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On The
Interactional Unpackaging of a Gloss

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With an appended brief glossary of the transcript symbols

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On the Interactional Unpackaging of a 'Gloss'

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Introduction

The phenomenon I'll be reporting on here emerged from a two year study of 'Troubles-Telling in Ordinary Conversation' funded by the SSRC. Although I noticed the phenomenon in the course of that study, and much of the data I'll be considering here have to do with various sorts of 'troubles', it is not exclusive to such talk; is not bound to talk about troubles.

The phenomenon emerged in the following way. As I worked with 'troubles-tellings' I found that that activity frequently converged with other sorts of businesses, and that convergence was consequential for the shape of the troubles-telling. For example, a troubles-telling might converge with an 'arrangements-making' - a possible 'trouble' standing as a possible 'obstacle to a plan'. Or, for example, a troubles-telling might converge with an 'inquisition' - a possible 'trouble' alternatively constituting a possible 'misdeed'.

While focussing on the convergence between troubles-tellings and inquisitions I noticed a recurrent feature of the troubles teller-cum-transgressor's talk: It included intensely detailed descriptions. And that 'detailing' seemed to constitute 'evidence' in the building of a case for, 'not transgression, trouble'.

And, recurrently, another feature would be present: Some bit of

that 'detailing' turned out to be what I'm calling a 'gloss'. Most roughly, a gloss can be a 'generalization' and/or somewhat inaccurate and/or incomplete and/or a masking or covering-up of 'what really happened'.

What seemed to be going on, then, was selective detailing/glossing, to best support the case being built.

But one feature of the glosses was that on their occurrence they seemed to constitute perfectly adequate detailings; i.e., perfectly adequate narrative/descriptive components. They didn't, on their occurrence, strike me as inaccuracies, inadequacies, lies, etc. But once - however it came about - the gloss was 'unpackaged' and its constituent details exposed, it became available that, and how, it had been deployed for the case being built.

Having noticed that sort of phenomenon in inquisitional talk, I began to notice a range of 'glosslike' occurrences in other types of interaction.

Now, any report component might in principle be characterized as a 'gloss' of some sort; i.e., never really after all broken down into its bedrock details. I am not taking on that sort of issue. I am focussing on the sequential/interactional workings of conversation, which leads me to an interest, not in glosses-in-general, and not to such a question as just what is a gloss? Rather, I am led to an interest in those places in conversation where one among the myriad glosses becomes available as such; and especially to places where a gloss becomes unpackaged; to the question just how does that unpackaging occur over the course of interaction. I will be considering five cases of the phenomenon.

1. Unpackaging vis Inquisition

The first case under consideration exhibits a convergence of a

'troubles telling' with an 'inquisition'. In this telephone call between a husband (S) and wife (T), the alternation is between 'illness' and 'malingering'. And in a combined attempt to elicit appropriate responses to a 'troubles telling' (see, e.g., lines 17-20) and defend against the possibility of 'malingering', the wife produces a segment of enormously fine detailing (see lines 5-20).

(1) [TCI(b):9:2-3:Standard Orthography]

1 S: I just called to make sure you were you know,
2 (0.2)

3 S: 'hh I didn't know whether you'd gone to work or what you
4 know.

5 T: I was going to go: to wor:k, hh' hhhh I got a:fter you
6 left I thought well I'll eat some breakfast and then I
7 will go: to wor:k. hh
8 (0.3)

9 T: ' hhhh A:nd so: I: a:te a muffin? hh ' hhhh and chee:se, hh
10 (0.7)

11 T: ' hhhh And then I went to the bathroo:m?
12 (1.5)

13 T: 't' hhhh There was, h
14 (1.6)

15 T: A::nd I had a spoonful of cereal,

16 S: Mm hm,

17 T: ' hhh And then I got a real bad stomach ache.
18 (1.7)

19 T: Like (.) when: (.) someone tied a knot in my stomach.
20 (0.2)

21 T: → ' hhh So I lay dow:n and the next thing I know it was
22 eleven o'clo:hh-hh

23 S: heh-heh-heh-heh-heh-hih-hih-heh=
24 T: =So I didn't go:.
25 S: Ah.
26 (0.3)

27 S: No that's: okay,
28 (0.5)

29 S: Mh,
30 (1.2)

31 S: They can get along without you for a day or two,
32 T: nUhhhh
33 (1.4)

34 S: °(Well)°=
35 T: =hhhh
36 (0.9)

37 T: I had all kinds of wie:rd drea:ms. hh-hh
38 S: °hh! hm huh°
39 (0.2)

40 S: → ' hhh You been laying down on the couch or in the bedroom
41 T: → In the bedroo:m sleeping,
42 S: (Uh huh)

There is also what turns out to be a gloss. That it is a gloss is not available in the primary telling, but emerges later as a consequence of the recipient's activities. The gloss in question, "So I lay down", occurs at line 21. It is exposed as a gloss at lines 40-41.

On its occurrence, "So I lay down" is a perfectly reasonable, adequate descriptive component. However, once the recipient questions it, it turns out that it was at least ambiguous, and perhaps specifically implicative of an activity which would tend to support the case being built - but an activity which did not actually occur. That is, what is implied is that with an intention to go to work she just lay down on the couch, where what actually occurred might better be characterized as: Abandoning the intention to go to work, she went back to bed.

And, at least in the United States, there seems to be a strong distinction between 'bed' and 'couch' with regard to 'commitment to business as usual'. So, for example, in the following fragment, that someone "was lying on the couch out in front" is announced attendant to, and may stand as an exhibit of, her proposed status as "better".

(1.a) [NB:II:4:R:1:Standard Orthography]

1 E: I HAD A LITTLE O:Peration on my toe this week I had to
 2 have (0.2) *u toenail TAKEN O:FF,hh
 . .
 13 N: Did you have to go in the hospital?
 14 E: n:No::: I just had a
 15 → lo:cal deal an:d uh it wasn't any fu:n but I'm BETTER I
 16 → was: lying on: the cou:ch out in front

Now, in Case (1) the unpackaging of the gloss is a direct result of the recipient seeing it as a possible gloss, retrieving it, and picking it apart. In the other materials I will be considering, the unpackaging of a gloss, while it is very much the result of some activities by a recipient, does not have that inquisitional character. Indeed, whether or not the recipient sees that there is something to be unpackaged, is unavailable.

Rather, the recipient's activities may be roughly characterized as providing an environment in which the as-yet-unrevealed matters may be safely, appropriately, comfortably, etc. etc., produced.

2. Achieving an Environment for Unpackaging

The two fragments which make up Case (2) are taken from a very long telephone conversation between two middle-aged sisters, one of whom has just returned from a visit with a friend of hers who has recently found a prosperous husband and is now living in a California desert resort town. During that visit the two women indulged in some nude swimming.

The gloss here is a matter of incompleteness, not inaccuracy. Over the course of the conversation with her sister, we find repeated mentions of the nude swimming incident. The two fragments shown here include the first and last references to the incident. There are others. And one might dismiss these repeated references as just something people tend to do. She enjoyed it, it was a bit naughty, she just keeps mentioning it. She is 'rambling', and people do, after all, ramble.

But it turns out that there is more to it, and that the repeated references are attempts to find an environment in which the more-to-it can be properly, comfortably told.

Briefly we can inspect each of the fragments for what the recipient does, with regard to the sort of environment being established.

(2.a) [NB:IV:10:R:3:Standard Orthography]

1 L: Jesus Christ you should see that house E(h)mma you have {no
 2 idea.h_{hmhh}
 3 E: I bet it's a dream<With the swimming POO:L
 4 ENCLO:SED.HU:H?
 5 L: u-
 6 L: Oh::::::: Go:d we 'hhihhh uh hu ↑We swam in the n:ude 'hh
 7 Sunday night u(h)ntil abo_[ehh] ut two o' clo]:ck.]_[heh] huh h]a:h ha_[HUH]:<
 8 E:
 9 L:
 10 [↑HA: HA:]↓:.
 11 E: [he:hhhh]↓OH::: well I bet the moonli:ght and the beautiful
 12 stars th-uh ↑WIND BLEW TERRIBLY ↓THOU:GH

13 L: i-Ye:ah? the wi:nd blew down there and the wind blew today
 14 but oh: God coming home through the canyon tonight oh man=
 15 E: [(sniff)]
 16 L: =i:t was horrible. Man I really held on to that !ca:r.

To this first mention of nude swimming the recipient first of all produces some laughter (see lines 6-8). In another study we have observed that while laughter may appreciate, it does not necessarily affiliate. It recurrently works as a pre-affiliation, preceding and setting up a 'safe' environment for some talk in which the recipient of a problematic position-statement or activity-report exhibits that he feels the same way, does the same things, etc. etc. (See Jefferson, Sacks and Schegloff, "Laughter in the Pursuit of Intimacy", 1974, unpublished).

