CHAPTER 5 PERFORMANCE

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Introduction

Sailing southward off the Pacific coast of North America after an unsuccessful attempt to discover the Northwest Passage, and seeking a sheltered harbor to repair his ship, Sir Francis Drake anchored the *Golden Hinde* off what is now Point Reyes, California in June of 1579. As recorded by Francis Fletcher, a priest on board Drake's ship,

> The next day, after our coming to anchor in the aforesaid harbour, the people of the country showed themselves, sending off a man with great expedition to us in a canoe. Who being yet but a little from the shore, and a great way from our ship, spoke to us continually as he came rowing on. And at last at a reasonable distance staying himself, he began more solemnly a long and tedious oration, after his manner: using in the delivery thereof many gestures and signs, moving his hands, turning his head and body many ways; and after his oration ended, with great show of reverence and submission returned back to shore again. (Fletcher 1854: 119; spelling modernized)

Some days later, the native inhabitants of the area – whom we now know to have been Coastal Miwok – approached a shore party from the *Golden Hinde*, whereupon

> one (appointed as their chief speaker) wearied both his hearers, and himself too, with a long and tedious oration; delivered with strange and violent gestures, his voice being extended to the uttermost strength of nature, and his words falling so thick one in the neck of another, that he could hardly fetch his breath again: as soon as he had concluded, all the rest, with a reverent bowing of their bodies (in a dreaming manner, and long producing of the same) cried *Oh*: thereby giving their consents that all was very true which he had spoken, and that they had uttered their mind by his mouth unto us … (Fletcher 1854: 122–123; spelling modernized)

This intercultural encounter, replete with imperialist resonances, has long been the focus of extended commentary by historians, both because of the early glimpses it

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affords of the indigenous inhabitants of Northern California and because of its role in shaping European imaginings of the imperial mission. Not the least interesting aspects of this fateful encounter, however, are the communicative dynamics of the initial contact with the Miwok, as seen through British eyes. First, while the European visitors had no clue *what* the Miwok speakers were talking about, they were close observers of *how* they were talking about it, perhaps all the more so because they could not understand what the speakers were saying. Of the initial visit, Fletcher remarks on the solemn key, extended length, and strange manner of delivery of the speaker's oration, marked by many physical gestures. That is to say, Fletcher and his shipmates considered that what they were witnessing was a special, marked, stylized verbal display, opaque though its referential content may have been to them. The later speech, like the first, also involved an extended disquisition and conspicuous fluency by the "chief speaker," likewise accompanied by "strange and violent gestures." This time, however, Fletcher also noted the exaggerated volume and rapid pace of the speaker's delivery, the deportment of the native audience, and their stylized evaluative response at the end of the speech. What is more, he inferred from their response a particular kind of participation structure in which the chief speaker "uttered their mind by his mouth to us," calling for ratification on their part to signal that they too were principals in an utterance they had not themselves produced.

As Fletcher and his fellows observed the Miwok speakers, then, it is the formal features, mode of delivery, and participant structure of the speeches that captured their attention, as strange, marked, unusual, the province of specially designated speakers in a species of verbal display and subject to a particular kind of evaluative response by the native audience but also open to evaluation by the British explorers themselves. All this, again, quite apart from whatever it was that the orators were talking about. In a word, Fletcher and the other British observers recognize that they are witnessing a *performance*. It is this special mode of communicative display that I will examine in this chapter.

Foundations

The foundations of performance-oriented perspectives in folklore lie in the observations primarily of folktale scholars who departed from the library- and archive-based philological investigations that dominated folk narrative research to venture into the field to document folktales as recounted in the communities in which they were still current. These scholars were drawn understandably to the individuals who had the largest repertoires and were reputed to be the most virtuosic storytellers in their communities. In the course of their efforts, these "field collectors" were strongly impressed by the artistic skills of their star informants in recounting their stories, especially the dramaturgical devices and histrionic flourishes – the mimetic qualities – that the storytellers employed in telling their stories and that their audiences valued in listening to them. Thus, from the late nineteenth century onwards, we find in the framing matter – introductions, notes, appendices – of text collections published by field-oriented scholars vivid descriptions of the theatricality that characterized the performances of their star informants, often tinged with romantic stereotypes about how peasants or members of particular racial or ethnic groups are "natural performers,"

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more expressive than "modern," "cultivated," urban people (Briggs and Bauman 2003).

Of the Roma storyteller, Taikon, from whom he collected approximately 250 *Märchen* plus a large number of legends and other folklore forms, the Swedish folklorist Carl-Herman Tillhagen observed, "he performs [*er spielt*] the tale more than he narrates it" (Tillhagen 1948: 260), thus highlighting the mimetic (as opposed to diegetic) qualities of Taikon's performance. Enumerating the stylistic devices that Taikon employed in his "dramatic accentuation" (Tillhagen 1948: 259), Tillhagen mentions his "special liking for direct discourse," one of the most defining features of mimetic presentation, and the "abrupt chages of tense" that are characteristic of a shift into quoted speech (Tillhagen 1948: 259–260). Tillhagen's description of Taikon's repertoire of dramaturgical devices is worth quoting in full:

> For Taikon, as for most true tale tellers, the word is only *one* of the means of expression with which he shapes his tale. He narrates with gesture and with intonational modulation, with dramatic pauses and effervescent verbosity, with pantomime and solemn preaching, with laugher and with tears. In his voice the sun appears when he portrays the young Princess. Joyful images are reflected in his eyes, and his hands form airy dancing rhythms. And what a lovable old man is the King! The voice sounds like a smile, the hands stroke through the imaginary beard, the eye seizes on a majestic sovereign vision, the movements become a little bit decrepit and thus dignified. The Prince, by contrast, is young and strong. His voice is like the peal of a trumpet, his movement like spring steel. He sits erect in his tent. He swings his sword lightning-fast. He stands derisively before his worst enemy with his hands on his hips, thrusts his sword in the ground, and casts the head from the neck. And how diabolical is the witch! She is hateful, she is malicious, with the subterranean coldness of the evil and the incredible surrounding her … The voice of the storyteller slips into shrill falsetto, his eyes become nearly green with rage. (Tillhagen 1948: 262–263)

To this evocative inventory of Taikon's histrionic techniques, Tillhagen adds other formal devices that mark his artistry, as in his "choice of words. He enjoys a beautiful expressive style, alliteration is his joy, and for the musical euphony of language, he has an alert, sensitive ear" (Tillhagen 1948: 265). Still further, Tillhagen picks out the introductory formulae (e.g., "It was, and it was not. If it hadn't happened, one would not recount it"), narrative formulae (e.g., "He went one day, he went two, and on the third he arrived"), and closing formulae (e.g., "And if they haven't died, they are still living today") that Taikon employed in marking off and fashioning his narrative texts (Tillhagen 1948: 281–283). All in all, Tillhagen's account of Taikon's storytelling style, in all its histrionic and poetic richness, gives us a vivid portrait of his remarkable virtuosity as a performer (see also Lundgren and Taikon 2003). To be sure, the identification of Roma people as especially given to performance has a long history in European racial and performance ideologies (Lemon 2000).

Like Taikon, Richard M. Dorson's "number one informant," James Douglas Suggs, "did not simply tell the story but acted it out and dressed it up with sounds, gestures, and tumbling words," taking on the distinctive voices of characters in his tales and employing various forms of sound symbolism to enrich his narration (Dorson 1956: 21–22, 126; 1958: 155–156). While Suggs is the best of Dorson's narrators, both in terms of the number of tales in his repertoire and his skills as a raconteur, he is not unique among Dorson's African-American sources. Dorson notes of them all that

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they "not only fully utilize their oral resources but also gesticulate and even act out parts in exciting narratives. …These histrionics build up to a small performance, the tale verging onto drama or farce, and the audience rolling with laughter, exclaiming, commenting, and otherwise appreciated the efforts of the star" (Dorson 1956: 24). Here, the idiom of theatricality serves Dorson not only as a means of capturing the artistry of his sources, but also as a framework for comprehending the enhanced experience and evaluative responses of the storytellers' audience. And of course, it too accords with long-standing stereotypes of African-Americans as "natural performers" (Abrahams 1992).

Theorizing Performance

Evocative and suggestive thought they are, the descriptions of virtuosic storytelling in the metaphorical idiom of theatricality remain impressionistic and ancillary to the collectors' sense of their primary task, which was to publish collections of texts. Missing from the performance-oriented accounts of Tillhagen, Dorson, and their fellows is any effort at conceptual synthesis. The first systematic efforts to articulate a more synthetic notion of performance in folklore began to coalesce in the late 1960s and early 1970s as part of a more general shift of perspective beginning to take hold among ethnographically oriented folklorists from folklore as "an aggregate of things" to folklore as a "communicative process," to use the terms of one influential early formulation (Ben-Amos 1972: 9). Certainly, there were important precursors that energized and helped to shape this emergent concern with performance. To suggest only a few of the most prominent shaping influences:

- Bronislaw Malinowski's insistence on *context of situation* as an essential frame of reference for the comprehension of "narrative speech as … a mode of social action" (Malinowski 1923: 306, 313; 1965[1935]: 4–8) and his direction of attention to indigenous genre systems as organizing frameworks for verbal performance (Malinowski 1948[1926]);
- Milton Singer's neo-Durkheimian conception of *cultural performances* as scheduled, bounded, crafted, heightened, and participatory occasions in which culture is put on display for the reflexive contemplation of members and outsiders Singer 1955, 1958);
- Roman Jakobson's model of a *communicative event*, a synthesis and elaboration of prewar Prague School frameworks for comprehending the multifunctionality of verbal expression and the place of poetic language among those multiple functions (Jakobson 1960);
- Melville Jacobs' conception of *style*, in the Boasian tradition, as a system of formal features that make up the "aesthetic design" of folklore forms in use, comprehending both compositional and performative aspects of cultural expression (Jacobs 1959);
- Milman Parry and Albert Lord's theory of *oral-formulaic composition* as a means of comprehending the radical integration of cultural tradition and individual creativity in the recognition of "Singing, performing, composing [as] facets of the same act" (Lord 1960: 13);

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- William Hugh Jansen's direction of folklorists' attention to "that dual but inseparable process of *performance* and *reception*" in the recognition that any item of folklore depends for its very existence on someone "to 'do' that piece of folklore" for "an auditor" or "a group of auditors" (Jansen 1957: 112, emphasis added).

