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POETICS AND PERFORMANCE AS CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES ON LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL LIFE

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INTRODUCTION

Scholars have vacillated for centuries between two opposing assessments of the role of poetics in social life. A long tradition of thinking about language and society argues that verbal art provides a central dynamic force in shaping linguistic structure and linguistic study. This position emerges clearly in the writings of Vico, Herder, and von Humboldt; attention from Sapir, the Russian "Formalists," and members of the Prague School to the role of poetics contributed to the development of performance studies and ethnopoetics in the last two decades. Nonetheless, poetics has often been marginalized by anthropologists and linguists who believe that aesthetic uses of language are merely parasitic upon such "core" areas of linguistics as phonology, syntax, and semantics, or upon such anthropological fields as economy and social organization.

The balance between these two views shifted in favor of poetics in the late 1970s and early 1980s as a new emphasis on performance directed attention away from study of the formal patterning and symbolic content of texts to the emergence of verbal art in the social interaction between performers and

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audiences. This reorientation fit nicely with growing concern among many linguists with indexical (as opposed to solely referential or symbolic) meaning, naturally occurring discourse, and the assumption that speech is heterogeneous and multifunctional. Anthropologists and folklorists similarly found performance-based studies responsive to their interest in play, the social construction of reality, and reflexivity. One dimension that particularly excited many practitioners was the way performances move the use of heterogeneous stylistic resources, context-sensitive meanings, and conflicting ideologies into a reflexive arena where they can be examined critically.

A number of historical overviews and critical assessments of this literature are available (28, 33, 35, 36, 39, 40, 63, 93, 166, 237). We accordingly turn our attention to several basic theoretical issues that have shaped both the way scholars have studied performance and its rejection by other practitioners. These problems are evident in the way such key terms as performativity, text, and context have been defined, and in the presuppositions used in framing them. Our stress on these broader theoretical issues runs counter to a growing tendency to view this area of study as "the performance approach," thus downplaying the heterogeneous array of theoretical sources that have shaped it and reducing performance to the status of a formula for analysis of artful communication.

First, we examine several crucial presuppositions of both the partisans and the critics of poetics research. These implicit metaphysical conceptions take culturally and historically specific ideas about the nature of language and its role in social life and elevate them to the level of purportedly objective and universally applicable theories. We argue that such assumptions are not only limited and ethnocentric but also often undermine the ability of scholars to grasp the heterogeneous and dynamic character of language use and the central place it occupies in the social construction of reality. It is important to recognize the historical and cultural specificity and ethnocentricity of Western thinking about language and society and to explore a broader range of alternatives. In the context of these broader questions, performance-based research shares some of the central goals of deconstruction (80), reader-response and reception theories (154, 244), hermeneutics (207), the "poetics and politics" of ethnographic texts (75), and cultural studies (71).

Studies of performance can make a unique contribution to this larger project. As many authors have stressed, performances are not simply artful uses of language that stand apart both from day-to-day life and from larger questions of meaning, as a Kantian aesthetics would suggest. Performance rather provides a frame that invites critical reflection on communicative processes. A given performance is tied to a number of speech events that precede and succeed it (past performances, readings of texts, negotiations, rehearsals, gossip, reports, critiques, challenges, subsequent performances,

and the like). An adequate analysis of a single performance thus requires sensitive ethnographic study of how its form and meaning index a broad range of discourse types, some of which are not framed as performance. Performance-based research can yield insights into diverse facets of language use and their interrelations. Because contrastive theories of speech and associated metaphysical assumptions embrace more than these discourse events alone, studying performance can open up a wider range of vantage points on how language can be structured and what roles it can play in social life.

Performance-based study challenges dominant Western conceptions by prompting researchers to stress the cultural organization of communicative processes. Linguists, of course, have long discounted native speakers' views of language structure and use; Boas (51), for example, referred to such conceptions as "secondary explanations," and he regarded them as irrelevant, distracting, and patently false. Anthropologists, on the other hand, often follow Malinowski (172) in claiming to present "the native's point of view" (see 106). Presentations of "the native model" or "theory" generally overlook difficulties in deriving indigenous perspectives exclusively from the referential content of elicited data. They tend also to ignore the fact that such factors as gender and social class frequently generate competing perspectives on language and social life. To make more reliable use of native speakers' meta-level discourse on language we must regard performers and audience members not simply as sources of data but as intellectual partners who can make substantial theoretical contributions to this discourse. In addition, we must develop greater awareness of the way discourse is recorded and analyzed.

As ethnographers of performance, we regard the task of deconstructing dominant Western conceptions of language and social life as a vital, ongoing facet of a larger project. We accordingly turn to the complementary task of exploring alternative ways of viewing performance in a later section ("Entextualization and Decontextualization"). We attempt to provide a framework that will displace reified, object-centered notions of performativity, text, and context—notions that presuppose the encompassment of each performance by a single, bounded social interaction. Heeding calls for greater attention to the dialectic between performance and its wider sociocultural and political-economic context, we stress the way poetic patterning extracts discourse from particular speech events and explores its relationship to a diversity of social settings.

Decentering and recontextualization have powerful implications for the conduct of social life. Investigating how this process takes place and how individuals gain rights to particular modes of transforming speech can therefore illuminate issues of central concern to anthropologists, linguists, folklorists, and literary scholars.

FROM PERFORMATIVITY TO THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF REALITY

J. L. Austin's *How to Do Things with Words* (13) sparked both excitement and controversy. His rejection of an exclusive focus on truth-value semantics in favor of viewing language use as social action that emerges in the "total speech act" is echoed in Bauman's emphasis on the emergent properties of performance (26, 33). The impact of this characterization of language use as social action by such speech act theorists as Austin (13), Grice (119), and Searle (219–221) was enhanced by its resonance with Sapir's emphasis on the dynamic character of language (214; 173), the Prague School's characterization of the multifunctionality of signs (105, 176, 186, 187), and Malinowski's view of language as a "mode of action" rather than primarily a "means of thinking" (170, 171). The work of Bateson (25) and Goffman (109, 110) has also been influential in this regard.

