of the then recent Gulf War. The discussion in this extract begins here with comments that are a response to an initial interviewer query concerning the meaning of Arab cultural identity. In pursuing this issue, the interviewer draws an explicit comparison between the events which are said to characterise life in Arab countries and those in the United States. (The lines in this extract have been numbered for ease of reference. The transcription conventions employed here are detailed in the appendix at the end of this paper).

Interviewer: I mean, is that different than what happens in the STATES, you're saying? To a different degree or something?
DB: I think to a different degree, I think clearly and that's one of the things that sort of makes it difficult to talk about, you know, a culture because everything that I complain about here also happens in the STATES. Uh-you know, a lot of people, including myself, you know, find uh-that the way women, you know- a lot of women who come here have a lot of problems which they attribute to the culture and a lot of it is-thing IS cultural. At the same time, you know, if you're and you walk down the street in New York City you're probably going to have a lot of the same- same problems. Uh-

Interviewer: Such as- what? What do you mean, just-
DB: Being harassed, being followed, being- you know, the kind of people that assume that you're a prostitute because you happen to be walking down the street, you know, by yourself at a certain time of day, uh- and having people uh-you know, just take liberties uh-because you're a woman and you're- and you're- and you're- and you're Western, um- ... (5.5) so- I mean I- and another cultural thing that I find-

Interviewer: Yeah.
DB: again, it's this sort of whole focus on a certain way of thinking, you know, that there's sort- conspiracies, where everything has some hidden meaning, you know you- it's- uh-you know, what people say openly doesn't mean as much as what they might be saying, you know- what- what- what people- what you assume they're saying, you know, behind the doors. And that can be very frustrating if you're representing a- a government and you're trying to be open, you're trying to be straightforward, because the assumption always is that, you know, if you take- if- if you say it on television, it doesn't mean anything. It's not real. You know. It's what you sort of say to somebody when nobody else is listening that- that matters

Interviewer: Mm hm.
DB: And- but, you know, that- to a certain degree that exists in EVERY culture. I mean, it's just more here- it's more widespread and more commonly accepted than it is in the States, at least in the sort of uh-

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15 The corpus of data from which this interview was taken was collected as part of a dissertation project currently in progress which explores the social construction of Arab identity among the community of Western (primarily British and American) expatriates who live and work in the Middle East. Following common convention, the interviewee identity has been obscured with the use of a pseudonym or - as here - with a set of pseudo initials. Further, any revealing details such as place names, references, etc. have been systematically altered.
Interviewer: I mean XXXXXX?

DB: <X you can X> sort of sense what I'm dealing with, it's more-

Interviewer: It's more common to- to do that? Is that what you're saying? Or X-

DB: It's more common to do that here I think, I think that's one of the problems we
had uh- in the time leading up to the WAR. You know, when Bush come out and
make statements saying, you know, "Kuwait will be liberated", you know, "this is
how we're going to do it, this is when we're going to do it, this is what we mean
when we SAY this", and Baker would go to Tariq Aziz and say "This is what the
President said, this is my directive, this is what's going to happen if you don't do
ex", and Tariq Aziz would say "Oh, but what do you REALLY mean, what do you
really want", it's like "No. This is it." You know. "There is no hidden agenda, there
is nothing else", you know, "regardless of"- you know, "you can analyse forever uh-
what the mo- motives were and what the", you know, "domestic politics- the role of
domestic politics might have been" and so on, "but the fact IS once the President's
gone out and publically said something, if that doesn't happen", you know, "he's
going to be pretty upset so you should take it seriously", and I don't think they did.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

DB: I think they, up til the very end, really believed there was some other way of
getting around the- you know, this- this problem. That- that they would- that the US
would forget about it or sweep it under the rug or, you know-

Interviewer: Yeah.

DB: it didn't happen.

Interviewer: Huh.

DB: Uh-

Interviewer: Huh.