The conception of performance as the "doing" of folklore gained currency in the early 1970s as part of the nascent turn to performance I mentioned above. In the Introduction to *Toward New Perspectives in Folklore* (Paredes and Bauman 1972), a collection of essays often credited as establishing the framework for the turn to performance in folklore (Brenneis 1993; Shuman and Briggs 1993), I identified as one of the principal thrusts of the volume "a full-scale and highly self-conscious reorientation from the traditional focus upon folklore as "item", the things of folklore, to a conceptualization of folklore as "event" – the doing of folklore. In particular, there is an emphasis upon performance as an organizing principle" (Bauman 1972a: v). While the idiom of "doing" in this charter statement might seem to echo Jansen's framing of performance as "doing," the larger thrust of the argument marks a major shift. Where Jansen still assigns primacy to the folklore items that make up the aggregate textual corpus of folklore, with performance as a secondary supplement, the contributors to this new collection (especially Dan Ben-Amos, Roger D. Abrahams, Richard Bauman, Dell Hymes, Dennis Tedlock) were advocating a wholesale reconceptualization of the field, with performance, as a species of situated communicative practice, as the organizing focus.

This conception of performance was shaped most immediately by two convergent intellectual currents, one literary, the other anthropological. Kenneth Burke's highly productive notion of "literature as equipment for living," his "dramatistic pentad" (act, scene, agent, agency, purpose), and his penetrating insight into the power of significant form to elicit the participative engagement of audiences had, and continues to have, an energizing influence on folklorists attuned to the poetics of verbal folklore while recognizing at the same time the profoundly social nature and rhetorical efficacy of poetic forms in use (Burke 1941, 1968, 1969). Burke's magisterial intellectual synthesis also had a formative influence on the ethnography of speaking, a subfield of linguistic anthropology that took shape in the period from the early 1960s to the mid-1970s with the active participation of anthropologically oriented folklorists (Bauman and Sherzer 1989[1974]; Hymes 1972). The ethnography of speaking centers on the premise that social life is discursively constituted, produced and reproduced by situated acts of communication that are cross-culturally variable and to be discovered through ethnographic investigation. Ethnographers of speaking seek to elucidate the relationships linking the communal and individual repertoires of discursive means, the formal, functional, contextual, and ideological orienting frameworks for discursive practice, and the goals and competencies of participants in the production, reception, and circulation of discourse.

In some charter formulations of the ethnography of speaking, performance serves as one of the master terms. For example, after outlining the constituent elements of the program, as above, the editors of an influential stocktaking volume of case studies in the ethnography of speaking suggest that "The nexus of all the factors we have outlined is performance," and go on to urge that "The task of the ethnographer of speaking … is to identify and analyze the dynamic interrelationships among the

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elements that go to make up performance" (Bauman and Sherzer 1989: 7). *Mutatis mutandis*, this sense of performance as situated discursive practice – for folklorists, the situated use of folklore in the conduct and accomplishment of social life and the production of cultural meaning – retains its currency and productivity to this day.

At the same time that the general conception of performance as practice was gaining traction in the shared territory between folklore and linguistic anthropology, a more restricted sense of the term began to take shape as well. The broad purview of the ethnography of speaking extended to all verbal discourse, from the most routinized and quotidian to the most elaborated and complex, and the ethnography of communication, a more semiotically comprehensive perspective founded on an overarching understanding of society and culture as communicatively constituted, encompassed an even more global domain. For folklorists motivated by the long-standing interest within the broader field in oral poetics, whether under the rubric of "oral literature," "verbal art," "folk literature," or any other, part of the attraction of performance as a concept lay in its implication of artfulness, virtuosity, affecting power, and the intensification and enhancement of experience. Accordingly, some folklorists who were energized by the intellectual program of the ethnography of speaking turned their efforts toward articulating a conception of verbal performance as a special, artful way of speaking, recognizing both its continuities and discontinuities with all other ways of speaking (Abrahams 1972; Bauman 1972b, 1977; Ben-Amos 1972). The line of inquiry that developed out of those efforts has proven to be a durable and productive intellectual enterprise, not only in folklore and linguistic anthropology but in a number of adjacent disciplines as well: history, religious studies, literature, speech communication, media studies, education, and more.

What does this approach to performance as a special, marked mode of communicative practice look like? There are many possible points of entry into the problem, but the brief examples with which I opened this chapter will serve well as a point of departure. Consider again the features that captured the attention of Drake's crew in their encounters with the "chief speakers" of the Miwok, or those that impressed Tillhagen and Dorson in the presentational style of their star informants. The capacity of these various features and devices to capture the attention of the onlookers, to be perceived as uncommon or unusual, to foreground the way in which the act of expression is accomplished, allows them to serve, in effect, as indicators that whatever other communicative business is being accomplished, the speaker is engaged in a special mode of communicative display, a *performance*. That is to say, these attention-getting elements serve a metapragmatic function. In linguistic analysis, pragmatics focuses attention on the situated use of language, that is, on discourse. Metapragmatics, in turn, pertains to those aspects of any given discursive act that refer reflexively, either explicitly or indirectly, to the pragmatic functioning of that act (Silverstein 1993). The features that draw the attention of our observers, then, serve as metapragmatic signals that alert co-participants that the speaker, as performer, is taking responsibility for a display of communicative competence, subject to evaluation for the virtuosic skill, communicative efficacy, and affecting power with which the act of expression is carried out. By invoking this interpretive frame, the performer is at the same time eliciting the participative engagement of co-participants, casting them as an audience, with license to regard the act of display with heightened intensity and inviting them to evaluate how skillfully and effectively it is accomplished.