To say that language use is social action is, however, much easier than to develop frameworks that can identify and explain the nature of this dynamism. As Levinson (163) notes, speech act theory has rested on a "literal force hypothesis" that posits a one-to-one correlation between performative utterances and illocutionary forces, even if most theorists admit that surface forms frequently do not directly signal illocutionary force. Silverstein (229) suggests that speech act theory ultimately draws on the very referential reductionism it decries in asserting that the semantic content of "explicit performative verbs" can be used in correlating types of performative utterances with illocutionary forces. This equation becomes painfully apparent in Austin's conclusion that since "primitive languages" lack "precision" (that is, referential delicacy), explicit performatives will also be absent; it will accordingly be impossible to make clear distinctions between illocutionary forces. Far more than the reputation of speech act theory itself rests on sorting out these problems; they force practitioners to come to grips with basic recurrent issues regarding structure vs event, context-free vs pragmatic elements of language, and the role of language in social life. Performance-oriented research, particularly studies of political and ritual discourse, have played a special role in this undertaking.

Discourse analysis argues that a wide range of formal features can signal the illocutionary forces of utterances, often apart from or in spite of their referential content. One of the most controversial claims is Bloch's (50) characterization of political rhetoric in "traditional" societies. He argues that oratorical style places great constraints on linguistic form, suppresses creativity, and diminishes the importance of reference; this process of formalization nonetheless greatly enhances the ability of speakers to bring about a desired course of action. While many writers have attacked Bloch (60, 147, 192,

199), his work has prompted researchers to examine the way performativity can be tied to a vast range of formal features and patterns. Hanks (124) argues, for example, that the formality of Yucatec Mayan ritual speech does not preclude creative responses to the shaman's personal history and the contextual parameters of the performance. McDowell (180) suggests that formalization of ritual speech decreases its accessibility to both potential performers and audiences; this suppression of the referential function enhances its efficacy. He also argues in a study of riddles (178:22–30) that framing speech as performance can signal a suspension or inversion of the felicity conditions outlined by Austin. Conversation analysts, such as C. Goodwin (111), M. Goodwin (115), Moerman (184), Sacks (212, 213), and Schegloff (216, 217), have focused on the sequential organization of conversation, arguing that the communicative function of an utterance is relative to its location in the linear stream of discourse. In some speech communities, code-switching provides a central means of transforming the performative force of utterances (10). Hill (135) has drawn on Bakhtin (18) and Vološinov (251) in arguing that code-switching can heighten attention to competing languages and varieties to such an extent that identities, social relations, and the constitution of the community itself become open to negotiation (cf 136).

Similarly, drawing on Jakobson's work on parallelism (72, 151–153), a number of researchers have demonstrated the way parallelistic constructions at both micro and macro levels (230, 248a) can signal illocutionary force. Haviland (131) argues that the authority of elders in mediating conflict emerges from their ability to displace a cacophony of angry voices through use of the quintessential embodiment of Zinacanteco social and linguistic order—ritual couplets; a wealth of similar examples from eastern Indonesia is available in a recent volume edited by Fox (101). Urban has argued that cultural stylization of the sonic embodiments of crying signal both affect and sociability in ritual wailing (250).

Studies have also suggested that performativity is not lodged in particular formal features alone but in larger formal-functional units. Abrahams (3, 6) and Bauman (32) draw on Bakhtin (17, 18) Bateson (25), Goffman (109, 110), Huizinga (137), and Turner (245, 246) in arguing that play frames not only alter the performative force of utterances but provide settings in which speech and society can be questioned and transformed. Participation structure, particularly the nature of turn-taking and performer-audience interaction, can have profound implications for shaping social relations (50, 60, 88, 113–115, 134, 188, 227, 248).

A number of authors have argued that genre plays a crucial role in shaping illocutionary force (2, 9, 37, 44, 56, 59, 63, 117, 118, 125, 140, 204). These works suggest that genres are far more than isolated and self-contained bundles of formal features. A shift of genre evokes contrastive commu-

nicative functions, participation structures, and modes of interpretation. Moreover, the social capacity of particular genres and the relationship between genres are themselves patterned in ways that shape and are shaped by gender, social class, ethnicity, age, time, space, and other factors (2, 4, 8, 9, 32, 37, 55, 63, 108, 118, 162, 223, 225). Similarly, pursuit of a particular interactive focus (teaching, exhorting, befriending, confronting, etc) generally involves negotiated changes of genre in which features of one genre are embedded within a token of another. Bakhtin's (18, 19) pioneering work on this problem has been afforded greater depth and precision by several recent studies (5, 37, 86, 165). The illocutionary force of an utterance often emerges not simply from its placement within a particular genre and social setting but also from the indexical relations between the performance and other speech events that precede and succeed it (of which more below). The illocutionary force and perlocutionary effects of courtroom testimony are highly dependent, for example, on evidentiary rules and broader semiotic frames that specify admissible types of relations to other bodies of written and oral discourse (46, 77, 81, 182, 189, 190, 202, 203).

This body of research has greatly enhanced our understanding of performativity by showing that illocutionary force is not simply a product of the referential content and/or syntactic structure of particular sentences. The formal properties of discourse, larger units of speech events, frames, keys, participation structures, and the like are not simply "felicity conditions" (13) or "preparatory conditions" (219) that activate self-contained performative utterances. Illocutionary force can be conveyed by a host of elements from micro to macro and, most importantly, by the interaction of such features. The ethnography of communication, discourse analysis, and research on performance have all contributed to shifting the focus of research from isolated sentences and features to, in Austin's terms, the total speech act.