DB: uh- so I don't know. But again, it's like- it's very hard- I'm- I'm sort of
uncomfortable making real statements about Arab culture as a whole because I've
known, you know, lots of, you know, uh- uh- very different types of- uh- of- of
people in- in these countries. Um- but there are- you know, I- you know, I- I- I
try and be sensitive to recognising- you know, you don't want to assume anything
about somebody when you first meet them because they're part of a culture, at the
same time you want to be sensitive to differences that might be there

Interviewer: Uh huh.

DB: and while certain- maintaining your own cultural values. You know, I X- I can-

Interviewer: What do you mean by that?

DB: Well I can say I- I- you know, I understand- I can understand- it's like I'll
recognise that uh- you know, a Western woman who wears shorts and a tank-top
walking around town is going to be- is going to be bothered, because to a lot of
people in- in Egypt or here ((IN KUWAIT)), that's seen as an invitation to uh- you
know, to be- to be bothered, <X in fact X>, and I can recognise that as a- as a
cultural thing, but I don't- that doesn't mean I have to accept that and say "Okay",
you know, "she's asking for it", or "she's doing it". I don't think that's- you know,
that's right.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

DB: Uh- I don't believe, you know, that uh- I mean, that- that sort of thing. I mean
I- uh- you can say "Okay, this is likely to happen in this culture, this is- these are
XXX the cultural reasons for it" and so on, but that doesn't mean that as an American
or as- XXX my own values, I have to uh- give those up.

Interviewer: Uh huh.

DB: Or- or change those. Uh- same thing with the sort of uh- what I see as sort of
this view of the world of the set of conspiracies. You know I can understand when
people say that, you know, that's what they believe, that's what they feel, uh- but I
don't have to agree with it. I DON'T agree with it a lot of the time.

Interviewer: Yeah.

DB: So-
In the material taken from popular fiction concerned with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, we have seen how the characters constructed there work to create, through their dialogue and actions, a kind of privileged discursive space from which to comment upon both their own particular perspective as well as that of the Other. Similarly, in the conversational interview data here, we see how the speaker works to articulate a position which is distinct not only from that of the Arab cultural perspective he construes of the Other, but also from that of a limited and fixed single-point perspective in relation to which the viewpoint of the Other is itself said to stand. This latter position is the perspective of the Self, but interestingly it is a Self which is distinct from that occupying the discursive space from which the speaker addresses his remarks, as in lines 3-10 (Harre 1991). Further, this other, limited and fixed Self is one which is constructed in terms of a social and cultural identity defined by association with its geographic situatedness in the United States. The speaker’s voice, thus, is in some ways rather ambiguous as to whether it is that of the American or that of the speaker situated outside his identity as an American. It is, of course, this ambiguity that makes for a maximising of the speaker’s credibility to evaluate the Arab perspective as against the American one.

Also interesting is how the speaker works to maintain a distinction between the Arab and American perspectives even while simultaneously working to undermine the basis on which such a distinction might be considered appropriate (viz. the harassment, under certain conditions, of women). In his remarks in lines 12-16, the speaker paradoxically claims that the United States and Arab countries both are and are not distinguishable on the basis of how women are treated there. Now, what becomes clear is that the primary work involved here is that of sustaining perspectival difference as such, even while neutralising the basis upon which it might be founded. This paradox arises because the speaker attempts to satisfy the two conflicting demands of displaying his empathy with the perspective of the Other by articulating a point of commonality (viz. similarity in social status of women) and of nevertheless distinguishing his perspective from that of the Other. This means that Otherness as such is asserted even while the speaker works to erode the foundation upon which it might be based.