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Consider, for example, the "orations" delivered to the crew of the *Golden Hinde*. Fletcher notes the conspicuous length of these performances and the hyperfluency that marks their delivery. Extended, monologic holding of the floor and rapid, continuous, unbroken delivery both serve well to set off the performer from other participants and to differentiate the performance from a less foregrounded, more turn-taking mode of speech exchange. The extended length and hyperfluent delivery of these orations are further augmented by loud volume and "strange gestures" that distinguish Miwok oratory from their other ways of speaking. By the time the English visitors encounter the Miwok at "a great assembly" on shore, they are able to distinguish the role of the "chief speaker," that is, the incumbent of a special speaking role singled out for his skill in the production of oratory as a genre, marked by the formal features that Fletcher describes. Moreover, the performance role of chief speaker is bound up in a structure of participation that includes the Miwok members of the audience, who offer in unison a ritualized evaluative response to the speech, affirming at the same time their own commitment to the speaker's message. Fletcher's brief descriptions, then, present us with an associational cluster of pragmatic and metapragmatic features – event structure, formal devices, genre, participant roles and relationships – any one of which may serve conventionally to invoke the performance frame in a particular community, but whose co-occurrence makes it abundantly clear that Fletcher and his shipmates are witnessing a performance.

Tillhagen's and Dorson's accounts of the theatricality that mark the storytelling of their star informants offer a complementary inventory of keys to performance, those metasignals that alert co-participants to interpret the act of expression as performance (Bauman 1977: 15–24; Goffman 1974: 43–44). Like the Miwok orators, Taikon's "effervescent verbosity" and Suggs's "tumbling words" display degrees of hyperfluency that display the virtuosity of skilled performers. Likewise, the gestures, bodily orientations, and facial expressions call attention to themselves and heighten the affective intensity of their performances. These embodied aspects of performance commonly work in tandem with a range of oral devices to enhance the storytellers' characterization of the dramatis personae that populate their tales: direct discourse, the taking on of voices by means of the manipulation of pitch, intonation, timbre, and other suprasegmental features. Suggs further ornaments his narration with ideophones and other forms of sound symbolism, Taikon with alliteration and grammatical parallelism, as in "It was and it was not" or "He went one day, he went two …" (Tillhagen 1948: 281, 284). The former, one of Taikon's introductory formulae employed to open the narration of a *Märchen*, is a functional complement to other formulae that indicate the end of the story. Special formulae of this kind may themselves serve as keys to performance, signaling to the audience that a performance is about to commence or has been brought to a close, bounding off, in effect, that stretch of generically organized discourse for which the speaker assumes responsibility for a virtuosic display.

Our brief set of examples – Coastal Miwok, Swedish Roma, African American – thus reveal a diverse inventory of formal devices, generic features, and pragmatic factors that may serve to key the performance frame. Some, like hyperfluency or vivid gestures, occur in all three cases, suggesting the possibility that certain metapragmatic means of invoking the performance frame may find widespread use among the world's peoples (others might include a high quotient of figurative language, special registers,

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or appeals to tradition, for example (Bauman 1977: 15–24), while others, such as ideophones, appear to be of more limited distribution (Webster 2008: 343–346). It must be emphasized, though, as explicitly and emphatically as possible, that there can be no universal checklist of keys to performance. Rather, the specific inventories of communicative means that may serve as keys to performance in a given community are to be discovered ethnographically, not assumed a priori. Each community will have its own metapragmatic orienting frameworks by which an individual may signal to an audience, "This is performance. I'm on! I invite you to watch and listen closely and I will impress you, entertain you, move you. I invite you as well to judge just how skillful, effective, and moving a display I can accomplish."

The engagement of an audience is a necessary constituent of performance. Indeed, performance must be viewed as a joint achievement of performer and audience (Barber 1997; Duranti and Brenneis 1986). From the vantage point of the audience, the keying of the performance frame is an invitation to regard the act of expression with special intensity and to evaluate it for the relative skill, correctness, appropriateness, or effectiveness with which it is accomplished. The standards and terms of evaluation will vary from community to community, person to person, situation to situation. They may be explicit ("That's a good one!" or "tedious"), or implicit ("the audience rolling with laughter") in the responses of audience members. At times, the performer himself or herself may offer an evaluation, in an effort to sway the audience (Coplan 1994: 201–202).

Performance is an act of stancetaking, in the parlance of sociolinguistics (Jaffe 2009). That is, the performer, by invoking the performance frame, takes up a particular position, or alignment, to his or her act of expression, the assumption of responsibility for a display of communicative skill and efficacy. Stancetaking, though, is a reciprocal act. By entering into performance, the performer inevitably invokes the complementary stance of audience member, inviting co-participants to assume an alignment to the performance that demands an evaluative response and perhaps more, such as verbal acknowledgment, commentary, encouragement, or ratification (Basso 1985: 15–18; Finnegan 1967: 68–69; Finnegan 2007: 45; Urban 1986), in what amounts to co-construction of the performance. Performance is in this respect heavily stance-saturated: in its fullest manifestations, it makes positioning all but obligatory. I say "in its *fullest* sense" and "all *but* obligatory," though, because performance is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon. Like any other frame, performance is labile, susceptible to being re-keyed, hedged, or otherwise rendered ambiguous, raising the tacit question, "is this performance?"