This process has followed three loosely defined stages. A number of studies (published primarily in the late 1960s through mid-1970s) applied Austin's framework to a particular speech community and/or body of speech act types (94, 98, 99, 208). As a result, a lack of fit became apparent between the concepts outlined by Austin, Searle, Grice, and others and the way performativity was conceived of and used in a wide range of speech communities. Ethnographies of speaking both exposed the ethnocentricity and reductionism inherent in these formulations and helped researchers to find alternatives (88a, 141, 157, 191a, 209, 229). Eventually the use of speech act theory in framing research problems was to a great extent displaced in favor of, as Levinson has put it, "much more complex multi-faceted pragmatic approaches to the functions that utterances perform" (163:283). Performance-oriented scholars no longer think of performativity primarily as the use of specific features in signaling particular illocutionary effects within a fixed set

of conventions and a given social context. Instead, they view it as the interaction of complex and heterogeneous formal patterns in the social construction of reality. Works from this perspective (see particularly 9, 32, 42, 60, 70, 76, 134, 164) resonate with the voices of such philosophers and literary critics as Burke (68, 69), Gadamer (103), Langer (161), and Williams (253) in arguing that formal elaboration does not relegate discourse to a Kantian aesthetic sphere that is both purely subjective and carefully insulated from cognition, social relations, and politics. While Austin (13:21–22) claimed that performance weakens the performative force of utterances, this literature suggests that poetic patterning, frames, genres, participatory structures, and other dimensions of performance draw attention to the status of speech as social action.

Researchers can go much further than they have in using the rich potential of performance-based research to question received notions about the nature of performativity and its role in social life. Three issues seem particularly in need of critical attention.

First, the relationship between formal features and communicative functions has generally been treated as one of means to ends, such that form becomes meaningful insofar as it is connected with some type of content or function. Saussure (215), for example, idealized form as a meaningless plane of undifferentiated sound that is constituted as a set of signifiers arbitrarily related to units of referential content. Just as telling is his capitalistic analogy, which equates the relationship between signifiers and signifieds with that between currency and goods. But some speech communities regard sound itself as a primary locus of meaning. Feld (91, 92) suggests that the Kaluli reverse the explanatory arrow, viewing the patterning of linguistic and musical sound as emanating iconically from natural sounds, particularly bird calls and waterfalls; here communicative functions and socially defined ends are derived from formal patterns, not vice versa. E. Basso (20) and Seeger (222) draw on South American data in arguing that musical dimensions of performances can shape linguistic patterning and social relations (see also 210, 238). While more research is needed in clarifying these issues, it is apparent that reifying form as a collection of empty containers waiting to receive small dollops of referential content or illocutionary force impoverishes our understanding of performance and of communication.

Second, Austin's suggestion that performance renders the performative force of utterances "hollow or void" cannot simply be inverted. Performance does not always connect discourse automatically and unimpeachably with particular illocutionary forces and perlocutionary effects. Keenan (156) and Briggs (65) have noted that performances can by their very nature call into question the performative efficacy of speech forms, thus leading to negotiation of the relationship between utterances and illocutionary forces. Bauman

(29), Silverstein (232), and, long before them, Sapir (214) have shown how diachronic shifts between patterns for relating form and meaning are played out in conflicts between proponents of competing forms and ideologies. Briggs (63:328–31) argues that ritual speech can invoke a special form of signification in which the distinction between signifier and signified is itself collapsed. Bauman (26) and Hymes (142) have suggested that audience evaluation of the communicative competence of performers forms a crucial dimension of performance. Particularly in ritual and political discourse, this concern with form and function is often extended to assessments of how (and even if) formal patterning becomes imbued with functional significance.

Finally, theories of performativity presuppose conceptions of the nature of language and social action. As Heidegger (133) has argued, Western theories of language and poetics in turn presuppose Western metaphysics; Derrida (84, 85) has attempted to expose these connections by deconstructing Western discourse. The performances of non-Western societies and marginalized sectors of Western industrialized nations provide illuminating settings for furthering this pursuit. Such performances do not simply reveal contrastive forms and functions; basic conceptions of language and social life differ as well (102). In the case of marginalized groups on the periphery of industrial capitalism, performances are often overtly concerned with deconstructing dominant ideologies and expressive forms (63, 90, 162, 164, 194, 195, 235, 252).

A striking illustration of the fruitfulness of this approach is an article by Rosaldo (209). She uses Ilongot conceptions in showing how Searle "falls victim to folk views that locate social meaning first in private persons—and slight the sense of situational constraint" (209:212). The Ilongot data prompt her to argue that Searle's analysis of performative verbs should be read less as universal laws of speech acts than as "an ethnography—however partial—of contemporary views of human personhood and action as these are linked to culturally particular modes of speaking" (209:228). (Also see Besnier, in this volume, on the relationship between language, affect, and concepts of the person.) Such truly dialogical research does not view speakers as dupes who lack the ability to reflect meaningfully on their own communicative conduct. Rather, it accepts them as partners who have substantive contributions to make to the process of deconstructing Western views of language and social life and exploring a broader range of alternatives.

FROM CONTEXT TO CONTEXTUALIZATION

A crucial move in the establishment of performance approaches was a shift from the study of texts to the analysis of the emergence of texts in contexts. Malinowski (170, 171) early emphasized the cultural and interactional context

of language use, paying attention especially to verbal art forms such as magical spells and narratives. Bateson's (25) and Goffman's (109) work on frames, Parry's (201) and Lord's (167) emphasis on the role of the audience in oral composition, and the conceptualization of the communicative event proposed by Jakobson (151) and expanded by Hymes (138, 139, 141) provided important stimuli for students of performance (see 1, 12, 26, 43, 45).

Nevertheless, a number of recent studies suggest that scholars are moving away from a focus on context, as conceived in normative, conventional, and institutional terms. Blackburn's work on Tamil bow songs provides a case in point. In an article published in 1981, Blackburn noted that "the influence of oral context on narrative content" provided a "central focus of this essay" (47:208). Five years later, while similarly declaring that "Performance . . . is whatever happens to a text in context" (48:168), he went on to argue that the analysis of text remained central to the study of performance. By the time his monograph on bow songs appeared in 1988, Blackburn asserted that what is needed is a "text-centered approach to performance" that "starts with the narrative outside its enactment" (49:xviii).