However, in this fragment the laughter is followed by an utterance which tends to disaffiliate from the business of nude swimming. Here, the recipient follows her laughter with an innocuous/romantic reference to the setting, "I bet the moonlight and the beautiful stars" (lines 11-12). And she uses this reference to the setting to move to the canonical 'neutral topic', The Weather, "the wind blew terribly though" (line 12).

And the teller takes up that most innocuous topic, and with it closes off the report of the swimming, and indeed the report of the whole trip (see lines 13-16).

Now, people with 'more to tell' can and do find ways to return immediately to the topic being moved away from by a recipient. But in this case it appears that the teller is gauging her recipient's attitude and seeing that this clearly is not the place to pursue the matter.

Almost forty minutes further into the conversation, an Nth reference to the nude swimming occurs. And on this occasion we find an altogether different type of response by the recipient, and an altogether different outcome.

(2.b) [NB:IV:10:R:56-58:Standard Orthography]

- 1 L: So THEN when Dwight le(h)eft we(h)e ftook the suits off
 2 (h)and s:wa:m around in th[e nu:de f eh HUH-ʌ and took a=
 3 (E): ((Ø)
 4 L: =|su:nba:th in the nu:de f and |everythingf hhh hhh
 5 E: Well you
 6 know E:vvie and ↑I used to do that on the ↑rivers if the
 7 fellows would go down get gasoline for their boa:ts,h 'hhhh
 8 She'd say do you mi:nd we'd be in a c:o:ve but we'd TAKE IT
 9 ou:t (.) under the wa|ter. You know because: uh: (.) ee
 10 we're OUT in the O|PEN. You know 'hhhh But we'd just slip
 11 our bathing s:ui:t |ow: and g-and °↑swim around in that°
 12 r:IVER tha(.)t uh Colorado River til: 'hhh'hh (.) Ghho:d
 13 what a thri|*:ll.
 14 (0.2)
 15 E: I always h:ave |liked to swim in the °nu:de.↑°
 16 L: M E]: TOO YOU
 17 KNOW and we 'hhh And then 'hh ri:ght eh: theh (.) there's
 18 ↑two places where the ho:t water comes in and you can get
 19 rhi:ght up close to them f and it just feels like you're f
 20 [ta:king a dou:CHE,]
 21 E: [eh] uh]uh]uh] a h] ahh [ahh a h 'hhh HUH-HA HA-AHh]=
 22 L: [hhhHHU:H]HHUH]HHU:H]HA:h ha]=
 23 L: = [a h h]ah:] ah:] e]h,] .
 24 E: [e-u-e]ah]agh]u h] . †hhuhhh=
 25 L: =A [nd we-:]
 26 E: [I C'] N †S [EE Y OU †TW O KI | :D S (AW-:)]
 27 L: [. * e [. * e [† i [A:ND †SH E was on ONE
 28 EN:D I was over the other end with ur legs up you know and=
 29 E: = [°Oh: : : : :] : - : : G o : : d] | isn't] she | cu: : te? °
 30 L: = [Jeeyi(h)ss [f(h)elt s(h) o g(h) oo:d [hna:h ha:h] =
 31 L: = hu [uh hu]
 32 E: [°Oh: °] she's *a cut | *ey. =
 33 L: = [h: <]
 34 E: [G O] :D she's uninhibited,

Here the recipient provides explicit affiliation. She starts off with a story of her own participation in nude swimming (lines 5-13). Note that the story is both circumspect and romanticized, ending up with its focus not so much on nude swimming, but on "that Colorado River" (line 12). Thereafter, however, she produces a policy statement which affiliates with nude swimming, per se, "I always have liked to swim in the nude" (line 15).

And it is just then, and perhaps specifically only then, that the teller produces the as-yet-untold materials. (See lines 15-20). In this regard, the 'just (and perhaps only) when' can be tracked in fine detail

across this interactional bit. The thoroughly enthusiastic assessment, "God what a thrill" gets no response. It is possible that this utterance is problematic for its affiliation with nude swimming due to its juxtaposition with "and swim around in that river that uh Colorado River"; i.e., the 'nude' aspect has become a bit removed. On the other hand, the affiliative policy statement "I always have liked to swim in the nude", is responded to with alacrity; the response occurring at a 'recognition point' for "in the nu//:de." (See lines 12-14 vis-a-vis lines 15-16).

Further, upon the occurrence of the affiliative policy statement, the one who has been repeatedly volunteering talk about her nude swimming is now in a position to talk on a "ME TOO" basis; her talk now exhibited to have been occasioned by her recipient's.

And in terms of assessing the 'safety' of an environment, the teller can be seen to have accurately gauged the situation here. In the recipient's response to the now-unpackaged materials, we find the classic pattern of laughter as a pre-affiliation followed by explicit affiliative talk (see lines 21-26).

The affiliation in this case might be characterized as 'second best' or 'in lieu of'; i.e., an exhibit of openness to the problematic description ("I can see you two kids") substituting for a 'me too' statement or story. In any event, the 'eyes on the activity' provided here stands in sharp contrast to the 'looking away' to "the moonlight and the beautiful stars" provided earlier.

But it can be noted that the teller has not been given carte blanche. As the description becomes increasingly graphic, the recipient's affiliation starts to decay, now targetting only one of the actors, the non-present other, and producing a 'not me' assessment, "God she's uninhibited." (See lines 27-34. Although the transcript is rendered in standard

orthography, there is one point at which I have stayed with the sounds and not attempted to select a word: "And she was on one end I was over the other end with ur legs up". It is simply not available to me whether the word is 'our', or 'her').

With regard to affiliation/disaffiliation, a detailed comparison of the points in the two fragments at which laughter occurs (and which, in Fragment 2.a is followed by disaffiliation, in Fragment 2.b by affiliation) yields some interesting features. Specifically, the laughter itself in Fragment 2.a. tends to disaffiliate, while that in Fragment 2.b. tends to affiliate. These tendencies can be seen in the placement and contour of the laughter.

In Fragment 2.a. placement and contour provide that the laughter is directed not to the nude swimming, but to the more general and innocuous business of carrying on until all hours of the night; i.e., to the mention of "u(h)ntil about two o'clock." Where 'two o'clock in the morning' is the prototypical token of having had a wonderful time.

In detail: The laughter does not start up in the vicinity of "in the nude", but well after it, just as the announcement of the time is being projected.

(2.a) [Detail]

6 L: Oh:::::::::: Go:d we `hhihhh uh hu †We swam in the n:ude `hh
 7 Sunday night u(h)ntil abo[ut
 8 E: [ehh]

Further, the laughter is shown to have been, not, for example, a delayed response to "in the nude", just so happening to occur across, and thereby disattending, the less exotic announcement of the time, but indeed targetting that announcement. Note that there is a fine-grained display of 'anticipating' that announcement; a rather soft, closed-positioned "ehh heh heh", followed by 'recognizing'; opening to a "huh" at a

'recognition point' for "two o'clo//:ck", and 'appreciating'; escalating to "ha:h ha:" at completion of the time-delivery.

(2.a) [Detail]

7 L: Sunday night u(h)ntil abo[ut two o' clo:ck.
8 E: [ehh] h e h] heh huh h] a:h ha:<

In Fragment 2.b. we find an almost identical procedure of 'anticipation', 'recognition', and 'appreciation'. Whereas in Fragment 2.a. it is deployed to disattend "in the nude" and target "until about two o'clock", here it is deployed to target the risqué materials, "and it just feels like you're taking a dou:che". Here, as the what-it-feels-like is projected, we get the 'anticipatory' "eh uh uh".

(2.b) [Detail]

19 L: fand it just feels like you're_{ref} [taking] a]
20 E: [eh] uh] uh]

(The 'florin' sign is used here to indicate 'suppressed laughter'). At a 'recognition point' for "a dou//:che", we get an escalation to "ah", and at completion, a next escalation to "ahh ahh".

(2.b) [Detail]

19 L: ffeels like you're_{ref} [taking] a] dou:CHE,]
20 E: [eh] uh] uh] uh] a h] ahh ahh

In each instance, then, the laughter can be seen to be beautifully fitted to - indeed part and parcel of - an ongoing response by the recipient; in Fragment 2.a., a disaffiliative response through and through, and in Fragment 2.b., an affiliative response through and through.

Now, the glossing in Case (2) is rather different from that of Case (1), the latter turning out to be at best ambiguous, at worst a misrepresentation, the former turning out to have been a precursory announcement. What they have in common is that upon their occurrence they stand as adequate, and it is in subsequent talk that their 'inadequacy' emerges. In Case (1) the 'inadequacy' emerges via the recipient's inquisition, and

in Case (2) it emerges via the recipient's providing an environment for, and the teller's producing, further materials (description of an activity which is not a standard, taken for granted component of nude swimming, and is thus not adequately referred to by a mention of nude swimming).