As I noted earlier in the chapter, not every "doing" of an item of folklore is necessarily a performance in the more marked sense of the term we are now exploring. Although the expectation of performance may be high for a particular item or genre or event or individual, other potential frames may provide for alternative stances, or what Goffman would call different footings (1981: 128). A *Märchen*, for example, or an oration, or any other type of utterance that carries a high expectation for performance, may alternatively be reported, demonstrated, imitated, rehearsed, relayed, translated, quoted, or summarized as opposed to performed (Bauman 2004: 128–158; Goffman 1974: 40–82; Hymes 1975a; Sherzer 1983: 18–20). Likewise, it may be hedged, as when a narrator or public speaker is willing to narrate a story or give a speech for which performance is the normative presentational mode, but

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without feeling able, qualified, authorized, or willing to assume responsibility for full, unqualified performance (Bauman 2004: 109–127). Note also that a speaker can oscillate in an out of performance, "breaking through" (Hymes 1975a) into performance for stretches of a story, say, that he feels competent to perform, but retreating into report, for example, when he does not feel sufficiently knowledgeable, able, or confident to manage a performance. By the same token, a participant impelled toward the stance of audience member might wish to decline the honor, either by withdrawing from the interaction or by taking on the alternative participant role of mere observer or onlooker, free of demands of evaluation.

Reluctance to assume – or to appear to assume – the mantle of the performer should not be surprising, as performance is by its very nature fraught with risk (Yankah 1985): of failure, of being adjudged incompetent, inauthentic, ineligible, or inappropriately forward. The range of "faultables" (Goffman 1981: 203–225) attendant upon performance will vary from one community to another, but there will always be a potential of failure. On the one hand, to perform is to seek the limelight, to claim special skill, to elicit the participative energies of other participants. In some of the world's societies, especially those with an egalitarian ethos, putting oneself forward is a moral transgression, which might induce some to avoid performance and others to issue a ritualized disclaimer of performance before actually performing (Darnell 1989: 325). Or consider the widespread problem that shadows female performers in many societies, cast simultaneously as objects of desire and as morally compromised (Kapchan 1996; Sawin 2002), and thus at risk of unwanted sexual attention or moral condemnation if they dare to perform. Still further, performances, especially in ritual settings, risk failure insofar as they may not achieve the social ends for which they are undertaken, such as the successful negotiation of bride-price or the curing of an ailing patient (Keane 1997; Keenan 1973; Schieffelin 1985, 1996).

These dynamics of stance-taking, risk, ideology, access to participation, and the like alert us to the politics as well as the poetics of performance. For heuristic purposes, we may identify three principal dimensions of power in performance: control over the organization and production of performance; control over the meaning and interpretation of performance; and control over the ends or outcomes of performance. The politics of performance, then, pertains to the ways in which these aspects of power are claimed, allocated, authorized, negotiated, contested. A concern with power in performance has been part of performance-oriented approaches from their inception (Abrahams 1972; Bauman 2002; Paredes 1993[1971]) and will re-surface at salient points in what follows.

Text and Context in Performance

The philological foundations of folklore and the text-historical orientation of its historically most prominent method have made the folklore text the dominant unit of analysis within the field (Fine 1984). Strikingly, however, text and textuality, as concepts, have seldom been the focus of theoretical or critical attention on the part of folklorists, until very recently. The folklore text has been a given, an objectified token of a generic or thematic type that is recognized a priori as part of the folklore canon – *Märchen*, legend, myth, *Schwank*, epic, ballad, riddle, proverb, charm, and so

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on – according to criteria of traditionality, anonymity, social distribution, or some other non-textual factor. The closest the field has come to considerations of textuality lies in the enumeration of formal features that define or characterize particular genres, such as the specification of meter, verse length, internal segmentation, and rhyme schemes of the *décima* or the metrical structure of the Serbo-Croatian epic line.

In the development of performance-oriented perspectives, however, the recognition that many of the same formal devices and patterning principles that enter into certain genre definitions also commonly serve as keys to performance has encouraged the development of a new perspective on the text, not as an autonomous, traditional, literary artifact but as the emergent product of situated communicative practice, a discursive achievement. The communicative resources that key performance, that is, that frame the performer's display of virtuosity, also give form to the performer's act of expression and shape it as a text: bounded off to a degree from its discursive surround, internally cohesive, semantically meaningful.

Certainly, given the predisposition of folklorists toward traditionality, much of the compositional process by which items of folklore are endowed with their shape as texts may occur long before a given iteration of it in performance. Nevertheless, from the vantage point of performance as a mode of communicative practice, each performer must give shape to the utterance anew and mark it as performance in the real-time unfolding of actual events. Textuality thus becomes not merely the a priori packaging of an oft-repeated piece of oral literature, but a discursive accomplishment, the practical process of rendering, even if reproducing, the utterance as a text. This is the process of *entextualization* (Barber 2003; Bauman and Briggs 1990; Silverstein and Urban 1996).