Performance-centered scholarship has also been read of late in antithetical ways. Limón & Young (166) argue, for instance, that studies of performance have not measured up to Bauman's (26, 27) call for analysis of the broader social, cultural, and historical context; they attribute this failure to the devotion of practitioners to "microsociological" or "interactional" analysis and to the "poetics of . . . verbal art." Bronner (67:89) argues in a somewhat similar vein that "in emphasizing display and performance, in the assumption of expressive actions as strategies used in specific situations, the nature of an actor was separated from the act, and the physical stage was isolated from its social surroundings." Thus in these and other recent accounts, performance-centered research emerges as the blind man's elephant. Blackburn seeks to recover "lost ground in the study of oral performance" by "reversing the direction that performance studies had charted" (49:xxi, xvii); that is, to him performance studies seem too much concerned with context and too little concerned with textual detail. Limón & Young and Bronner, on the other hand, argue that performance approaches are too caught up in poetics to be able to discern broader social and political contexts.

These discrepancies are not simply the product of divergent trends in the field: These authors cite many of the same sources. Nor do such claims simply imply a circular movement from text to context to text. Rather, performance studies are in the midst of a radical reformulation wherein "text," "context," and the distinction between them are being redefined. This shift is signaled grammatically in the addition of affixes that effectively move the emphasis from product to process and from conventional structures to agency as the terms "entextualization" and "contextualization" gain currency. The remain-

der of this section is devoted to a consideration of the move from "context" to "contextualization"; we discuss the transition from "text" to "entextualization" in the following section.

Briggs (63:13) identifies two problems inherent in the concept of context: inclusiveness and false objectivity. Some practitioners have proposed relatively circumscribed definitions. Dundes (87:23), for example, states that "The context of an item of folklore is the specific social situation in which that particular item is actually employed." In his seminal formulation, Malinowski distinguishes "the context of cultural reality . . . the material equipment, the activities, interests, moral and aesthetic values with which the words are correlated" (171:22) from the "context of situation" or "social context," the "purpose, aim and direction of the accompanying activities" (171:214). Bauman (30) expands the list to six elements, including the "context of meaning," "institutional context," "context of communicative system," "social base," "individual context," and "context of situation." All such definitions of context are overly inclusive, there being no way to know when an adequate range of contextual factors has been encompassed. The seemingly simple task of describing "the context" of a performance can accordingly become an infinite regress.

The problem of false objectivity emerges from the positivistic character of most definitions of context. This equation of "the context" with an "objective" description of everything that surrounds a set of utterances has two important implications. First, since it is obviously impossible to point to all aspects of the context, the researcher becomes the judge of what merits inclusion. Second, positivistic definitions construe context as a set of discourse-external conditions that exist prior to and independently of the performance. This undermines the analyst's ability to discern how the participants themselves determine which aspects of the ongoing social interaction are relevant. It also obscures the manner in which speech shapes the setting, often transforming social relations. Reifying "the context" also implicitly preserves the premise that meaning essentially springs from context-free propositional content, which is then modified or clarified by "the context" (cf 234).

A number of writers have attempted to break out of this mold by focusing on the metacommunicative or metapragmatic (228) capacity of language. Cook-Gumperz and Gumperz (78; see also 123) incorporate insights of Bateson (25), Goffman (109, 110), and others in proposing a shift from context to *contextualization*. They argue that communicative contexts are not dictated by the social and physical environment but emerge in negotiations between participants in social interactions. The ongoing contextualization process can be discerned by attending to the "contextualization cues" that signal which features of the settings are used by interactants in producing interpretive frameworks. A rapidly growing body of literature points to the

centrality of features of poetic patterning in contextualizing performances (20, 21, 32, 42, 48, 63, 112, 131, 144, 146, 159, 180, 227, 248, 250). Performance-based analysis has a key role to play here in that poetically patterned contextualization cues are highlighted in performance; this heightened perceptibility can help researchers to determine how individual cues are linked in creating larger formal and functional patterns.

The shift in emphasis from context to contextualization suggests the reason performance analysis has become simultaneously more textually and more contextually focused in recent years. In order to avoid reifying "the context" it is necessary to study the textual details that illuminate the manner in which participants are collectively constructing the world around them. On the other hand, attempts to identify the meaning of texts, performances, or entire genres in terms of purely symbolic, context-free content disregard the multiplicity of indexical connections that enable verbal art to transform, not simply reflect, social life. To claim that researchers must choose among analyses of poetic patterns, social interaction, or larger social and cultural contexts is to reify each of these elements and to forestall an adequate analysis of any.

The shift we identify here represents a major step towards achieving an agent-centered view of performance. Contextualization involves an active process of negotiation in which participants reflexively examine the discourse as it is emerging, embedding assessments of its structure and significance in the speech itself. Performers extend such assessments to include predictions about how the communicative competence, personal histories, and social identities of their interlocutors will shape the reception of what is said. Much research has focused on the way this meta-level process is incorporated into the textual form of performances, particularly in the case of narratives. Babcock (14), Bauman (32), Briggs (66), McDowell (177), and others have focused on meta-narration, "those devices which comment upon the narrator, the narrating, and the narrative both as message and as code" (14:67). Meta-narration includes a host of elements that have, as Georges (107) argues, been marginalized, overlooked, and sometimes even deleted from transcripts, owing to their supposed irrelevance to the narrated events themselves. As Bauman has argued (32), meta-narrative devices index not only features of the ongoing social interaction but also the structure and significance of the narrative and the way it is linked to other events. For example, Texas storyteller Ed Bell embeds the following metanarrative comment in a story about a giant bee tree: "And I don't blame y'all if you don't believe me about this tree, because I wouldn't believe it either if I hadn'ta seen it with my own eyes. I don't know whether I can tell ya how you could believe it or not, but that was a big tree" (32:99). Bauman argues that such interventions bridge the gap between the narrated event and the storytelling event by reaching out phatically to the audience. Shuman (227) details the way adolescent fight

stories focus not only on the fighting but also on situations that reveal the tenor of ongoing relationships between the involved parties. Such stories thus present both assessments of the causes and consequences of the fighting and assertions of the participants' rights to tell and hear the story.

