"If we refuse to consider and interpret the surprising facts of device, design and performance inherent in the words of the texts, the Indians who made the texts, and those who preserved what they made, will have worked in vain" (Dell Hymes, 1981: 5).

One of the striking features of textual materials in Shuswap and other Interior Salish languages is the frequent use of passive voice constructions in these narratives. As with other languages that allow for passive constructions, the Shuswap passive is an optional grammatical device. Sherzer (1987) has shown that optional grammatical categories as they are used in discourse, whether it is verbal dueling, poetry, political rhetoric, or myths and legends, illuminate the relationship between language and culture. Discourse, Sherzer notes, is an embodiment and transmitter of culture, but also an embodiment of language: "Grammar provides a set of potentials. Since these potentials are actualized in discourse, they can only be studied in discourse" (Sherzer 1987:307). Therefore, the full meaning of grammatical forms only emerges when studied in discourse, that is, in their social and cultural context.

As I will show in this paper, the Shuswap use of the passive in oral narrative as an optional device combines a grammatical and semantic function with a poetic and cultural one. Its use in narrative discourse must be explained in relation to extralinguistic criteria, and must be related not only to the textual but also to the cultural context. (1)

Shuswap or Secwépemc is one of the Interior Salish languages spoken among native people of the British Columbia Interior Plateau. It bears close resemblance to the neighbouring Interior Salish languages, i.e. Nlaka'pamux or Thompson (75% cognates), Lillooet and Okanagan, and is less closely related to the Salish languages of the Columbia Plateau. Kinkade (1976) and Thompson (1979a) have described and compared the areal features of Salishan languages, including categories of control and non-control (Thompson 1979:736b) and passives. The latter appear as both agentless passives and passives where both agent and patient are indicated (op.cit.:740-41).

The occurrences of passive voice constructions analysed below were taken from narratives. Hence, they are not elicited forms, but they occurred in the context of discourse. They invariably feature third person singular passives, by far the most frequent passive constructions occurring in natural speech. Like most passives, the passive constructions used here can be converted into corresponding active voice constructions through elicitation. However, the point I will be raising in this paper regards not so much "What is said", but "how and why" certain utterances are produced.
Passive constructions in Shuswap are formed as follows: Verb-stem + transitivizer + passive suffix. Transitivizers can be simple ones (/nt/; /t/), causative ones /st/; /ntes/, or those implying direct affectedness /mins/ or involuntarily or accidental action /inwent/, they can also be further combined with other affixes, such as reciprocals /wecwnt/, beneficatives /c/; /cit/. Since most verb stems can be transitivized in this way to form a derived meaning, most verbs can be turned into passive forms.

Examples are:

Kitsen- to arrive - ktsc = he takes someone to a place
Pink - to break wind - pentəs = to break wind on s.o.
Kwets- to make - kwetsəm = she had it made for her
Qwets- to set out - qwetsətstem = he is taken somewhere

It should also be noted that most transitive or transitivized verbs which appear in passives are derived from strong control roots Thompson 1979b).

1. The Passive as a Focusing Device:

Keenan (1987) has discussed the primary function of the passive as a "foregrounding operation", allowing the speaker to draw attention to an element in a sentence. In this sense, passives are similar to topicalizations (e.g. BEANS is what I like) or left-dislocations, both of which are options of Shuswap syntax. As we will see below, "foregrounding" or "focusing" is indeed one of the poetic or stylistic functions of the Shuswap passive. However, while topicalizations and left-dislocations operate at the syntactic level, passive constructions operate at the Verb-Predicate level.

Kuipers has drawn attention to the function of the Shuswap passive in narrative as "focusing". For instance, Example #1 is taken from a short story Kuipers recorded from David Johnson of Alkali Lake. The entire story translates literally as follows (Kuipers 1974:92):

"Fox met Coyote. He (Fox) was eating skimmings. He (Fox) was told by his brother, 'Where did you get that?' Fox said to him, 'Oh, you can find them over there, in the well, if you lean over, that's where it is, that's where I get it.' Coyote set out, leaned over, there were skimmings on the bottom. But really it was the reflection of the moon that was visible there. He jumped and plunged in. He thought it was skimmings. He was tricked by his brother.

Example #1: (Kuipers op. cit.)

m-tsəntem tə ugisə, the te k-takwenwews;
PAST-tell-PASS ART. brother-POSS, where hyp.ART you-get

Of the sentence in #1, Kuipers notes that "coyote speaks to Fox, but the focus of the preceding sentence (fox) is maintained by using a passive form, of which fox is the subject." In other words, the passive maintains the focus on a particular character, even though another character intercedes by acting. The first half of the story is focused on fox; however, with the sentence, "coyote set out...", the focus switches to coyote, and is maintained on his until the end through the passive construction, "He was tricked by his brother. The two passive constructions involved thus also add an element of symmetry to the story.