One of the most salient formative influences in the process of entextualization is *genre*, part of the conceptual bedrock of folklore. Viewed in performance-centered terms, genre becomes a socially constituted orienting framework for the production, reception, and circulation of particular orders of texts (Bauman 2004: 3–8; Briggs and Bauman 1992; Hanks 1987). As such, genres represent schemata that guide the formal regimentation of utterances, routinized constellations of systemically related co-occurrent formal features and structures. At the same time, however, genres have pragmatic and thematic correlates as well, providing conventionalized guidelines for dealing with recurrent communicative exigencies (Luckmann 1995), sets of roles and relationships by which participants are aligned to one another (Hanks 1996; Irvine 1996), vehicles for encoding and expressing particular orders of knowledge and experience. Entextualization is the process by which these formal, thematic, and pragmatic relations are called into play in the formation of texts. When a text is aligned to a given genre, the process by which it is produced and interpreted is mediated through its intertextual relationship with prior texts. The invocation of generic framing devices such as "*Voy a cantar estos versos*" or "Bunday!" carry with them sets of expectations concerning the further unfolding of the text, indexing other texts initiated by such opening formulae. "*Voy a cantar estos versos*" anticipates the singing of a *corrido*, the ballad form of Greater Mexico (Paredes 1976: 83); "Bunday!" marks the opening of a Bahamian "old-story" performance (Crowley 1966: 19–22). These expectations thus constitute a framework for entextualization.

We may observe the process of entextualization at work in the sales pitch, or *pregon*, of a patent-medicine vendor I recorded (January 14, 1986) in a weekly open-air

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market in San Miguel de Allende, Gto., Mexico. The artfulness of commercial talkers like pitchmen, auctioneers, street-vendors, carnival barkers, and the like is widely recognized, and their talk is often enjoyed as much for its own sake as for its practical role in the sale of commodities (Bauman 2004: 58–81; Dargan and Zeitlin 1983; Kapchan 1996). This vendor was unquestionably engaged in such a display of verbal virtuosity in the service of promoting and selling his remedies. To begin his pitch, he mounted a small wooden platform, faced the space along which shoppers were passing, and began to speak in a loud, declamatory fashion, effecting a marked shift in the prevailing discursive organization of the market-space he occupied. I was among those passing by, and the vendor's performance captured me and others, quickly forming a small crowd, an audience, some of us interested in his medicine, others simply stopping for a bit to enjoy the show. The vendor's hyperfluent speech was clearly not fixed, but a few minutes' listening revealed its emergent textuality, the ways in which he knit his pitch together. The following is an excerpt from the extended whole. I have formatted the transcript to foreground certain formal features of the text. This mode of transcription, designed to lay bare on the printed page significant aspects of formal organization that regiment the performance, follows the core principal of ethnopoetics that the editing of oral performances for publication should take into account the poetic organization of the performed text (Blommaert 2006; Hymes 1981; Sherzer and Woodbury 1987; Tedlock 1983).

1 Para que saque, expulse los parásitos, señor,	Because it draws out, expels the parasites, sir,
2 para las lombrices,	for threadworms,
3 para la solitaria, las amibas, los oxiuros,	for the tapeworm, the amoebas, the pinworms,
4 cuando duele el estómago,	when you have a stomach ache,
5 cuando haya vómito o diarrea	when there is vomiting or diarrhea
6 hervido y tomadito,	boiled and drunk in a small amount
7 llega a sacar precisamente gas estomacales	it suffices to draw out precisely stomach gas,
8 quitar agruras	relieve acidity,
9 asedías la mala digestión.	sieges of indigestion.
10 Para que limpie el estómago,	Because it cleanses the stomach,
11 lave los intestinos,	washes the intestines,
12 ayude al crecimiento,	aids in growth,
13 al desarrollo.	in development.
14 Lombrices, solitarias, amibas,	Threadworms, tapeworms, amoebas,
15 oxiuros, alfilerillo,	pinworms, tobacco borers,
16 tenia, bicho, gusanillo.	tapeworm, bug, small worm.
17 Señoras, señor,	Ladies, sir,
18 esto le sirve para que expulse las lombrices.	this will help you because it expels the threadworms.
19 Le regalo tantito, ándele.	I give you a small bit, come on.
20 En una tacita de agua,	In a small cup of water,
21 taza de agua,	cup of water,
22 póngalo a hervir,	set it to boil,
23 ya hirvió lo cuela lo endulza	once it has boiled strain it, sweeten it,
24 y lo da a tomar en ayunas.	and give it to drink on an empty stomach.
25 Huélalo.	Smell it.
26 Huele a menta como anís.	It smells like mint, like anise.

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The transcript reveals a number of additional keys to performance, beyond the raised platform, the continuous, extended holding of the floor, the spatial organization of participation. The devices to which I would call attention include the segmentation of the utterance into measured, cadenced lines marked by breath pauses and syntactic structures, grammatical parallelism, and alliteration (both present, for example, in *Para que limpie el estomago,/*lave los intestinos (lines 10–11)). As I suggested earlier, however, these and other formal features and devices serve to knit the utterance together into a tightly cohesive network of interrelationships. Lexical repetition, including grammatical variants of the same word (as in the replaying of the catalog of internal parasites (lines 2–3, 14–16) or *saque/sacar* (lines 1, 7)), grammatical parallelism (e.g., *cuando duele el estómago/cuando haya vómito o diarrea* (lines 4–5); *En una tacita de agua/taza de agua* (lines 20–21)), the cumulation of measured lines, all serve to bind the passage together into a formally cohesive and semantically coherent textual package. These formal patterns, as Kenneth Burke has suggested (Burke 1968 (1931): 124, 140–141), set up patterns of anticipation and fulfillment that elicit the participatory engagement of the vendor's audience, catching them up in the formal regimentation of his sales pitch. What is especially significant about Burke's insight is that it establishes a functional linkage between poetic form and rhetorical or perlocutionary efficacy. That is to say, as the consumer in the market is caught up in the poetic patterning of the calls, he or she becomes receptive to the sales pitch of the vendor and is that much more likely to buy. This nexus of form and function represents a significant aspect of the power of performance.