A central device for connecting narrated and narrating events (149) is reported speech; a growing body of research (32, 37, 65, 144, 169, 233, 247) has built upon the insights of Vološinov (251). Reported speech enables performers to increase stylistic and ideological heterogeneity by drawing on multiple speech events, voices, and points of view. As we show below, this decentering of the narrating event and of the narrator's voice opens up possibilities for renegotiating meanings and social relations beyond the parameters of the performance itself.

While much research on the metacommunicative functions of poetic patterning has focused on narrative, a number of studies have analyzed proverbs, riddles, rhymes, insults, greetings, and other genres, as well as poetic features of conversation (5, 22, 54, 63, 74, 116, 118, 160, 178, 181, 230, 231). More research is needed in this area.

This shift in analytic perspective has fostered awareness of the active role that hearers also play in performances. In conversational narratives, audience members are often accorded turns at talk, thus rendering narration coperformance (83, 113). The backchannel of audience members shapes the structure and content of the performance as speakers assess the involvement and comprehension of their interlocutors (41, 63, 89, 111, 129, 131). C. Goodwin (113) argues that audiences are shaped by discourse in keeping with the differential involvement of members in what is said; the audience also plays a key role in assessing the significance of the talk. Performance-audience interaction is clearly not shaped by overt signals alone; K. Basso (23) provides a striking analysis of the way that speakers can withhold overt contextualization cues, counting on culturally defined patterns of response to enable listeners to work out the bearing of the narrative on the current setting. Even when audience members say or do practically nothing at the time of the performance, their role becomes active when they serve as speakers in subsequent entextualizations of the topic at hand (e.g. in reports, challenges, refutations, enactments of consequences, and the like).

The movement from context to contextualization and related concerns thus enables us to recognize the sophisticated way that performers and audiences use poetic patterning in interpreting the structure and significance of their own discourse. Researchers can accordingly ground their analysis in the participants' interpretive efforts. This change in orientation has profound implications for fieldwork. It facilitates greater awareness of the dynamics of performance in the ethnographic encounter itself.

The basic conceptual and methodological premise of the ethnography of

performance is that the structure and dynamics of the performance event serve to orient the participants—including the performer. One might therefore expect assessments of the discourse emergent in ethnographic encounters to take into account both the ethnographic agenda and the role of the fieldworker. In fact, however, analysis of the effects of the ethnographer's actions, research entourage, equipment, agenda, etc) upon such discourse required the modification of a longstanding focus among folklorists and anthropologists on the "natural context"—i.e. on the way the natives do (or did) things on their own, free of compromising outside influences. Ethnographers of performance needed a certain boldness to deconstruct this notion of natural context by confronting their own influence on what their local sources offered them. Nevertheless, after Haring's pioneering analysis (127) of how his informants shaped what they told him to their conception of who he was, what he wanted, and what he should be told, numerous papers have examined contextualization in the ethnographic encounter. This work has illuminated variously the negotiation of the agenda of the interaction and the role of the participants within it as well as the choice, shaping, and framing of their discourse (31, 61, 62, 73, 82, 142, 146, 183, 242). Indeed, contextualization has been shown to extend beyond the boundaries of the fieldwork setting itself, insofar as the tape recorder introduces possible subsequent audiences into consideration (32:78–111, 242:285–301). Such reflexive attention to contextualization in the ethnographic encounter significantly affected the very formulation of performance theory: Hymes's foundational distinction between the reporting of an artistic text and the performance of it rests on an analysis of shifting and negotiated frames of contextualization in his ethnographic work with his Chinookan consultants (142).

By focusing on the dialogic foundations of ethnographic discovery, this reflexive line of performance-centered research anticipated the recent turn toward a more dialogic anthropology (175, 242). In turn, the insights we have discussed here offer to "the poetics and politics of ethnography" a heightened awareness of the communicative work invested by our ethnographic interlocutors and a set of tools for analyzing the entextualization (79) and contextualization of ethnographic dialogs.

The insights afforded by the studies we have cited so far stem from the special sensitivity of the ethnographers who produced them to the dynamics of contextualization and performance. Paredes (197) goes on to offer a trenchant critique of ethnographic practices that fail to take performance within the ethnographic encounter into account. Paredes finds the literature on Greater Mexican (especially Texas-Mexican) society and culture to be riddled with interpretive inaccuracies that stem from the naively referential bias of positivist ethnographic practice of asking people for facts and assuming they will provide straight answers. Paredes shows that the ethnographic encounter

invites the display of communicative competence, a touchstone of performance, just as the inequality that often characterizes the relationship between native "informant" and ethnographer may invite joking, leg pulling, or playing to stereotypes. There is thus a predisposition toward performance and other expressive framings of communication in the contextualization of discourse within the ethnographic encounter, regardless of whether the question at hand is verbal art or kinship. Paredes's work suggests that sensitivity to performance must be a critical and reflexive part of any ethnographic investigation that involves the gathering of data by verbal means (see also 62, 120).

ENTEXTUALIZATION AND DECONTEXTUALIZATION[1]

Much performance-oriented research on contextualization has focused on the grounding of performance in situational contexts. An alternative perspective has begun to emerge from performance studies and other areas that approaches some of the basic problems in linguistic anthropology from a contrary set of assumptions.