It is further interesting to note that even this neutralisation in the basis upon which the distinction between perspectives is made turns out itself to be rather fuzzy. While the same harassment of women is said to occur in both the United States and Arab countries, the speaker nevertheless is emphatic in his construal of such behaviour as descriptive of Arab culture per se ("and a lot of it is- thing IS cultural", lines 7-8). Yet in his description of what this behaviour actually involves, the assumption that there exists a perspectival distinction itself comes, in the course of the talk, to inform the very description of which it was initially intended as a way of neutralising. Where initially in lines 8-10, the speaker had set out to describe the harassment of women as common to both the United States and Arab countries ("At the same time, you know, if you’re a woman and you walk down the street in New York City you’re probably going to have a lot of the same- same problems"); by the end of his turn at talk in lines 14-16, this subtly shifts to become the harassment of Western women, presumably by Arab men in Middle Eastern countries ("and having people uh- you know, just take liberties uh- because you’re a woman and you’re- and you’re- and you’re- and you’re Western"). What we see here then is that the speaker is caught in something of an ideological dilemma.
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(Billig et al., 1988) in which he must negotiate between the Scylla and the Charybdis of the conflicting demands arising from the different purposes of his talk. Now, these details are quite interesting in and of themselves, but they should not cause us to lose sight of the overall effect that the speaker works to bring about at this point in the conversation. In addressing his remarks to a comparison between U.S. and Arab cultural perspectives as such (the question as to whether this distinction is effectively neutralised or not being a different matter), the speaker can be seen here to redefine his own perspective in relation to the group for which he supposedly speaks. The upshot of all this is that in so doing, he creates a sort of privileged discursive space from which to comment upon Arab cultural identity. In particular, this space is privileged in the sense that it is immune to the potential accusation of its being motivated by the interests attached to a Western perspective itself.16 Just as interactants in courtroom proceedings struggle over the inferential potential made available through the categories and other background assumptions which they negotiate in the various queries and responses pursued (Atkinson and Drew 1979; Jayussi 1984), so too here the interviewee’s talk anticipates the potential accusation that his characterisation of Arab society overlooks similar aspects about ‘the West’, and that it is therefore biased as a result of the limitations of the perspective from which the interviewee speaks as a Westerner. This is especially relevant to the speaker’s assessment of Arab cultural identity because while he in fact does distance himself from the limitations of both perspectives here, he nevertheless paradoxically works to retain a sense of identity as a Westerner as a resource from which he can draw in order to validate his observations. The overall effect of this is to give the speaker a much greater degree of credibility than the Arab Other which he describes because he (the speaker) is represented as able to take on multiple perspectives in a way that that Other cannot. It is as if only after having distanced himself from both the Arab and the Western positions that the speaker can then opt to take up the Western viewpoint from which he had initially stood apart. His perspective thus has the advantage of appearing to be one for which he has opted after a kind of deliberation - a sort of endpoint to which he has arrived after the process of critical distancing has taken place and from which he can, after all, see the validity of the Western viewpoint (compare, for example, the remarks in lines 59-64 with those which follow in lines 75-78). It is this particular aspect of meta-perspective which itself constitutes an exercise of discursive power primarily because it is an ability which is systematically denied to the Other. Even where the Arab Other is shown to be capable of taking on the viewpoint of his or her Western Other (such as in the case of the Zionist perspective, as seen in our example from popular fiction), that capability on the part of the Arab Other is nevertheless still portrayed as restricted by the limitations of its situatedness in a way that is not true for the speaker making that portrayal.

Having examined how it is that the speaker works to distinguish his own perspective as speaker from that of the Western group which he represents, we can