A look at a second passage, produced about 15 minutes after the first, reveals further dimensions of interrelationship:

1 Le limpia el estómago,	It will cleanse your stomach,
2 y le lava los intestinos.	and wash your intestines.
3 Le regalo,	I give it to you,
4 para qué saque y expulse las lombrices,	because it draws out and expels the threadworms,
5 la solitaria,	the tapeworm,
6 las amibas,	the amoebas,
7 los oxiuros.	the pinworms.
8 Le limpia el estómago,	It will cleanse the stomach,
9 le lava los intestinos,	and wash the intestines,
10 y le ayuda al crecimiento.	and aid you in growth.
11 Arrímese, señorita, para acá.	Come closer, ma'am, over here.
12 Cuando llegue a haber un vómito,	When vomiting begins,
13 una diarrea,	diarrhea,
14 un cólico,	colic,
15 un dolor de estómgao.	stomach ache.
16 Huélalo.	Smell it.
17 Huele coma a menta,	Smells like mint,
18 a anís,	like anise,
19 no amarga,	it isn't bitter,
20 no sabe feo.	it doesn't taste bad.
21 Le va a limpiar el estómago,	It will cleanse your stomach.
22 le ayuda al crecimiento,	aid you with growth,
23 al desarrollo,	with development,
24 matando los animales.	killing the animals.

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This passage continues to key the vendor's pitch as performance, and it also exhibits similar mechanisms of internal cohesion to those we perceived in the first excerpt. In addition, however, it displays strong ties of cohesion with the earlier passage, utilizing the same lexical sets (again, see the catalog of parasites (lines 4–7)), closely parallel lines (*Le limpia el estómago/y le lava los intestinos* (lines 8–9); *le ayuda al crecimiento/al desarrollo* (lines 22–23); *Huele coma a menta/a anís* (lines 17–18)), and so on. These correspondences extend the web of textuality across considerably larger stretches of the vendor's pitch. And indeed, these are only two of many such interrelated passages. The construction of these unifying links that knit the pitchman's extended performance together is the emergent process of entextualization.

Now, at the same time that our vendor was engaged in entextualizing his pitch, he was also *contextualizing* it, aligning it, as part of the entextualization process, to salient features of the phenomenal world. Context has been identified as a core concern of performance-oriented perspectives from their inception, as witness Richard Dorson's early application of the label "contextual" to the then-nascent approach (Dorson 1972: 45–47). To be sure, folklore has always been a contexualist enterprise, insofar as folklorists have viewed folklore texts in relation to something else, though to *what* else has varied: cognate texts, particular social formations, the *Volksgeist* of a people, a stage of evolutionary development, and so on. What was new about the contextual concerns of performance-oriented folklorists was a concentrated focus on *situational contexts of use*, the locally defined situations, events, scenes in which folklore forms and practices serve as "equipment for living" (Burke 1941: 293–304) resources for the conduct of social life. Initially, the constituents and dynamics of such communicative events, as in Jakobson's influential model (Jakobson 1960), were conceived as exerting a formative influence on the texts for which they were construed as context, an approach, in effect, from the outside in, in which the occurrence of the events – scenes of male or female sociability, ceremonial occasions, children's play events, and the like – was presupposed, as part of the cultural way of life that shaped the texts. This approach had – and continues to have – a certain descriptive utility. In a full description, one might well want to know about the location, configuration, political economy, social organization, and lots of other things concerning the weekly open-air market in which our medicine vendor hawks his remedies.

From the vantage point of communicative practice, however, such an approach has a major shortcoming: it fails to take direct account of which of the myriad elements in the contextual surround are salient to the performer, as points of orientation in the emergent fashioning of the performance (Bauman 1986; Bauman and Briggs 1990; Briggs 1988, 1993). How does the performer anchor his or her performance in the world, tying the emergent text, in its process of production, to other salient phenomena? To ask this question is to shift one's attention from context as presupposed to *contextualization* as an aspect of communicative practice, rather than as "digression" from what is construed as the essential text, the perduring traditional narrative that can be abstracted from any anchoring in specific situations of performance (Başgöz 1986; Georges 1981). In the classical philological tradition of folklore, contextualization cues were systematically eliminated from published texts, as extraneous to the traditional core of a narrative, whereas they are absolutely central to performance-oriented conceptions of text and textuality. Returning to our pitchman in the San

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Miguel Tuesday market, we may discern the contextualizing work that he undertakes in the course of selling his wares. I will draw examples from three of the many orders of contextualization that emerge in the course of his performance.

Recalling the various keying devices by which the vendor signals to his audience "this is performance," consider the following two brief passages from the beginning of his pitch:

1 Le regalo, señora.	I give it to you, ma'am.
2 Mire.	Look.
3 Venga güerita,	Come, blondie,
4 venga señor,	come, sir,
5 camine, le regalo,	go, I give it to you,
6 ándele.	come on.
7 Ustedes que van al campo.	You who go to the countryside.
8 Venga, señor.	Come, sir.