Consider for a moment why researchers have had to make such an issue of contextualization, to devote so much effort to establishing that the form, function, and meaning of verbal art cannot be understood apart from context. The reason is precisely that verbal art forms are so susceptible to treatment as self-contained, bounded objects separable from their social and cultural contexts of production and reception. Taking the practice of decontextualization as the focus of investigation, we ask what makes it possible, how it is accomplished in formal and functional terms, for what ends, by whom, under what circumstances, and so on. We are currently far from having conclusive answers to these questions, but the inquiry can open up some productive new approaches.[2]

The past work of most investigators of contextualization has thus tended to take the opposite tack from the one on which we will now embark. It has

[1]Because this is a preliminary and programmatic formulation of a line of inquiry just beginning to take shape, we do not frame it as a review of the literature. Instead, by means of citations we link our outline to past research on which the approach can be built. This section should be read in conjunction with William Hanks's article on "Texts and Textuality" in the 1989 *Annual Review of Anthropology* (126).

[2]The problem of decontextualization (and recontextualization, of which more below) has been the principal focus of a seminar at the Center for Psychosocial Studies, chiefly under the rubrics of the *decentering* and *recentering* of discourse. These terms draw on poststructuralist usage in the process of offering a critique of the perspectives in which that usage is rooted (34). Through the work of the group's members, these terms have begun to gain wider currency in linguistic anthropology (e.g. 126, 200). We employ "centering," "decentering," and "recentering" here, interchangeably with "contextualization," "decontextualization," and "recontextualization."

established how performance is *anchored* in and inseparable from its context of use. Such work—on the ties of performance to the competence, expressive agenda, rhetorical strategy, and functional goals of the performer; on the phatic ties of the performer to the audience; on the indexical ties of the performed discourse to its situational surround, the participants, or other dimensions of the performance event; on the structure of the performed text as emergent in performance, and so on—served to establish how and why verbal art should be resistant to decentering, to extraction from context. We will contrastively ask what it is that makes verbal art decenterable despite all these anchoring counterforces. What makes it susceptible to decontextualization? What factors loosen the ties between performed discourse and its context?

One starting point for these inquiries is a distinction between discourse and text. At the heart of the process of decentering discourse is the more fundamental process—*entextualization*. In simple terms, though it is far from simple, it is the process of rendering discourse extractable, of making a stretch of linguistic production into a unit—a *text*—that can be lifted out of its interactional setting. A text, then, from this vantage point, is discourse rendered decontextualizable. Entextualization may well incorporate aspects of context, such that the resultant text carries elements of its history of use within it.

Basic to the process of entextualization is the reflexive capacity of discourse, the capacity it shares with all systems of signification "to turn or bend back upon itself, to become an object to itself, to refer to itself" (15, 16). In Jakobsonian terms (151), with regard to language, this reflexive capacity is manifested most directly in the metalingual and poetic functions (174). The metalingual (or metadiscursive) function objectifies discourse by making discourse its own topic; the poetic function manipulates the formal features the discourse to call attention to the formal structures by which the discourse is organized.

Performance, the enactment of the poetic function, is a highly reflexive mode of communication. As the concept of performance has been developed in linguistic anthropology, performance is seen as a specially marked, artful way of speaking that sets up or represents a special interpretive frame within which the act of speaking is to be understood. Performance puts the act of speaking on display—objectifies it, lifts it to a degree from its interactional setting and opens it to scrutiny by an audience. Performance heightens awareness of the act of speaking and licenses the audience to evaluate the skill and effectiveness of the performer's accomplishment. By its very nature, then, performance potentiates decontextualization.

We may approach the process of entextualization in performance in formal and functional terms by exploring the means available to participants in performance situations to render stretches of discourse discontinuous with

their discursive surround, thus making them into coherent, effective, and memorable texts. What discursive resources might serve this end? From a formal perspective, this line of inquiry takes us into familiar territory: the formal organization of texts, the devices of cohesion, and so forth. Here, the close formal analysis advanced in recent years under the stimulus of ethnopoetics (144, 226, 242, 243), the comparative analysis of parallelism (72, 100, 101, 158), and the analysis of folklore genres (32, 44, 63, 118, 178, 179) has expanded our understanding of the textuality of verbal art forms. The means and devices outlined as "keys to performance" by Bauman (26) may be seen as indices of entextualization. Conversational analysis (110:5–77; 163, 218, 240) and language-oriented studies of disputing and conflict (58, 64, 114, 122) offer vantage points on the formal analysis of discourse and entextualization and illuminate how the prepared-for detachability of texts may be interactively accomplished. They remind us that participants themselves may be directly and strongly concerned with the social management of entextualization, decontextualization, and recontextualization (7a).

Beyond formal features, frame analysis (109), the phenomenological investigation of the "worlds" created in performance (61, 254), studies of the interaction of verbal performance and accompanying media such as music, dance, and material objects (91, 179, 222, 239), analysis of the composition process (95–97, 108), and a range of other lines of inquiry illuminate the process of entextualization in performance. The task is to discover empirically what means are available in a given social setting, to whom they may be available, under what circumstances, for making discourse into a text.

Performance is clearly not the only mechanism of entextualization. Our claim, rather, is that performance as a frame intensifies entextualization. It is also important to recall that performance is a variable quality; its salience among the multiple functions and framings of a communicative act may vary along a continuum from sustained, full performance to a fleeting breakthrough into performance (31, 142). Likewise, entextualization is a matter of degree across the speech genres of a community (20:91–140; 57, 63, 108, 118, 180, 223). Full performance seems to be associated with the most marked entextualization, but such correlation is far from perfect; a rigorously entextualized stretch of discourse may be reported, or translated, or rendered in a frame other than performance. This is an area that will reward further investigation.

The foregoing brief survey of entextualization must suffice here in establishing that discourse may be fashioned for ease of detachment from situational context. Processes that anchor discourse in contexts of use may be opposed by others that potentiate its detachability. If we now consider what becomes of text once decontextualized, we recognize that decontextualization from one social context involves recontextualization in another. For present

purposes, we consider the decontextualization and recontextualization of texts to be two aspects of the same process, though time and other factors may mediate between the two phases. Because the process is transformational, we must now determine what the recontextualized text brings with it from its earlier context(s) and what emergent form, function, and meaning it is given as it is recentered.