With the two fragments that make up Case (3) we return to the sort of gloss considered in Case (1); i.e., a statement (in this case two distinct but connected statements) which on its occurrence stands as perfectly adequate, descriptive, factual, etcetera, but in subsequent talk turns out to have been something of an inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

And whereas in Cases (1) and (2) the unpacking of the gloss occurs in the course of a single conversation, in Case (3) there are two conversations with two different recipients. In the first conversation, the gloss is preserved. In the second, as in Case (2), the recipient provides a salutary environment, and, in a fashion similar to Case (2), it may be just and only when a particular environment is established that the teller proceeds to unpackage the gloss.

3. Cross-Conversation Absence/Presence of An Environment for Unpackaging

Akin to Case (1), Case (3) consists in a convergence of a possible 'trouble' with a possible 'misdeed'. The situation here is rather more complicated. A little boy, finding himself alone at home, has phoned up some of his mother's friends, asking where she is. In later conversations with the mother, the friends inquire into the incident.

Both the boy and the mother stand in the problematic position of someone with a trouble and someone who has done a misdeed. The boy has his "insecurity" as a possible trouble, but a consequence of it, his calling around the neighborhood and perhaps being a nuisance, stands as a possible misdeed. The mother has the boy's "insecurity" and its consequences as a possible trouble, and her apparent insensitivity to it as a possible

misdeed.

In Fragment 3.a. the focus is almost exclusively on the 'misdeed' aspect, both of the mother and the boy; the mother defending against the possibility of inattention to the boy's problem, and in turn, setting up the boy as causing problems for her.

(3.a) [Rah:I:1-3:Standard Orthography]

- 1 V: Where did you get to last night,
2 (1.0)
- 3 J: Last- I dit- (0.2) I didn't go anywhere
4 (0.4)
- 5 V: Well Thomas rang to see if you where there,
6 (0.7)
- 7 J: 'hh °Ohh:::° hh Well it Was it last night. (.) Yes it
8 wThat's right it was last ni- 'hhh No I'd taken No:rman::
9 eh::m 'tlk to the uh (.) Sport Center in Saltbern. 'hhh]=
10 V: [hOhh: : : : :]=
11 V: =He'd forgotten,
12 J: [And I lef]t a no:te. No I left a note for Thomas
13 saying em'hhh eh- I le-eh (.) because I know he's a little
14 devil you kno:w, 'hh So I bahh! I left a note to sa:y that
15 (.) I'd be back. soo:n, 'hh and I put the ti:me on it. I
16 said I've just taken Norman to the: (0.3) Center.
17 (.)
- 18 V: Yes.
19 J: The Sport Center.
20 V: °Ahhh:::~:~:~:°
21 (.)
- 22 J: And,
23 (0.7)
- 24 J: Well uh (.) °What ti:me was it,° 'h I left you at about
25 twenty to fi:ve.
26 (0.4)
- 27 V: I don't know what ti:me it was J[essie
28 J: [°Ye:s°]=
29 V: =I can't remember really,
30 J: =I left here a t twenty to five and there was nobody i:n.
31 Now I thought he would have come with me you se[e, 'hhh=
32 V: [Ye:s,
33 V: =Y[es,
34 [And Norm and I picked Norman up at te:n to:,
35 (1.0)
- 36 J: And then it tu- Well I had to go sfairly slo:w to Saltbern
37 with the roads being[ba:d,
38 V: [It- Yes it would be:[Y e : s,]
39 J: [·hhh [An:d then I got
40 back and I (.) stopped in town just to buy some butter,
41 (0.3)
- 42 J: 'Cause I- I was out of butter,
43 V: [Y : a : h ,

44 J: 'hh And I came home.We:ll he was in tears: 'hh So:: that
 45 was it.
 46 V: Oh::.
 47 J: I don't know ↓why:. I don't know what had upset him I'm
 48 sure=
 49 V: =Oh: dear.=
 50 J: =But I hadn't been go:ne that that [long I was ba]ck=
 51 V: =No : : : : .
 52 V: =No ,
 53 J: =there b]efore six,

The 'inquisitional' character of the interaction is set at its beginning with the friend's accusatory inquiry, "Where did you get to last night?" (see line 1). And across the mother's talk we find that defensive detailing which is so recurrent in inquisitional materials, becoming particularly intense at lines 39-42, where, that "I stopped in town" is explained to have been momentary and prosaic, "just to buy some butter", which is itself explained as necessary, "'Cause I was out of butter".

The gloss in question occurs at lines 44-48, "And I came home.We:ll he was in tears: 'hh So:: that was it. . . . I don't know ↓why:. I don't know what had upset him I'm sure". And as far as this conversation is concerned, that is the description of the event. That is what happened. She comes home and this little boy is inexplicably in tears. Had we not access to another conversation, then as far as we would be concerned, that is what happened.

But we do have access to this other conversation, with another recipient. And the talk proceeds in quite a different fashion, and has a very different outcome.

For one, whereas Fragment 3.a. (and virtually the conversation) starts off with the accusatory "Where did you get to last night?", in Fragment 3.b. we find an instance of what Anita Pomerantz talks of as "an indirect form of soliciting information" (See "Telling my side: 'limited access' as a 'fishing device' in Sociological Inquiry:50:3-4:1980 pages

186-198). Well into the conversation, this coparticipant produces, "Eh::
 when was it was it Thur:sday.'h eh: Thomas rung to see if you were he:re."
 (lines 1-2). And in contrast to Fragment 3.a., this recipient shows an
 interest in and concern for the boy's distress (see e.g., lines 40-44 and
 64-65).

(3.b) [Rah:II:8-12:Standard Orthography]

1 I: Eh::
 2 when was it was it Thur:sday.'h eh: Thomas rung to see
 3 if you were he:re.
 4 J: 'tch'h Oh I think he rang e:verybody [hones]tly'h↑I da'h
 5 I: [euhhh] [tha-ha-ha
 6 (.)
 7 J: ↑You'd think that I'd (.) Do ↑you know I left a note for him.
 8 .
 9 .
 10 .
 34 J: and I put a I put the ti:me on it?
 35 I: Yeh- ehh:::heh-↑heh-h [eh he]
 36 J: And I said I've just taken Norman to
 37 Saltbe [rn], I won't be very long.
 38 I: [Ye:s, No<
 39 (.)
 40 I: eeYeh, 'h I said to him are ↑you alri:ght Thomas now I-eeYou=
 41 J: I-
 42 I: =haven't ↑done something you know, 'h'h'Cause [I sai]d I:'ll=
 43 J: =pop round if you've hu:rt yourse(h)e(h) [↑YEH l f o r some]hh
 44 I: ring. He didn't get in til gone ↑five him [self]*aa:]=
 45 J: [Oh I: 've]=
 46 I: =AND ↑I was↑ in before si]x:. I said I bet Jessie's gone to
 47 J: ↓no idea what t i m e.] I said I bet Jessie's gone to
 48 do a bit of shopping she's just called with Auntie Vera I
 49 said to him you know, 'h
 50 J: Oh well he rang Vera: yhh ↑HHAHH hhah=
 51 I: eh:::!!
 52 J: =hh [ah h h a : ha]hh 'h [Ey he]'s a 'hh
 53 I: [ha-ha-ha-ha-ha]hhehh ↑I<
 54 (.)
 55 J: ↑Ye:s. (.) But he's a funny ki:d. 'hh=
 56 I: =Y[:e]h
 57 J: [He-]He was so upset k- He w- You know he'd been crying
 58 when I got back but [I was back befo]re six.h'hh=
 59 I: [H a : d h e :.]
 60 I: =H a d he really.]
 61 J: I mean all I di:]d, was (.) pick No: [rman up] said to him
 62 I: Well I s:] said to him
 63 now you let me know eh Thomas are you alright, you(h)know,=
 64 J: Mm:
 65 I: =hh'Cause I thou:ght 'h well has he done something and- he
 66 he's fri:ghtened to [sa:y you know,]
 67 J: [The o:ny thing I:] could think of=

70 J: =when I came in I could see he'd been ↓°crying°=
 71 I: [°Yes.°
 72 J: =°He said he hadn't.°
 73 (0.2)
 74 I: °Ye:s [::°
 75 J: [But- ee-ee °two police ca:rs had° stopped outsi:de.=
 76 I: =eeYe::s?
 77 J: [·h And that whether he thou:ght that I had an
 78 ac[cident] [or someth]ing I don't kno:w.=
 79 I: [I :]:k n o : w
 80 I: =n|No:: : : : : : :
 81 J: =||but·h [you know he's a funny little in [secu:re l]ittle boy:=
 82 I: [eeY e : h
 83 J: =isn [t he:.]
 84 I: Beh-uh B ut the point is Jessie don't forget no:w.·h
 85 (0.3)
 86 I: Eh:m (.) he was so: close to°Aaron°wa:sn't |he.=
 87 I: =He wa[s v e r |y : :.]
 88 J: [°Well this is it] you see [::, [Ye::s.°
 89 I: [And no [w he's] |go:ne.=
 90 I: =And he thinks |you're gonna go as well you see:.
 91 J: [Well I think
 92 this is it

Let me just point out one rather striking feature of the two conversations. Although these two recipients respond very differently to talk about the boy's distress, they respond almost identically to one bit of defensive detailing. In each conversation the mother attempts to get some corroboration for the time-frame of her absence. In 3.a. she asks "What time was it, I left you at about twenty to five." (lines 24-25). In 3.b. she asks "What time did he ring. He didn't get in til gone five himself" (lines 45-46). And in each conversation the recipient declines to participate in this reconstruction; in 3.a. with "I don't know what time it was Jessie I can't remember really" (lines 27-29), and in 3.b. with "Oh I've no idea what time" (lines 47-49).