16 Of course, this immunity is not complete as the potential opened up by our analysis here goes to demonstrate. By referring to the privileging of speaker positioning in this way, what we mean to say is that an accusation of speaker motivatedness is foreclosed and thus cannot be undertaken without a considerable amount of additional interactional work on the part of the interlocutor.
now turn to see what takes place when he concedes the validity of another's perspective by momentarily taking on that perspective for himself. As we have seen with regard to his Western Self and his discursive Self (that is, the Self occupying the discursive meta-perspective), it is sometimes ambiguous as to which these distinct perspectives the speaker draws upon in order to inform his observations: whether it is the limited, fixed perspective of his Western identity, or whether it is that of the discursive meta-perspective he works to create in distinction to that fixed Western identity. In either case, however, what is important is that the speaker shows himself to be capable of taking on a number of viewpoints - of speaking in a number of different voices, as it were. Now, as we will see presently, this ability not only applies to that of his fixed Western viewpoint, but extends also to the viewpoint of the Arab Other as well. In the same way that the speaker displays his control over the construction of both his Western and distinct, meta-perspectival speaker identities; so too he controls construction of the Other's perspective, so to speak. This apparent taking on of the Other's viewpoint, though necessarily only temporary in its operation, nevertheless functions to put the speaker in a discursive position of some power. As can be seen, for example, in lines 72-97, the speaker takes on a very specific viewpoint with regard to how women are viewed in relation to the significance of their clothing - specifically, that a particular fashion of dress is seen as indicating a certain permissiveness regarding sexual behaviour. Now, what is interesting about this talk is that while the speaker works to concede and even empathise with a given culturally situated perspective by expressing an understanding of its content, he simultaneously works to make a construal as to what exactly that content is. In other words, in expressing his understanding of the Arab cultural perspective (indexed with the reference to "a lot of people- in Egypt or here ((KUWAIT))", lines 68-69), the speaker also necessarily makes an assertion as to what it is that he takes that perspective to be. This really involves some rather elegant interactional work because the speaker manages here to create a kind of discursive situation such that an interlocutor cannot contest the content of the assertion concerning Arab cultural values without appearing to undermine or negate the speaker's claims to be empathetic. Thus, a distinction between the content of the speaker's characterisation and his motivation in making that characterisation remains ambiguous at this point and cannot, in fact, be made without the undertaking of additional interactional work on the part of the interlocutor. To do so would be to implicate the motives of the speaker and as such would threaten to undermine the assumption of good faith upon which the interaction is necessarily based.  

17 What we see then is that in the course of taking on the perspective of the Other, the speaker does not simply work to achieve the kind of meta-perspective to which we have been referring, but he also does so in such a way that simultaneously situates his talk in the ongoing flow of conversational interaction. That is, his use of this strategy involves its situated construction within the interaction itself so that the strategy is, to some extent, protected from its being 

17 To be more specific, it would threaten the display of such an assumption. In other words, while speakers may or may not assume the good faith of their interlocutors in any interaction, it is the display and mutual orientation to such an assumption of good faith which is necessary for interaction to be sustained (cf. Jayussi 1984 and Heritage 1984 for a discussion of this and other closely related issues).
made accountable as a strategy within the course of interaction. By foreclosing the potential accusation that his empathy with the Arab cultural perspective is strategic, the speaker constructs a kind of statement in which the content of his assertion regarding Arab cultural values is insulated from interrogation, so to speak, by its placement within the ongoing interaction. In this way, both the strategy of meta-perspective and the construal of Arab cultural values is very neatly accomplished.

4.2. Undermining the Other’s claim to meta-perspective

There is another very interesting feature of the interview extract which, though closely related to the issue of meta-perspective that we have been discussing in the two sorts of data, is not one that involves the direct use of any of the two strategies we have mentioned so far. Instead, this feature has to do with what it is that takes place in the speaker remarks concerning what he elsewhere refers to as 'conspiracy theory'. Specifically, we have in mind the speaker's remarks in lines 16-53. It is here that the speaker works to limit and control the Other's perspective by undermining his claim also to achieve a position of meta-perspective.