Another example of this kind is the first sentence of Example #2, Coyote and Fox's wife, a story I recorded with Ida William of the North Thompson Band. This story, again, revolves around Fox, along with his wife, travelling with Coyote: Coyote wants to run off with Fox's wife, but Fox catches them and beats up Coyote. The story unfolds with Fox wanting to set out, but Coyote wanting to stay on /with Fox's wife, which is rendered as:

Example #2:

Ta7 k sk'elnmentem te senxwxułucw.
NEG ART+NOM-listen-PASS ART coyote
"He (Fox) wasn't listened to by coyote"

which maintains the focus of this portion of the story on fox.

2. Perspective and Control

In addition to marking focus, however, the narrator's use of the passive provides a way of identifying with, or narrating, a story from the POINT OF VIEW of the protagonist, to whom something happens. As Keenan (1987:268) has noted, "the focus of a passive is never less affected by the action than when it is presented as the object of an active transitive verb". In other words, the passive combines focusing with affectedness or "not being in control" of the situation. The protagonist who is emphasized is subjected to something. Sentences 2-5 of the story about Coyote and Fox's wife illuminate this aspect: The reason Coyote won't listen to fox is that he wants to be with Fox's wife and run off with her. The focus then switches to the woman: She had tied a ribbon around her jowls to look younger (the pack-rat's version of a face-lift!). Focusing on the woman, the story continues: the woman was told/wanted to be embraced, but she didn't listen, or in other words: "He wanted to put his arms around her but she didn't want him to." What happens here is that the sensation of the threat of a forced embrace is related from the woman's perspective. Similar, in the next sentence, which gives the reason why she didn't want to be embraced: "She was afraid that she would be subjected to him feeling where she had tied it on her back." After fox catches up to them, the focus changes back to coyote as the sufferer: "He was caught up by his brother, was beaten and had the woman taken away from him.

Nuxwenxw tsəntem re stukwentem, ta7 k sk'elnmens.
woman tell-PASS ART embrace-PASS NEG ART listen-she
"The woman was told to be embraced, but she didn't listen."
Some of them were killed there

some+PAST+ PASS+ for+ PASS+ ART+ aunt+ POSS+ many+ ART+ shoes

"her aunt made many shoes for her" (so the girl could escape her captors)

m-niwentem te kwselkten
PAST+ ask+ PASS ART+ relative+ POSS
She was asked by her relatives (how she managed to escape)

Thompson and others have drawn attention to the notion of control in Interior Salish languages, mainly through suffixing and transitivizing, and through a limited set of non-control verbal roots. I think the optional use of the passive, at the level of the verb-phrase is an additional device for marking control, by focusing on the non-control or patient-status of the grammatical subject of the passive phrase.

3. Cultural Aspects of Control and Causation:
As far as the notion of passivity, causation and control is concerned, it is useful to move to the extralinguistic context. In other words, what are the cultural implications of agency, or the cultural conventions guiding the pointing out of control. In Example #1, the Coyote and Fox story, the sentence "He was told by his brother, "Where did you get that"?", is pivotal to the unfolding of the story. This is because of the implied or alluded content, i.e. the cultural message underlying it. First of all, in being addressed as Coyote's brother, Fox can't refuse him, but must share his food and knowledge with him. Moreover, "he was told by his brother" indicates Coyote pressing him into action. In a cultural context, Fox being told by somebody who is his brother, "where did you get that", implies, "hey, give me some of that!"

While the above examples include an agent, agentless passives are, in fact, the more frequent ones and sometimes have intricate implied or alluded meanings. "If there is any one function that is common to the passive in all the languages that are customarily said to have a passive voice, this is that it makes possible the construction of agentless sentences," Lyons (1968:373) noted. While passive constructions - as opposed to the middle - always imply the existence of an agent (Keenan 1987:254), it is a particular property of agentless passive sentences that the agent goes unmentioned and is therefore only alluded to. When the agent is a narrator himself, or the "I" of the story (especially in direct speech), the use of the passive draws attention away from him and is a way of communicating politeness, humbleness, both culturally important values. (note for example the difference between "I made it" - where the maker takes credit - and "It was made", with the implied agent "by
me" - where the maker is too polite or humble to take credit, although the implied message "by me" is understood by the audience.