While it might not be surprising that neither coparticipant is tracking this woman's life in such a way as to have such details immediately to hand, there are circumstances in which such a request will generate an effort at recalling, figuring out, etcetera.

It is at least possible that the prompt and absolute rejections here

have to do with an unwillingness to be implicated in this problematic situation, and, for example, an avoidance of providing the mother with such resources as, "Well Vera says...", and "Ida says...", and the potential sequelae of such involvement.

But in terms of the boy's distress, there is a marked difference between the two recipients; that of 3.a. being utterly unforthcoming, that of 3.b. exhibiting concern.

And the initial gloss component, which appears in 3.a. as an exasperating confrontation, "And I came home. Well he was in tears", now shows up in a somewhat milder form, "You know he'd been crying when I got back" (lines 59-60).

I am wondering if this version is not only milder, but, in terms of unpackaging a gloss, somewhat 'looser'. I find the description just a bit difficult to fathom. Is it to be understood as 'He was crying when I got back'? or as 'He'd been crying before I got back'? or what?

I have a similar problem with an utterance in the following fragment.

(3.c) [NB:IV:11:R:3:Standard Orthography]

1 G: And Bud got do:wn.
 2 E: [·hhhh YE:S=
 3 E: → =HE was HE:RE: uafter I: came ho:me, I: uh went to Lottie's
 4 for a fih-little while and then he'd gone up to get some
 5 PAI[:NT. So he ca]me o:n in an:d uh
 6 G: [°°I s e e °°]
 7 (.)
 8 E: ·p[·hhh
 9 G: [Well that's fi:ne.

Like "He'd been crying when I got back", "He was here after I came home" has a certain elusive, Moebius Strip quality. I gather from the subsequent explanation that the circumstances are a bit complicated. Something like, she got home and went out again. While she was out, he got home and went out. She re-arrived and then he re-arrived. Something like that.

In any event, the circumstances are a bit complicated. And I am wondering if just that sort of situation might be conveyed in the initial description-bit, "He was here after I came home". Likewise, "he'd been crying when I got back" might, by design, convey that the circumstances being described are 'a bit complicated'; that there is 'something more to be told' about them. If something like this is so, then the gloss of 3.b. may not only be 'milder' than that of 3.a., but in a state of imminent unpackagability.

And the responses to the two description-bits differ radically. In 3.a. the recipient produces an "Oh", which does not immediately follow the exasperated "Well he was in tears", but follows the summary statement, "So that was it", and an "Oh dear" which follows the announcement of the tears being inexplicable, "I don't know why. I don't know what had upset him I'm sure", an utterance which conveys the boy's problematicness to his mother, as much, if not more than, the boy's distress (see lines 44-49). The responses here are non-committal, permitting the teller to procede however she chooses. And she chooses to return to the building of her defense (lines 50-53).

In 3.b. the mother also chooses to return to the building of her defense, but in this case the recipient, who has followed reference to the boy's distress with a 'news-receipt/topicalizer', "Had he", pursues it across the mother's defensive accounting, with "Had he really", and, still in competition with those materials, produces a report of her own attention to the boy's distress, "Well I said to him now you let me know Thomas, are you alright?", to which the mother realigns as a recipient (lines 59-66).

The recipient's reported attention to the boy's distress is followed by a report of the diagnosis she had generated at the time, "'Cause I

thought well has he done something and he's frightened to say" (lines 67-68). And it is at just that point, and akin to Case (2) with great alacrity, that the teller proceeds to unpackage the gloss (see lines 67-69). I will address the placement of the unpackaging shortly. First let me talk to the unpackaging itself.

It turns out that the boy was specifically not "in tears", and that his behavior was not altogether inexplicable. Rather, we have the mother examining the boy, concluding that he'd been crying although he denies it, and generating a diagnosis (incorporating the observable aftermath of tears, and the presence on the scene of two police cars) that the boy had thought she had "had an accident" (lines 69-78).

A detail: A component of this unpackaging may itself be a gloss designed to accredit the mother's diagnosis; i.e., her formulation of the two police cars as having been stopped "outside". 'Outside' has a similar ambiguity to the "So I lay down" of Case (1), and may be used here in a similar way; i.e., to imply something that had not actually occurred - in this case, that the police cars were properly locateable by reference to this household, in contrast to, e.g., a bit further down the street, perhaps more accurately formulated as 'in front of the Lamberts' house', where, then, one might be reasonably led to wonder what was going on at the Lamberts'. But whereas "So I lay down" is unpackaged in the conversation, "outside" remains unexamined and intact. And thus, at least with the analytic resources I use, I have no way of showing that this descriptor is, indeed, being deployed in the manner I am proposing.

In any event, we find a very different set of environments in Fragments 3.a. and 3.b. And in the former, the gloss remains intact, while in the latter it is unpackaged. The mother delivers her diagnosis, that "he thought that I had an accident".

Now, "had an accident" may well be a euphemism for 'was killed'. As it happens, the boy's father had died some 18 months prior to this conversation. And as the talk proceeds, the recipient provides a powerful affiliation, concurring with the diagnosis, and maintaining the euphemism: "He was so close to Aaron wasn't he. . . . And now he's gone. And he thinks you're gonna go as well" (lines 86-90).

So, we have a very different set of environments as between the two conversations, and very different versions of the boy's distress and what was made of it. In 3.a., "I don't know why", in 3.b., that still suffering the death of his father, he thought his mother was dead, too.

Turning now to the placement of the unpackaging, we can notice that there is an earlier place where a similar environment is set up. The recipient reports, "I said to him are you alright Thomas now I- You haven't done something, you know, 'cause I said I'll pop round if you've hurt yourself" (lines 40-44). But there is a specifiable and perhaps significant difference between the two. The earlier one is a report of what the recipient said to the boy. The subsequent one ends with a report of what she thought.

And it is with that great alacrity that the teller's as-yet-untold materials are thereupon produced, now, akin to Case (2), observably occasioned by her coparticipant's diagnosis; produced as a reciprocal next rather than a volunteer initial.

(3.b) [Detail]

64 I: Well I s]:said to him now you let me know eh Thomas are you
 65 alright, you(h)know,=
 66 J: =||Mm:
 67 I: =||hh 'Cause I thou:ght'h well has he done something and- he
 68 he's fri:ghtened to sa:y you k n o w,]
 69 J: [The o:nly thing I]: could think of

That is, it may be just then and only then that an appropriate environment has been established.

A question is, why would the teller want/need/await just that environment into which to introduce her diagnosis? An answer might be worked out along the following lines. What the recipient seems to have made of the boy's distress, that he might have hurt himself, or "done something" is perfectly conventional, working with the routine mishaps or mischiefs a little boy might get into, rattling around alone in the house. What the teller has made of it, that the boy might have thought she'd been killed, is somewhat bizarre, catastrophic.

And some of our other work indicates that the reporting of such thoughts is highly constrained. So, for example, in one of his unpublished lectures (Spring 1970, Lecture 1) Harvey Sacks proposes that it is an occupational task of this society's members to be "engaged in finding out only how it is that what is going on is usual." And one aspect of that task can involve people in "achieving the 'nothing happened' sense of really catastrophic events", where "a classically dramatic instance is, almost universally the initial report of the assassination of President Kennedy was of having heard backfires."

In that regard, Sacks generated a collection of quotes from books and newspapers, which is now and then added to by myself and my colleagues. For example:

(3.d.1) [The Witnesses: Testimony of secret service agent driving the car in which John F. Kennedy was riding when he was assassinated]

Well, when we were going down Elm Street, I heard a noise that I thought was a backfire of one of the motorcycle policemen . . . And then I heard it again. And I glanced over my shoulder and I saw Governor Connally like he was starting to fall. Then I realized there was something wrong.

(3.d.2) [Los Angeles Times, February 22, 1969: Inquest into the Assassination of Robert Kennedy; testimony of a bystander who was shot]

"I felt someone kick me," said Stroll, adding that he didn't know at first that he had been shot. "Then I noticed - because I had on blue pants - that one of my legs was red."

(3.d.3) [Los Angeles Times, April 8, 1970]

Mrs. Martha Harmon will never forget the sound of her children's voices screaming in the night. "At first it sounded like they were just fussing," she recalled with a shudder Tuesday. "But then I heard the oldest one yell fire. That woke me."