Now, in order to understand what is involved here, we first need to give detailed consideration to the question of how a particular statement - any particular statement - derives some of its meaning in the context of the perspective that is assumed to be held on the part of its speaker. Specifically, what this refers to is the illocutionary force of a statement - that is, whether it is to be regarded seriously, as having been made in jest, as strategically motivated by some factor which may be recoverable in the context of its utterance, etc. If, for example, a speaker were to make a statement which in some way were at odds with the viewpoint that he or she was assumed to hold, then the statement itself might be seen as accountable by virtue of that fact. It would be regarded as a lie, a joke, or as somehow meaningful by virtue of its incongruity with what its speaker would otherwise be assumed to believe. In the terminology of pragmatics, we would say that its relevance is judged as against other, non-stated factors recoverable within the context of utterance (Sperber and Wilson 1986). Now, the crucial factor in making such a judgement is that of what we, following Bakhtin, have been referring to as speaker voice (or perspective). In broadest terms, what the interactional use of voice involves is an assumption on the part of one interlocutor that a certain viewpoint - a set of assumptions - is held by his or her counterpart. In other words, in discursively mediated interaction, the involved parties routinely make a decision as to whether they should view their interlocutor's behaviour seriously or not by comparing that behaviour with the beliefs they attribute to the Other. A crucial and fundamental aspect of such a judgement is that it involves viewing the perspective of that Other

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18 This is not to say that the use of such a strategy is completely insured of not being made accountable, but only that such accountability cannot be made without additional interactional work on the part of the interlocutor. The burden of proof, so to speak, lies with the speakers conversational partner (here, the interviewer) who must undertake to open up the potential accountability that the speaker's contribution works to foreclose. As mentioned, this cannot be done without risking the threat to a displayed assumption of interactional good faith.
as necessarily closed-off - finished and limited in the sense that the statement of that Other is seen as made from a single-point, fixed perspective. It is this particular aspect of discursive interaction which Bakhtin refers to with the term addressivity. Very simply put, addressivity involves the assumption of a fixed viewpoint on the part of the Other in order that the Self can have a point of reference in relation to which his or her own perspective can be articulated (Holquist 1990).

Now, with regard to the interview extract that we have seen above, it becomes clear that the rhetorical work our speaker accomplishes with his explanation of 'conspiracy theory' in lines 16-53 is that of denying the social and cultural Other the same privilege of addressivity which he himself takes on. Specifically, in glossing the Other's effort to judge the illocutionary force of his own interlocutor's statement as one involving conspiratorial thinking, the speaker works to curtail the possibility for that Other to assume the single-point, fixed perspective on the part of his Other (that is, the Other's Other - here Tariq Aziz's diplomatic interlocutors, lines 35-46). In other words, the speaker denies the Other (Tariq Aziz) the same capacity to address his Others (George Bush and James Baker) that he (the speaker) retains for himself (and, in this case for George Bush and James Baker as well). The reasoning of the speaker would seem to be: because the Other has a fixed viewpoint, his assigning of a fixed viewpoint to his Others should be treated as a projection on his part. In this way, the speaker works not only to close-off what it is that he construes to be the perspective of the Other, but to manage the Other's efforts to do the same by referring to them as conspiratorial. Thus, what we see is a kind of jockeying for meta-perspective, so to speak - a rhetorically constructed power struggle in which the speaker himself works not only to occupy a discursive space of transcendence but to dislocate the Other from that same space. It is this feature which is particularly powerful in making effective the other two strategies we have referred to above. With this characterising of the Other's perspective, the speaker is enabled not only to employ these other strategies, but to situate their use in relation to the Other's asserted attempt to do the same.

5. Conclusion

In the preceding sections, we have explored two very different kinds of data in our discussion of the discursive achievement of meta-perspective and its relation to the social construction of both Middle Eastern and Western social and cultural identities. One particularly significant aspect of the data we have examined is not merely that it involves the discursive strategies that we initially set out to discuss, but that the use of these strategies have broader implications for how an assertion involving the situatedness of viewpoint is itself an occasioned construction. In other words, the construal of a perspective as limited, constrained and non-open-ended is an exercise which is reserved for a description of the Other. By contrast, in