Passive sentences without named agents allow to defer agency and accountability of action to an unspecified source or person. Brown and Levinson (1978), as well as Lakoff (1971) have discussed the social functions of the use of passive voice constructions from this point of view. For the English language, Brown and Levinson note, "The passive coupled with a rule of agent deletion is perhaps the means par excellence in English of avoiding reference to persons involving /face-threatening actions/" (op.cit.:184). They cite the English "get" constructions ("It got wrecked") as phrases used to avoid the blaming of explicit others including oneself. In this sense, then, the passive serves the function of de-focusing on a subject, and de-personalizing action "Our functional hypothesis claims that the basic motive is subject demotion and possible deletion, and not object promotion" (op.cit.:274). The rationale for these kind of constructions are therefore social and cultural conventions, and they allow the speaker to avoid naming the agent responsible for what action in a potentially embarrassing situation (ibid.).

This brings us to another instance of the use of passives in Shuswap narratives, namely those that are agentless, or rather, defer agency to unspecified sources. Example #5 is taken from a lengthy narrative by the late Christopher Donald Sr. of the North Thompson Band. It involves an adolescent girl who is mute and therefore marginal to human society. Her only sounds are like the howling and barking of a dog, even her appearance is likewise. Her parents cannot cope with her and decide to take her into the mountains to abandon her there. This is, in fact, an act of forced exsxt or spirit questing, but most of all, challenges her to become a self-sufficient member of the social group or else perish. All she, however, does, once alone, is to bark and howl like a dog, whereupon a medicine man (tekwllc) turns her Into stone. In examining the uses of the passive voice, the interesting passage in this story revolves around the parents' decision to abandon her: The act of abandonment is expressed as a set of agentless passives. This is in marked contrast to the reflexives used to describe her action, which emphasize her causation of and responsibility for those actions. The passages in question are as follows:

Me'7 qwetsötystem re7 sme(k)7t t'e the7n k'llume FUT die-PASS your daughter ART where DEICT-invisible "Your daughter will be taken somewhere out there"

Me'7 llwélenten mes t'e ri7 t'e sgel'tus FUT abandon-PASS ART there ART mountain

She will be left there in the mountains

Me'7 plépes re qwetsötétan t'e ri7 the7n FUT get lost ART set out REFLEX there somewhere "She will get lost when she wanders off somewhere"

Ta7 k sxwexwitstén re sppéulsten NEG HYP. like -l ART kill-l I don't like to (don't want) to kill her

Put kwekwststut, neri7s just save-REFLX that's it If she saves herself, that's it."

This passage indicates that the parents externalize the agency of leaving her and put it in the hands of someone/something unspecified. The use of the passive voice is a device which shows the parents distancing themselves from control and causation as to the girl's fate. At the same time, through the use of the reflexive suffix /tsut/, which emphasizes control over action, they emphasize that she has the chance to better herself and save herself. It is also noteworthy that the verb stem plep- is a (- control) active rather than a passive.

Further on in the story, the "non-agency" of the parents is re-iterated when the medicine man comments on her abandonment. When he notices her, he says,

t'el rey witáin plép-enke ri7 "That over there, evidently is lost"
m-llwélenten-enke he/she/it was evidently abandoned.

Therefore, in the narrative, the medicine man also defers agency to other sources, rather than saying explicitly (although he very likely is aware of the circumstances) who abandoned her, or "they abandoned her."

This function of deferred agency is moreover an interesting one in light of Scollon and Scollon's (1981) work on North American Native narrative structure, interaction and the social construction of reality. Using the example of Athapascan modes of communication, the authors stress that maintaining the integrity of the other and maintaining others' (and hence one's own) face are important strategies of interpersonal discourse (see also Boelscher 1989). I assume that the Shuswap use of the passive, in at least some of its aspects, functions in a similar manner.

In summary, I have pointed out three interconnected functions of the use of the passive in Shuswap narrative discourse. They involve the focusing or foregrounding of
pivotal characters, the emphatic perspective from the point of view of the subject of the story, which adds non-control to the focus. Finally, the third function adds the deferral of agency from within a social and cultural context. While all three are optional categories, and may perhaps be considered aspects of literary style, the last one, particularly, is only understandable within the cultural context of what is said and what is meant by it.

NOTES:
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2) For more ease with word-processing, transcriptions are here rendered in Kuipers' practical alphabet for the Shuswap language. /c/ is an unvoiced velar fricative rendered as /s/ in NPA. /l/ is an unvoiced alveolar lateral fricative, /r/ is a voiced velar fricative, /s/ is an unvoiced uvular fricative (see Kuipers 1974a/b).

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