(3.d.4) [Oxford Times, March 19, 1982: "UFO Reports Stream In"]

Mysterious purple lights were seen moving across the sky last Friday evening to the amazement of witnesses.

Mr. Derek Mansell, of Crown Road, Wheatley, said he saw a large red light steadily moving across the sky above his home. The light suddenly shot upwards and disappeared.

"I thought it was an aircraft at first", said Mr. Mansell who is UFO research officer for Contact International UK, "but an aircraft could never have shot up so quickly."

The point is this: Even for events which did, undeniably, turn out to be catastrophic, the reporting of having, at that moment, perceived them as catastrophic, is constrained. People massively report, and the media massively preserve and transmit, an innocuous 'first thought', from which they were forced by mounting evidence of the bizarre/catastrophic.

It appears, however, that the teller in Case (3) is burdened with a catastrophic first (and only) thought. This may have to do with the way in which the materials were assembled; i.e., that what might serve as 'mounting evidence' was available before the event (i.e., first she saw the police cars, then encountered the boy with his aftermath of tears, et voilà!).

While she may be constrained from simply announcing it, wheresoever to whomsoever, the local sequential and interactional context can have sufficiently weakened that constraint, permitting it to be introduced as a reciprocal second, interactionally elicited, rather than self-generated report. And, at least in sequential terms, across speakers, a standard series has been produced; an innocuous first thought followed by mounting evidence for, and the introduction of, a catastrophic thought.

A final detail: Even though she may feel able to introduce this

report, she may be exhibiting an orientation to its problematic, constrained character in the way she produces it. Specifically, there are occasions when people do just go ahead and state a catastrophic first thought, without benefit of a prior-reported innocuous first thought. Recurrently, however, when they do so, they mark it as problematic. For example:

(3.b.5) [The Witnesses: Yarborough testimony]

As the motorcade went down the side of Elm Street toward the railroad underpass, a rifle shot was heard by me: a loud blast, close by. I have handled firearms for fifty years, and I thought immediately that it was a rifle shot.

(3.b.6) [The Witnesses: Connally testimony]

We had just made the turn, well, when I heard what I thought was a shot. I heard this noise which I immediately took to be a rifle shot . . . I immediately- the only thought that crossed my mind was that this is an assassination attempt.

In 3.b.5., not only does the witness Yarborough exhibit his credentials ("I have handled firearms for fifty years"), but he marks the spontaneous, unbidden appearance of the thought, with "And I thought immediately that it was a rifle shot" ((emphasis mine))

In 3.b.6., Governor Connally does not have such credentials to offer, but he does produce the other component, the marking of the spontaneous, unbidden character of the thought, "I heard this noise which I immediately took to be a rifle shot . . . I immediately- the only thought that crossed my mind was that this is an assassination attempt." ((emphasis mine))

These markings might convey a sense of the speaker's own non-involvement in the thought - this thought which otherwise exhibits (to adapt a phrase of Menninger's) a certain 'disloyalty' to the ordinary.

And a very similar sort of marking occurs in Fragment 3.b., "The only thing I: could think of...". One gets a sense that, try as she might, she could find no alternatives. This was all there was. Aside, of course, from "I don't know."

Indeed it is possible that the version she produces in the inauspicious environment of the first conversation, "I don't know why. I don't know what had upset him I'm sure"; i.e., a claim of 'zero alternatives', may be the appropriate and recurrently-used substitute for some actual perception which is constrained; i.e., which is too problematic to mention.

I will now turn to a case which I take to be a complicated version of this phenomenon of introducing problematic materials just (and perhaps only) when an auspicious environment is achieved; i.e., just (and perhaps only) when a recipient has shown some special availability to such talk.

4. A Misapprehension of an Inauspicious Environment as Auspicious

Most roughly, I believe that what is going on here is that a teller takes it that an auspicious environment has been established, when in fact it has not; when in fact the environment is thoroughly inauspicious.

The two fragments which make up Case (4) are taken from the same conversation as Case (2). This time it is the other sister, Emma, who makes repeated attempts to introduce something. In contrast to the delights of Lottie's holiday, Emma has been undergoing a series of troubles, including a flare-up of an affliction shared, in its virulent form by Lottie's newlywed friend, and to a lesser extent by Lottie herself. Lottie's friend has discovered a remedy which she is recommending to her fellow sufferers (to Lottie in person, and to Emma via Lottie; i.e., "She said for you to use this...and see if it might help").

(4.a) [NB:IV:10:R:36-38:Standard Orthography]

- 1 E: I m:ISSED YOU: but I've been *ri-u (.) I've REALLY had a
 2 very ni:ce time Sunday was kind of a lo:ng da:y but uh
 3 'hmhh_o hh_o 'huhh_o
 4 L: Ye:a_o [:h,_o
 5 E: I:'M used to everything no:w and (0.6) °I_o 'm° brayh_o hh_o
 6 L: [°Ye:ah,_o
 (0.2)
 7 E: I dMy toenails are falling_o [off I_o don't °know-°
 8 L: [°t [0 h :] wait a
 9 minute. That's I'm glad you me:ntioned tha:t.=

- 10 L: =You know I:sabel ha:d her: nai:l taken o:ff like you had
 11 your (.) toenail_{taken o:ff} and it just abou:t killed her=
 12 E: Ye:ah
 13 L: =you know_{she near}ly die:d a thousand times=
 14 E: Ye:ah,
 15 L: =and I was telling her a**↓**bou:t you:.
 16 E: Ye ah,
 17 L: hhhhhhhh So anywa:y< (0.2) i-she go:t this: (.)
 18 *v:Vi:dafoa:m and I: bou:ght some down there and I (.) put
 19 some on my nails last night and I put on: some toni:ght 'hh
 20 And she said that was the only thing that healed them.
 21 (.)
 22 E: Vi:dafoam.
 . . .
 36 L: It's V:-I:-O:, f-o-r-m:. Ointment.
 37 (0.6)
 38 E: v-Viaform did SHE HAVE the BA:D BIG THICK THING like
 39 m_{y TOE, NAILS?}
 40 L: OH::: : : ::]Go::d ye::s. And ho:w.
 . . .
 45 E: She always did have those 'hhh No but this goe:s with the
 46 toenail bit I think some of this (.) goes with the toenail.
 47 Well:my toenails are getting ba:d Lollie those two big=
 48 L: _{mh}
 49 E: =toenai:ls but ah,h 'hh_{h [t sa]}:ys (.) uh:: soothi:ng (0.2)
 50 L:
 51 anabye::: (0.6) o something an:d fun:geye dayuh preparation
 52 for the treatment of in:flamed condition of the skin such as
 53 eczema'hhh a:thletics foot and other fungus 'hhh infection.
 54 Your physician ma:y 'hhh (.) p-prescri:be Vi:dafoam for:...

In Case (3) it could be noticed that the way each of the two recipients introduces the matter of the little boy's distressed phone calls turns out to serve as a very good index of their subsequent treatment of that matter. The same holds in this case. That Emma's precursory announcement of her woes, "My toenails are falling off", is met with "I'm glad you mentioned that" (lines 7-9) turns out to be a good index to what follows.

Earlier I mentioned that the phenomenon of 'unpackaging a gloss' was noticed during an examination of the various convergences of troubles-tellings and other businesses, such as arrangements-making and interrogation. Another of those convergences is that of a troubles-telling with a 'service encounter'.

And one of the problematic features of that convergence is that a

hearer of a trouble exhibits an 'essential disinterest' in the troubles-bearer (i.e., the person), the 'essential interest' lodging in issues of problem and remedy. ((See Jefferson and Lee, "The rejection of advice: managing the problematic convergence of a troubles-telling and a service encounter" in Journal of Pragmatics:5:5:1981.))

And in Case (4) it can be noticed throughout that Lottie is orienting to a 'service encounter', exhibiting its 'essential disinterest' in the troubles-bearer (in this case Emma and her sufferings), its 'essential interest' in problem and remedy. I take it that it is this set of utterly opposed orientations which generates the misapprehension and its consequences.

In Fragment 4.a. we can briefly note that Emma's next attempt to talk about her troubles is met by a reading-out of the information on the remedy's label (lines 48-54). And that focussing on the remedy ends this first series of attempts to generate a troubles-telling (data not shown). The next attempt occurs some ten minutes later.