19 Obviously, this is not to say that in an actual conversation involving Tariq Aziz himself, that Mr. Aziz would not work to construct the subject of addressivity with respect to his interlocutor, only that this denial of addressive capability is a rhetorical effect of the portrayal made of him in this particular extract.
discussing one's own perspective, there remains an aspect of open-endedness which is necessarily denied to the Other. This is a phenomenon which, as we have said, Bahktin refers to as addressivity. In its simplest terms, addressivity involves a finishing-off or rounding-up of one perspective as necessarily limited. This finishing-off stands in something of a complementary relationship to the open-endedness which is attributed to the perspective of the Self (even where the perspective of that Self is temporarily conceded to be fixed). Extending beyond the data we have examined here, it is not difficult to see how this entire issue has some rather profound implications for a theory of thought and consciousness as related to social interaction. In the terms employed by another well-know Russian thinker, Lev Vygotsky, it is this occasioning of addressivity which makes it possible - in fact, essential - for someone to take up any kind of position within a relational and mutually perceptible discursive field. Consciousness of Self necessarily arises from one's view of how they themselves are perceived from an Other's perspective (Wertsch 1985; cf. also related work in Billig 1987, 1991; Billig et. al. 1988). Without the finishing-off of the Other's perspective that takes place with addressivity, no consciousness of one's own perspective and position would be possible because there would be no contrastive perspective in relation to which one's own view could be said to stand. Perspective is thus inherently relational. Because of this intimate connection with the relativity inherent to perspective, consciousness and thought themselves are also relational and in fact cannot be said to exist apart from the mutual interaction from which they arise. Even where one's own perspective can remain open-ended (as in the case of the speakers we have seen above), it must have a fixed perspective in contrast to which it can stand and thereby take on significance. In terms of its relevance to an analysis of the data we have examined, such addressivity is constructed and mutually oriented to in terms of cultural difference. Further, this cultural difference is such that Arab culture and society and the perspective accruing thereto is consistently construed as closed-off, finished - it is the subject of addressivity in the discursive material we have examined (which is not to say that in other contexts a different strategy may not obtain). In contrast, the Western view is construed as open-ended even when that open-endedness is suspended in an act of speaker identification with the Western perspective. In the final analysis, we see that the finishing-off of the Other is a controlling feature of the discourse we have examined in that the Western perspective is the one that remains open-ended by virtue of its eventually being identified as and equated with that of the speaker. While the assigning of open-endedness and fixity of perspective is perhaps a feature common to all discursive interaction, the fact that such finishing-off should take on the political and societal configuration that it does is not, however, an inevitable consequence of addressivity itself.

In addition to the more theoretical ramifications of this analysis, we might close by noting how these issues relate to the field of Middle East Studies - or more precisely, the studies of Western and Israeli stereotyping of the Palestinians and the Arab-Islamic world. It is perhaps the case that in the past too much emphasis has been placed upon a study of the contents of socially conventional stereotypes (often leading to the simple cataloguing of Western stereotypes of Arabs and of Islam) rather than upon the way in which such stereotyping is textually constructed. By pointing out the discursive strategies involved in the production and conventionalising of stereotypes, it is hopefully possible to achieve some insight into
the forms that stereotyping takes - that is, insights into the power of monologic approaches. We will have achieved our objective with this paper if we have demonstrated that such an approach points to a number of relevant ways for conducting such an analysis.

Appendix

The interview extract which appears in section 4.1 above follows a set of transcription conventions which employ a number of modifications to the well-known Jefferson system, as described in Du Bois (1991). Among the modifications Du Bois introduces, several have been omitted in the extract above where they were not significant to the analysis (e.g. pause timing between speaker turns at talk). Other conventions which do appear in the transcript include the following:

ALL CAPS indicate added emphasis
false starts are indicated with a dash
editorial comments appear in double parentheses
timing of pause, where significant, is indicated with ellipsis and timed to tenths of a second as indicated in parentheses
indistinguishable talk indicated with an 'X' for every syllable of such talk
doubtful transcription indicated with squared bracketed 'X'
Reported or quoted speech (usually accompanied with a slight speeding up and lowering of voice) indicated with quotation marks.

References