At this stage, we can only suggest schematically and programmatically what some of the dimensions of the transformation may be. It helps, of course, if one has good data on successive points in the process, but examination even of apparently isolated texts may be productive precisely because a text may carry some of its history with it (7a, 37, 63). Moreover, a succession of recenterings may be encompassed within a single event (206, 236;165–68).

For example, in performing a treasure tale popular among Spanish-speakers in northern New Mexico, Melaquías Romero provides a summary of the tale, a performance of his parents' version, and several retellings based on other versions of the narrative. Such recenterings may also be simultaneous rather than serial. Mr. Romero thus presents a key scene in the treasure tale, a dialog between a sheepherder and his boss, as it was retold by the boss to another sheepherder, who in turn recounted it to two friends; Mr. Romero then recounts the way these two individuals presented the narrative to him (see 66).

In mapping the dimensions of transformation one could employ any one of the following elements while keeping in mind the crucial task of examining their interrelations.

1. *Framing*—that is, the metacommunicative management of the recontextualized text. In Goffman's terms (110:124–59), what is the footing adopted toward the text in the process of recontextualizing it? Is it linked to prior renderings as a repetition or quotation? Here, the recent growth of interest in reported speech (32:54–77; 169; 223:201–7; 232) and metapragmatics (228) will be of special importance, as will developing research on blended genres, in which performed texts of one generic shape are embedded in texts of different generic shape (37, 193). The differential framing of texts as they are rendered in rehearsal as opposed to performance is also worthy of further research (109:60–61; 241).

2. *Form*—including formal means and structures from phonology, to grammar, to speech style, to larger structures of discourse such as generic packaging principles. Focus on this dimension of formal transformation from one context to another affords insights into the evolution of genres (7, 196). One especially interesting formal transformation is the recentering of text by metonymic substitution: mentioning the place where a narrated event happened (23, 24), or a key portion of the plot (155), for example, to evoke the whole in the hearers' minds.

3. *Function*—manifest, latent, and performative (perlocutionary and illo-

cutionary force; see above). A primarily ritual text, for example, may be used in entertainment, practice, or pedagogy (223:118).

4. *Indexical grounding*, including deictic markers of person, spatial location, time, etc. The analysis of "metanarration" represents one productive vantage point on this problem (14, 32, 37, 177).

5. *Translation*, including both interlingual and intersemiotic translation (150). At issue here are the different semiotic capacities of different languages and different media (168). What happens if a text is transferred from Zuni to English or from oral narration to print? These issues have been central to the enterprise of ethnopoetics (93, 144, 242) and to the problematics of transcription (191, 205). They thus afford an important critical and reflexive vantage point on our own scholarly practice as linguistic anthropologists.

6. The *emergent structure* of the new context, as shaped by the process of recontextualization. Texts both shape and are shaped by the situational contexts in which they are produced.

To this point, we have sketched a framework for the investigation of decentering and recentering largely in formal terms. But just as the formal analysis of the processes and practices of contextualization is a means of investigating larger social and cultural problems, so too the analysis of decontextualization and recontextualization will stand or fall as an anthropological enterprise by the degree to which it illuminates problems of broader concern. Let us suggest, then, some problem areas in which such an investigation might be productive. In so doing, we begin to answer certain critics of performance-centered analysis (summarized in 166).

The decontextualization and recontextualization of performed discourse bear upon the political economy of texts (104, 148), texts and power. Performance is a mode of social production (253); specific products include texts, decentered discourse. To decontextualize and recontextualize a text is thus an act of control, and in regard to the differential exercise of such control the issue of social power arises. More specifically, we may recognize differential access to texts, differential legitimacy in claims to and use of texts, differential competence in the use of texts, and differential values attaching to various types of texts. All of these elements, let us emphasize, are culturally constructed, socially constituted, and sustained by ideologies, and they accordingly may vary cross-culturally. None of these factors is a social or cultural given, for each may be subject to negotiation as part of the process of entextualization, decentering, and recentering.

1. Access depends upon institutional structures, social definitions of eligibility, and other mechanisms and standards of inclusion and exclusion (even such practical matters as getting to where the texts are to be found).

2. The issue of legitimacy is one of being accorded the authority to

appropriate a text such that your recentering of it counts as legitimate (227). Cultural property rights, such as copyright, academic standards of plagiarism, and their counterparts in other cultures all regulate the exercise of legitimate power over performed discourse, as do such social mechanisms as ordination, initiation, or apprenticeship. Not only do institutional structures and mechanisms confer legitimate authority to control texts, but the reverse potential also exists: Contra Bourdieu (52: 649), the appropriation and use of particular forms of discourse may be the basis of institutional power.

3. Competence, the knowledge and ability to carry out the decontextualization and recontextualization of performed discourse successfully and appropriately, may be locally conceived of as innate human capacity, learned skill, special gift, a correlate of one's position in the life cycle, and so on (e.g. 63, 101:13–16; 118:239; 132).

4. Finally, values organize the relative status of texts and their uses into a hierarchy of preference. Texts may be valued because of what you can use them for, what you can get for them, or for their indexical reference to desired qualities or states—Bourdieu's cultural capital (53, 104, 148).

All of these factors—access, legitimacy, competence, and values—bear centrally on the construction and assumption of authority. From Hymes's early formulation (142), in which performance consisted in the authoritative display of communicative competence, authority has held a central place in performance-oriented analysis. Hymes's definition highlights the assumption of an authoritative voice by the performer, which is grounded at least in part in the knowledge, ability, and right to control the recentering of valued texts. Control over decentering and recentering is part of the social framework and as such is one of the processes by which texts are endowed with authority (55), which in turn places formal and functional constraints on how they may be further recentered: An authoritative text, by definition, is one that is maximally protected from compromising transformation (18).