(4.b) [NB:IV:10:R:51-54:Standard Orthography]

- 1 E: 'huhh Uh getting ba:ck to this Vi:afɔ:r: foam, Lottie is
2 her NAIL A:LRIGHT no:w?
. . .
- 8 L: It's beautiful 'hh BUT IT would (.) ɪYOU KNO:W IT WOULD
9 JUS:T HURT
. . .
- 24 L: so: she got tha:t and uh and it's: n:ever bo:thered her.
25 (0.2)
- 26 E: 'h'hha_o [hhhhh [°Oh:::°gah-]hh
27 L: 't'hhhh A [nd GE:T] it] IN the TU:BE EMMA.
28 E: Al:ri:ght dear,
29 L: Get the tube=
30 L: =and no:w toni:ght I: I took a too:thpick and I 'hh and I
31 put the th-ih s tuff down in my uh- in my nai:ls=
32 E: [M m :] h m,
33 L: =yo u k n o w]
34 E: Isn't this FUNNY YOU AND I: WOULD HAVE IT.h
35 (0.4)
- 36 E: This is ri:dicul ous.
37 L: E:VERY BODY]'S GOT ih 'hh=

38 L: =Isn't tha:t funny we were in a p-uh: :
 39 E: [Oh: God it's terrible
 40 Lottie m:y toenails 'hehh they're just look so sick those
 41 big t:oenails it just u-makes me: sick. You know they're
 42 just (.) u-dea:d. (.) Everything's dead I d- I sat ou:t (.)
 43 today and I said my Go:d am I just (.) DY:ING it's: (.) like
 44 I'm ossified.
 45 L: NO I- We were in: some pla:ce I don't know if it was Abel's=
 46 E: ((sniff))
 47 L: =or somepla:ce (0.4) I guess it was Abel's. a:nd somebody
 48 was ta:lking about it a:nd I: bet there were 'hhh TE:N
 49 PEOPLE arou:nd the:re, and they a:ll started to say well
 50 they had the sa:me thing? and I kno:w like Doctor Barton
 51 says it's from the damn 'p detergent.

Here, Emma takes the occasion of Lottie's personalized directions for use; i.e., her description of her own use of the remedy, to do a powerful affiliation, "Isn't this funny you and I would have it" (lines 30-34). It can be recalled that it is not merely "you and I" who have it, but a 'we' which includes the non-present third party and discoverer of the remedy, who, further, more relevantly shares the trouble with Emma. That is, Emma is doing some special one-on-one aligning here.

Indeed it is my impression that this 'specifying' reference, 'you and I', is uncommon usage, the vastly more prevalent one being 'we'. But in this case 'we' would include Lottie's friend. "You and I" may then be pressed into service to partition out the third party, where this more intimate pairing can set up a more auspicious environment for a troubles-telling.

When response is not immediately forthcoming (lines 34-35) Emma goes on to produce an item which tends to be used in a rather special way; e.g., being stoical about things which are a lot worse than that, "This is ridiculous" (line 36).

And thereafter, when Lottie finally does respond, is an event which might well be characterized as Emma simply interrupting with a 'volunteer' unpacking, but which I think can be argued to be a matter of Emma's (1) mis-hearing an utterance in progress as providing the auspicious environment

she has been working towards, and (2) starting up at an appropriate place in that utterance. I will develop these two possibilities in turn.

I take it that a crucial relationship holds between Emma's "Isn't this funny you and I would have it. (0.4) This is ridiculous", and Lottie's "Isn't that funny we were in a p-uh://'" (lines 34-38). To argue that relationship I must introduce some supporting materials. These were collected and considered in the course of the study of 'troubles-telling', as instances of a particular point in a 'troubles-telling sequence' at which a special level of intimacy between teller and recipient is reached. In each case a troubles-teller is doing some more or less straight reporting, in the course of which a recipient does a more or less affiliative response.

(4.b.1) [HG:2:Standard Orthography]

1 N: But he just like o:pened up, (0.6) a lo:t you know of (0.4)
 2 the pimples I ha:ve?=
 3 H: → "Eoh::,
 4 N: It (just) hu:rt so bad Helen I was cry:::ing,

(4.b.2) [JG:I:19:1:GT:Standard Orthography]

1 M: And uh I w-h-h-en I lie down or when I get up it feels like
 2 the m::flesh is pulling off of my bones.
 3 S: → How awful.
 4 M: Oh I have listen I was in such excruciating pain yesterday
 5 and the day before that I really I just didn't know what to
 6 do I just pulled my hair.

(4.b.3) [Fr:HB:II:6:Standard Orthography] ((Last night, J and her husband arrived home to find that their house had burned to the ground. She is now telling a girlfriend about it.))

1 J: we just wouldn't have been here.hh You kno:w,
 2 P: 't! [O h : : : : : : : :] b a : b y,
 3 J: There's no way it was 'It was jus':t, We're just lucky I
 4 guess:,
 5 P: 'hhhh Okay wait [a minute=
 6 J: [So,
 7 P: → =I don't know if you're cryi-ing but I hhh(h)a [hhhm uh hm:]=
 8 J: [(hhhhh hum)
 9 P: ='hhh
 10 J: .h I was guh- I- Middle of the night la-ast night I
 11 wantehhdhhto hhc(h)all(h)y(h)you 'mhhh!

(4.b.4) [NB:IV:14:2:Standard Orthography])

1 E: and I have to have ointment I put on four times a da:y and
 2 I'm under:: violet ra:y for a few seconds, a:nd I got a
 3 shot in the butt of vītamīn:, (0.2) A:: . ski:n.
 4 (0.5)
 5 L: → Je::sus.
 6 E: Lo:ttie honest to Go:d you know, I just broke out terribly
 7 a:uh- hhwhen I le-ēft ho:me. An:d, I just- just my le:gs
 8 were just covered

(4.b.5) [NB:IV:4:R:2-3:Standard Orthography]

1 E: SO HE PACKED HIS CLO:THES AND HE WENT and he says he won't
 2 even be down for Thanksgiving. So I think I'll ca:ll Sandra
 3 and cancel the who:le thing. °°hmhh°°
 4 (2.2)
 5 E: Isn't this ri:diculous and uh-and BILL AND GLADYS WAITING
 6 OUT THERE TO GO TO DINNER AND I: had to go tell them Isn't
 7 he ri:diculous?
 8 (1.0)
 9 L: → He's cra:zy.
 10 (0.4)
 11 E: Oh: Go:d dammit. I said it's too bad the boat didn't sink
 12 yesterday and tha:t m-guh thah- I shouldn't have said
 13 tha:t. But (0.4) 'k'hhhh Lottie I: can't do anything ri:ght
 14 honest to Go:d I ca:n't. Here I worked ha:rd va::cumin:g...

The affiliative responses can range from the mild and slightly repelled "Eoh::" of 4.b.1. to the announcement of intense empathy in 4.b.3., "I don't know if you're crying but I am".

And in each case, immediately thereafter, the troubles-teller shifts from 'reporting' mode to 'expressive' mode, now exhibiting his feelings and/or doing relational intensifying/intimacy. For example, in 4.b.1. "Eoh::" is followed by "It (just) hurt so bad Helen I was crying", and in 4.b.3. "I don't know if you're crying but I am" is followed by "Middle of the night last night I wanted to call you."

And this configuration can be found in conversations between these two sisters, as in 4.b.4. where Lottie's "Je::sus" is followed by Emma's "Lo:ttie honest to Go:d...", etcetera.

So, a first resource for dealing with Fragment 4.b. is this recurrent configuration wherein a recipient's affiliation provides for a teller's

shifting into the 'expressive' mode.

A secondary resource is this 'stoical' formulation, "ridiculous". It can be noted that in 4.b.5. the affiliation "He's crazy" which is followed by a shift into 'expressive' mode, "Oh God dammit" and its sequelae, is itself preceded, and solicited, by the 'stoical' formulation "Isn't he ridiculous?" And in the general context of repeated precursory announcements, and the immediately local context of the partitioning/intimatizing work of "you and I", it is likely that when Emma produces "This is ridiculous", she is not being 'stoical', but is soliciting affiliation, and is primed to shift into expressive mode upon its occurrence.

And there are features of Lottie's next utterance which make it available for treatment as just such an affiliation. Simply enough, "Isn't that funny we..." is very similar to Emma's "Isn't this funny you and I...". However, at least one of the differences is crucial; i.e., the "we" which, as it turns out, is not referring to the local "you and I" pair, but to the pair consisting of Lottie and her friend. This near-repetition with its crucial difference is anything but a mandate for an unpackaging by Emma. Rather, it is a start on a problem-focussed anecdote by Lottie (see lines 45ff vis-a-vis line 38).

Now, the similarity may indeed be deployed to exhibit affiliation, but not the 'personal' affiliation which will provide an appropriate environment for an unpackaging. Rather, it may be exhibiting a 'topical' affiliation which will provide that this rather tangential story has been appropriately introduced, occasioned by Emma's talk.

But Emma, primed for a particular sort of affiliation, can be catching those features of Lottie's utterance which recommend it as the affiliation she has been working toward. And she launches her unpackaging with the alacrity noted for those in Fragments 2.b. and 3.b.

In Fragments 2.b. and 3.b. the unpackagings are launched in the vicinity of possible utterance completion; technically, in 'terminal overlap' with the last sound of a possibly last word.

(2.b) [Detail]

15 E: I always h:ave ↓liked to swim in the °nu:de.°↓
16 L: [M E]: TOO

(3.b) [Detail]

67 I: 'Cause I thought 'h well has he done something and- he
68 he's fri:ghtened to †sa:y you k n o w,
69 J: [The o:nly thing I]: could think of

In Fragment 4.b. the launch is far more precipitous, occurring in mid utterance. However, the precise point at which it occurs is a recurrent and systematic locus of pre-completion onset: Just as an utterance in progress begins to falter.

(4.b) [Detail]

38 L: Isn't tha:t funny we were in a p-uh:;
39 E: [Oh: God it's terrible

While I take it that 'terminal overlap' is an intuitively obvious locus of speaker transition, it is likely that 'hitch onset'; i.e., just as an utterance in progress begins to falter, is not immediately available as recurrent/systematic. I will not attempt to argue its systematicity here, but to provide at least a sense of its recurrence I am showing several more instances of this particular type of 'hitch onset'; i.e., upon the occurrence of the pause filler 'Uh'.

(4.b.6) [SBL:2:2:3:R:41:Standard Orthography]

1 C: †Well I think Frank liked him,
2 A: 'hhh'hh'hh Oh †I think he did too↓: [A n d I]=
3 C: [Ah hah.]
4 A: =I think they get along rea [l WELL:]an:d uh
5 C: [Ah hah.]
6 A: → 't'hhhh I: think that: uh:
7 C: → [I: could have asked (.) uh: Pat
but I was afraid she was gonna bring that ↓kid.

(4.b.7) [Her:III:1:14:3:Standard Orthography]

- 1 H: I would uh k- (0.4) be a little reluctant to let it go:
 2 uhm uh without some sort of correction: because 'hh
 3 J: [Mm.
 4 H: only in fact uh this this particular: s-u-statement about
 5 uh 'hh high powered overseas councilors.
 6 J: [Mm.
 7 J: M-hm=
 8 H: → =Do you know uh:m u h w] u h -]
 9 J: → [t But] do [you] know who did say it?

(4.b.8) [SPC:X:3:9:Standard Orthography]

- 1 M: Now I think he was just appalled at the turn that things
 2 have taken you know.
 3 K: → Oh yes:: . Sometimes uh:
 4 M: → [Cause this little guy will stand
 5 in the railroad tre-uh track . . .

(4.b.9) [NB:IV:10:R:14-15:Standard Orthography]

- 1 L: and so he told me exactly ho:w to go: , 'hhh]hh
 2 E: [M m [hm: ,
 3 (.)
 4 L: Uh:: (.) Let's see hit the Riverside Freeway and then when
 5 you see the River:side (.) Freeway when it says Indio and
 6 San Diego turnoff the:re,
 7 E: [Mm: [hm
 8 E: You're all ↑freeway all the WA::Y,
 9 (.)
 10 L: 't And then you go thrugh the CA:N |yon you know [↓:w.]
 11 E: [Yea]h:
 12 (.)
 13 L: → And the:n: uh: <
 14 E: → [I ↑hate that °canyon,°

(4.b.10) [NB:IV:2:R:2-3:Standard Orthography]

- 1 E: This is called Mexee Pep it's good hot sauce. I don't
 2 → know whether: b-uh: the
 3 G: → [Uh what's it called?

(4.b.11) [NB:IV:4:R:15-16:Standard Orthography]

- 1 L: I: wouldn't call Sandra and uh that's gonna spoil her
 2 who:le uh Thanksg i v ing.]
 3 E: [but 'hha'hh'hh
 4 E: YEAH BUT HOW IS SHE GONNA GET hHO:ME. Uh::: e-she-eh *u:-:
 5 → I:'ll have to let her know because: uh [:] 'huhh
 6 L: → [Well] can't] she just
 7 come down for Thanksgiving [and then go ba:ck with uh:: Do::n?
 8 E: 'hh

(4.b.12) [NB:IV:15:2:Standard Orthography]

1 B: → But it was a:l1 crappy an::d uh bulged u^p an::d
 2 A: → [Ye:a:h. [Ye:ah. [Ye:ah.

(4.b.13) [MDE:60-1:5:4-5:Standard Orthography]

1 S: → I've got to get the publicity out I've got to: uh
 2 I: → [()] Ye::ah.

(4.b.14) [CDHQ:II:252:R:3:Standard Orthography]

1 J: They're real lucky,
 2 (.)
 3 O: They sure a:re,
 4 J: 'Cause we got about as much damage as they did and uh: we
 5 caught the tail end of it.
 6 (.)
 7 O: iYeah? Mm hm? mBut uh: u-oh oh the: there's other pa:rts of
 8 → Morgan City that is: u,h
 9 J: → [I'll bet,

(4.b.15) [SBL:3:2:R:2:Standard Orthography]

1 C: and ↑Geri spoke up and said she couldn't ↑play on
 2 F r i : day
 3 S: [That's ri:ght,=
 4 S: → =That's right because of uh:m
 5 C: → [the ba:ll|ga*: : me::.]
 6 S: [the ballga:me,

That is, a mid-utterance falter or 'hitch' constitutes a specifiable place at which next speakers recurrently start up: A 'transition-relevant place'. And, as with the other transition-relevant places, we find two distinctive activity formats: A next speaker (1) uses the occasion to introduce business of his own, as in 4.b.6-4.b.11, or (2) responds to the immediately prior talk, exhibiting its 'as is' adequacy with acknowledgement/agreement as in 4.b.12-4.b.14, or, as in 4.b.15, himself producing the projected next component.

Fragment 4.b. may constitute a version of the latter format. Specifically, it may be characterized as a recipient exhibiting the 'as is' adequacy of an affiliation-in-progress; not waiting for, or requiring, it to

be worked out in its particulars. The following fragment may be similarly characterizable.

(4.b.16) [JG:II(a):1:5-6:Standard Orthography]

1 C: 'h h h h Alright now I was in a cold sweat, I couldn't get my
2 brea:th.
3 J: °Oh_h ()°
4 C: ['h h h Alright first of all you do:n't do this when
5 you've got too much boo:ze.
6 (0.3)
7 C: You get the co:ld sweats when you come ou:t. of having been
8 pa:ssed out from too much boo:ze.
9 J: [Yeah.
10 J: → But not before you go: d- (.) ()
11 C: → ['h h h h [↑NO: NEver.

In Fragment 4.b., then, we may be seeing a specifiable activity-format: An uptake, exhibiting the 'as is' adequacy of a faltering affiliation in progress. Where, however, that particular instance of the format is mis-conceived; i.e., the faltering utterance, although it looks very much like an affiliation in progress, is not.

And the mis-placed unpackaging of Fragment 4.b. receives radically different treatment from those of Fragments 2.b. and 3.b. Instead of recipient affiliation, we find a most standard device in the management of overlap: The recipient drops out at the onset of the overlapping utterance, waits for a point of possible completion, and thereupon recycles her own aborted utterance.

(4.b) [Detail]

38 L: → Isn't tha:t funny we were in a p-uh: [:
39 E: [Oh: God it's terrible
40 Lottie m:y toenails 'hehh they're just look so sick those
41 big t:oenails it just u-makes me: sick. You know they're
42 just (.) u-dea:d. (.) Everything's dead I d- I sat ou:t (.)
43 today and I said my Go:d am I just (.) DY:ING it's (.) like
44 I'm ossified.
45 L: → NO I- We were in: some [pla:ce I don't know if it was Abel's=
46 E: [((sniff))
47 L: =or somepla:ce (0.4) I guess it was Abel's. a:nd somebody
48 was ta:lking about it a:nd I: bet there were 'h h h TE:N
49 PEOPLE arou:nd the:re, and they a:ll started to say well
50 they had the sa:me thing? and I kno:w like Doctor Barton
51 says it's from the damn 'p detergent.

That is, instead of affiliation, the unpackaged materials are subjected to sequential deletion (replaced, as it were, by talk in which the recipient exhibits once again an 'essential disinterest' in the trouble-bearer and an 'essential interest' in the trouble itself - here, in its scope and source).

In this consideration of Case (4) I have assembled some machineries and brought them to bear upon an interaction-bit which might otherwise recommend itself as an utterly arbitrary 'interruption' for the purposes of introducing altogether inapposite materials. I am proposing that it can be seen as perfectly routine in both its placement; i.e., starting up upon a mid-utterance 'hitch', and its substance; i.e., is an unpackaging which is interactionally/sequentially warranted by a standard elicitor of just such materials. Where, however, the warranting in this case is apparent, not actual; i.e., the pivotal event constitutes an 'error'.

Now, the base phenomenon I have been tracking is that of a recipient's part in the delivery of problematic materials. Such materials can be explicitly sought after by a recipient, as in Case (1). Recurrently, however, such materials are unsought; their presence perhaps unsuspected, as in Cases (2) and (3), and their delivery perhaps unwanted as well, as in Case (4). That is, recurrently a crucial part of the work is left to a possibly unwitting, possibly unwilling recipient.