While the implications of the decentering and recentering of discourse for the construction and exercise of power may be approached from a variety of vantage points, including cultural conceptions of the nature and uses of performance, institutional structures, or ideology, the situated practice of decontextualization and recontextualization is an essential and foundational frame of reference. In this sense the investigation of decontextualization and recontextualization continues the program of the ethnography of speaking, adding a conceptual framework, centered on discursive practice itself, that links separate situational contexts in terms of the pragmatics of textuality. Moreover, the chain of linkages may be extended without temporal limit, for texts may be continuously decentered and recentered (128). At one level, this illuminates the process of traditionalization (37, 143), the telling and retelling

of a tale, the citing and reciting of a proverb as these recenterings are part of the symbolic construction of discursive continuity with a meaningful past. Attention to such processes locates performances, texts, and contexts in systems of historical relationship. At another level, the tracing of chains of decentering and recentering offers a unified frame of reference for the analysis of control over discourse that extends from the small-scale and local to the global. A given folktale performance, for example, may be traced through connected processes of decentering and recentering in local oral tradition, in the nationalization of culture as it is appropriated by learned elites in the service of nationalist ideology, or in the internationalization of culture as it is held up to view as part of world literature (11, 145:35–64; 185, 211).

Our approach to the decontextualization and recontextualization of texts also contributes operational and substantive specificity to Bakhtin's more abstract notion of dialogism (18), increasingly influential in linguistic anthropology and folklore. If indeed, as Bakhtin tells us, our mouths are filled with the words of others, the program we have outlined here is designed to elucidate how these dialogical relations are accomplished, and in ways that take full account of form-function interrelationships and the sociology and political economy of Bakhtinian dialogue.

A further significant payoff offered by the investigation of the decontextualization and recontextualization of texts is a critical and reflexive perspective from which to examine our own scholarly practice. Much of what we do as linguistic anthropologists amounts to the decontextualization and recontextualization of others' discourse (130, 249), which means as well that we exercise power along the lines outlined above. To be sure, the exercise of such power need not be entirely one-sided; our interlocutors may attempt to control how their discourse will be entextualized and recontextualized. These processes have significant implications for the methods, goals, and not least, ethics, of our profession.

CONCLUSION

Performance emerged as a key term in certain sectors of linguistic anthropology and folklore in the early to mid-1970s, drawing together under its rubric at least three critical reorientations then energizing those allied fields. The first of these involved a challenge to the conception of language promulgated under the banner of transformational generative linguistics. In that approach, performance—"natural speech," what the speaker actually does in using language—was excluded from the purview of linguistic theory, which centered instead on competence, an abstract, idealized, cognitive system of rules for the production and comprehension of grammatically appropriate sen-

tences. It was conceptually and rhetorically effective, then, to advance performance as the center of an alternative, socially constituted linguistics (141), in which social function gives shape to linguistic form, language has social as well as referential meaning, and the communicative functions of language in the constitution of social life are fundamental to its essence.

A second major shift of perspective captured by the notion of performance occurred in folklore, founded on a reorientation from a traditionalist view of folklore as reified, persistent cultural items—texts, artifacts, mentifacts—to a conception of folklore as a mode of communicative action (198). Here, performance was understood as the assumption of accountability to an audience for a display of communicative skill and effectiveness (26, 142).

Third, the turn to performance marked an effort to establish a broader space within linguistics and anthropology for poetics—verbal artistry—against the conception, deeply rooted in Western epistemology and ontology, that poetics is an etiolation of language, functionally hollow or void, extraneous to what really makes language or society work (102, 224). A focus on the artful use of language in the conduct of social life—in kinship, politics, economics, religion—opened the way to an understanding of performance as socially constitutive and efficacious, not secondary and derivative (38, 40).

All three of these critical reorientations relied centrally on the ethnographic and analytical investigation of form-function-meaning interrelationships within situational contexts of language use. As we have attempted to make clear in the early sections of this review, the further developments in performance studies have maintained the critical stance on which performance-centered analysis was founded and continued to exploit productively the basic situational frame of reference that characterized performance-centered lines of inquiry.

Recently, however, critics and practitioners alike have identified certain limitations engendered by a mode of analysis that hews too closely to the speech or performance event as the primary frame of reference and unit of analysis (166). The difficulties are several. First, there is the problem of history, the need to link series of speech events into historical systems of interrelationship in discourse-centered terms. Second, there is the perennial micro-macro problem of how to relate the situated use of language to larger social structures, particularly the structures of power and value that constitute the political economy of a society. Again, the problem is to identify discursive practices that mediate between the situated use of language within speech events and those larger structures. And finally, there is the problem of linking the artful speaking of performance to other modes of language use so that performance analysis does not fall into the trap of segregating poetics from other ways of speaking.

The third major section of our review offers in preliminary outline a framework we believe will help to overcome the limitations we have enumerated. Building upon the accumulated insights of past performance analysis, the investigation of the interrelated processes of entextualization, decontextualization (decentering), and recontextualization (recentering) opens a way toward constructing histories of performance; toward illuminating the larger systemic structures in which performances play a constitutive role; and toward linking performances with other modes of language use as performances are decentered and recentered both within and across speech events—referred to, cited, evaluated, reported, looked back upon, replayed, and otherwise transformed in the production and reproduction of social life. As we have suggested, this framework appears to us all the more productive in making our own scholarly practice continuous with the phenomena to which we devote our ethnographic attention. The poetics and politics of ethnography are illuminated by the poetics and politics of discourse within the communities about which and within which we write. Our dialogs with our ethnographic interlocutors are related dialectically to their dialogs among themselves and our own dialogs back home. Performance-oriented analysis is thus well positioned to continue the critical mission on which it was founded, testing our own conceptions of language and our own scholarly practices as it attempts to comprehend the role of language and poetics in the social life of the world's cultures.

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