And we are intuitively familiar with the phenomenon of 'stories untold', but may have only vague notions of how such things come about. The foregoing considerations can have located and partially explicated one source of that phenomenon; i.e., when the materials are problematic, and a recipient does not happen to - or declines to - do such talk as will provide an appropriate environment for their introduction. The potential

unpackaging simply does not get - or is denied - an opportunity to occur. I will close this report with a very brief consideration of a pair of fragments, Case (5), in which we might at least catch a glimpse of this possibility.

5. A Possible Closing Down of an Incipient Unpackaging

These two fragments are extracted from a very long telephone call in which two friends are reviewing this afternoon's Bridge game. In the course of their talk there are two vague references to some problematic circumstance; one at approximately 23 minutes into the conversation, "because I've had so much on my mind" (Fragment 5.a. lines 13-19), the other some 17 minutes thereafter, "it did take my mind off it a little bit" (Fragment 5.b. lines 12-19).

Akin to Cases (2) and (4) there are these repeated glosslike references. But in contrast to the radically differing activities of the recipient in Case (2), and what I take to be a (mis)-perceived shift by the recipient in Case (4), first denying and then providing an auspicious environment in each case, here we find the recipient producing the same activity in each fragment: A strong topic shift. In 5.a., "Well I know everybody had a good time today (lines 20-21) and in 5.b., "Well I should have known about Ellen's bidding" (lines 20-21).

(5.a) [SBL:2:2:3:R:33-34:Standard Orthography]

1 M: and it's good for us to esta:blish rules. If we're gonna
 2 play together.
 3 (1.2)
 4 M: For us to establish rules for (.) fo-or just us playing.
 5 C: Ye:ah,
 6 M: You know I don't mean making up our ow:n.
 7 C: Mm[hm,
 8 M: [hh But establishing rules so we can understand each
 9 other better. 'hhh We weren't understand- I wasn't
 10 understanding anybody today.
 11 C: Ah: hah=
 12 M: =Course I was bidding poorly. 'hh 'hh An:d uh (0.2) I
 13 → couldn't remember and I know it's: just because I've had
 14 so much on my mi:n₁d,
 15 C: [Ye:ah,

16 M: 't'hhhh And uh (.) 'p'h I ha:ve for the las:t two or
 17 three months. You know if I can get things settled
 18 Claire then I can start to think abhhout wh(h)at (h)I'm
 19 d(h)o(h)ing [hhhhh!]'hh
 20 C: → 't'h [We::ll]: I uh: I know everybody had a
 21 good ti:me toda[:y.]
 22 M: [Oh:]: I enjoyed my [self te]rrific [ly.
 23 C: [And uh]s_o I thi[nk
 24 that we'll calm: down next time . . .

(5.b) [SBL:2:2:3:R:58-59:Standard Orthography]

1 C: MAYBE we ought to play acro:ss the room frhhhom [eahhch]=
 2 M: [hhhhhh]
 3 C: = [uhh heh]
 4 M: [hhhhhhh]
 . . . ((they laugh))
 7 M: Oh: it was fu:n [wasn't]it. [hhhhh]'hh ihfYe:a:hf
 8 C: [hhhhh]hh I: just enjoy every one of those [eh-]aa- aa-]=
 9 M: [mgghm] [Yes?] I do
 10 C: =and I was so glad to get out. Because even if I played
 11 M: goofy I: felt sorry for my partners it did take my mind
 12 → °off it a little [bit, °
 13 C: [hh eeYa:h,
 14 (.)
 15 M: A:nd uh: I know as soon as it (.) gets settled and I could
 16 (0.2) settle down and think well: (0.2) shoot. You know
 17 here we ↑go:.
 18 C: → Yeh'p'hh Well↑I should have known about (.) e-ev-Ellen's
 19 bidding the way she bid over there when we were playing
 20 over there just the four o,f us yo,u know 'h [hhhhhhh]hh
 21 M: [Ye:ah. Ah hah,
 22 C: A:ND uh:m (0.4) and each TI:-eh ↑boy did I hesita:te, but
 23 I thought now'hhhh (.) she knows uh-uh the: (0.2) Go:ren
 24 ru:le [that] (.) when you say two it's a cut o:ff? and she-
 25 M: [Yah
 26 C: a:nd uh so: uhm 'hmhhh't'hhhhh I mean Elva.(0.3) I [thou:ght
 27 M: [Yes.
 28 C: 'hhh So I kih- I can't un: I ↑sti:ll can't under [sta-
 29 M: [↑SHE does
 30 funny:: ↓lots of ti:mes.'h (.) And ↑she'll go into a n:to
 31 ↓trump at the screwiest time↓
 32
 33

A possibility is that these strong topic shifts are not arbitrary, but that, with them, the recipient is working to quash an incipient unpacking. Where, further, these strong moves may be Nth in a series of moves in which the recipient has given the speaker 'first rights' to close down the matter but the speaker has at best only partially complied, and

therefore the recipient has herself moved to close down the matter by providing for a shift of topic.

The candidate series of moves begins in each fragment with the recipient producing an acknowledgement token in response to what could be just a passing remark about the problem (lines 13-15 in both fragments). Undoubtedly acknowledgement tokens constitute perfectly appropriate responses. But they can also be problematic. For example, a shift in token-type recurrently is produced by a recipient just prior to shifting topic ((see Jefferson and Lee, "On the Articulation of Topic in Conversation", Final Report to the SSRC, December 1981, Jefferson, "Caveat Speaker: Preliminary Notes on Recipient Topic-Shift Implicature", unpublished, and Jefferson, "Notes on a Systematic Deployment of the Acknowledgement Tokens 'Yeah' and 'Mm hm'", unpublished)).

And, for example, in Fragment 5.a. we find a long series in which the speaker is elaborating, explaining, revising a point about the virtue of "establishing rules" while the recipient is providing acknowledgement-and-no-more. At some point the speaker voluntarily relinquishes pursuit of her point (lines 1-12). It is possible that the acknowledgement-and-no-more is informative to the speaker; her eventual abandonment of her point responsive to her recipient's activities.

Similarly, it is possible that her shifts from problem-presentational to problem-resolutional talk; i.e., to references to 'getting things settled' (lines 17-19 in both fragments) are responsive to the recipient's acknowledgement-and-no-more.

However, those resolutional references do not altogether close down the matter. There is room, for example, for inquiries into her progress towards 'getting settled'; a potentially rich topical lode. And it is at this point in each fragment, in her next turn at talk, that the recipient

produces those strong topic shifts.

And whether or not the speaker would have proceeded, given an auspicious environment, to unpackage those matters glossed by 'so much on my mind', we find her now taking up the new matters; in 5.a. with "Oh I enjoyed myself terrifically" (lines 20-22), in 5.b. with acknowledgement tokens (lines 23, 27 and 29) and thereafter with more substantial topical talk (lines 31-33). That is, whether or not there was more to be said by reference to 'so much on my mind', the recipient exhibits, and the speaker concurs, that whatever had been said was 'enough said'.

Conclusion

With apologies to those who conceive of 'glosses' in a rigorous and technical way, I have used this term to locate a rather broadly conceived phenomenon; roughly, a formulation which, on its occurrence is quite adequate, which turns out to have been incomplete, ambiguous, even misleading. Given my interest in the sequential/interactional workings of conversation, I have focussed, not on the features of glosses, but on features of interaction. I have attempted to explicate, not such an issue as 'just what' is a gloss, but 'just how' such an object can come to be unpackaged, its constituent details exposed and/or its ambiguity clarified and/or its inaccuracy corrected.

One finding of this inquiry is that whether or not a gloss is unpackaged can depend upon what a coparticipant does. And that recurrently appears to be a matter of setting up an auspicious environment for delivery of the as-yet-untold materials.

One payoff of this inquiry is the following. Starting off with clear cases; those in which a formulation which occurs at one point is thereafter made available as having been a gloss by virtue of a subsequent unpackaging in response to a coparticipant's activities - within a short span of

talk as in Case (1), or later in a same conversation as in Case (2), or in another conversation with another coparticipant as in Case (3) - where various features of the recipients' talk could be explicated in terms of providing for a gloss's unpackaging, a rather strong sense of 'unpackaging a gloss' as a sequential/interactional phenomenon could be developed.

The phenomenon and its features could then serve as a resource by which to examine other, more obscure materials such as the proposed 'misapprehension' of a recipient's activities by a speaker in Case (4), in which we do not get a clear instance of a recipient's providing an auspicious environment, and the proposed 'quashing' of an incipient unpackaging in Case (5), in which we get neither an auspicious environment nor an unpackaging; i.e., neither of which two cases, on uninformed inspection, might recommend themselves as produced by reference to such a phenomenon.

Indeed, on uninformed inspection the focal events in Cases (4) and (5) might recommend themselves as thoroughly disorderly. However, an analysis informed by the phenomenon and its sequential/interactional features yields the possibility of definite orderliness; the otherwise apparently disjointed, arbitrary events of Cases (4) and (5) emerging as coherent components of negotiations vis-a-vis the unpackaging of a gloss.