1 Venga, por favor.	Come, please.
2 Venga para acá.	Come over here.
3 Venga para acá, mire.	Come over here, look.
4 Andele,	Come on.
5 arrímese.	move closer.

In the first excerpt, the vendor is calling out to passers-by in the market to come over to his space, to join, actually, to constitute, his audience. A performer needs an audience, as a vendor needs customers. Here, our pitchman calls both into being, actively recruiting his audience and his potential customers. In the second excerpt, still in the service of these ends, the pitchman holds up a small packet of his medicine and offers it as a gift, a free sample, that establishes a relationship of exchange, and attempts to entice specific individuals with whom he has made eye contact to approach his space. But he also employs a more broadcast strategy, calling in all those within earshot who go out into the countryside where they might pick up the parasites his remedy counteracts. The Tuesday market in San Miguel is heavily frequented by agricultural workers and their families from the farms and ranches in the surrounding area, so this aspect of the vendor's address casts a wide net. Our vendor is thus creating, by means of his pitch, the very situational context in which his performance unfolds, its interpersonal and spatial alignments, its participant roles, its dual exchange relationships of goods and words. The situational context is as much a discursive accomplishment as the text that calls it into play – entextualization and contextualization are part of an integrated, unified process (Bauman and Briggs 1990; Silverstein and Urban 1996).

The process of contextualization need not be confined to the scene immediately at hand. Indeed, the dynamics of contextualization open up to us the ways in which performances can transcend the boundaries of the individual performance event. At the same time that our pitchman works to produce the situational context of his sales pitch and to locate himself at center stage, he is also at pains to separate himself from the San Miguel Tuesday market and align himself to a world that is outside the here and now of his performance. At numerous points in the course of his pitch, he invokes the distant context of the botanical laboratory in Mexico City that produces his

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miraculous remedies and of which he is an agent. For example, pointing to a printed sign propped up before him with the name and address of the botanical center, he says,

1 Yo vengo de aquí:	I come from here:
2 Centro Botánico Azteca,	Aztec Botanical Center
3 en México Distrito Federal.	in the Federal District of Mexico.
4 Voy de paso,	I am passing through,
5 no estoy cada ocho días.	I'm not here every week.
6 Soy agente vendedor	I am sales agent
7 del centro botánico más grande	of the largest botanical center
8 de la ciudad de México.	in Mexico City.

By aligning himself to a (quasi-)scientific laboratory in the distant, modern, national capital, the source of prestige and authority, he accrues that prestige and authority to himself, all the more so in a provincial, old-fashioned, open market with a predominantly working-class and peasant clientele. He goes on to imply that he is but loosely coupled to the provincial market that is the immediate site of his performance, but which is overshadowed by the broader context to which he has just connected himself. He does so not only to claim authority for his medical and pharmaceutical knowledge and control the audience's interpretation of his claims, but also as part of a sales strategy to counter the hesitation of those who might persuade themselves that they can put off purchasing his remedy until the next weekly market. "I'm just passing through," he says, in effect, "and may not be here next week. I operate in a bigger world, far from this peripheral place in which we find ourselves. So you'd better buy now."

A third dimension of contextualization, there are many more, involves the pitchman's alignment of his artful words to the words of others, both present and absent. At a number of points in his sales pitch, the vendor commandeers the voices of virtual interlocutors in order to give voice to possible points of resistance to his claims so that he can contain and refute them on his own terms. If, in his personations (Coleman 2004; Tannen 2007:102–132), he can come close to voicing whatever doubts or reservations his potential customers may harbor, he has preempted the grounds of their resistance and asserted his own control over the situation. This rhetorical strategy is, in fact, a generic feature of the *pregon*, at least in Central Mexico. Interestingly, most such constructed dialogues are built around a generic, typified other who represents an amalgam of doubters merged into one articulating voice to which our pitchman can respond. For instance, to counter the hypothetical argument against using his remedy that the internal parasites will be eliminated anyway, in the natural course of things, he says,

1 Hay personas que andan echando así,	There are people who go along expelling [the parasites] like this,
2 pedacito por pedacito,	piece by piece,
3 y sabe qué dicen?	and you know what they say?
4 "Ya pa que me curo,	"So why should I doctor myself,
5 ah solito los echo."	ah, they are eliminated by themselves."
6 Dice un dicho, y dice bien:	A proverb says, and says well:
7 "Cómo estarán los infiernos	"What must hell be like
8 que hasta los diablos se salen."	that even the devils are leaving?"

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In this passage, note, the vendor has added to the voice of his constructed interlocutor and his own framing words a third, collective voice in the form of the traditional proverb, "What must hell be like that even the devils are leaving?" By drawing on the traditional authority encoded in the proverb, and by adding his own approving metacommentary – "*y dice bien*" – he counters effectively the argument raised by his virtual interlocutor. To apply a proverb to a situation is a powerful means of controlling what it means, why it matters, and what to do about it.

The vendor's artful incorporation of the proverb into his sales pitch establishes an intertextual relationship between them, a dialogue of genres (Bauman 2004; Stoeltje 2009). The overall sales pitch, or *pregón*, is an extended, improvised, cohesive argument for the efficacy of the vendor's remedy, drawing its authority from rational appeals to science. The proverb is a highly condensed, ready-made metaphorical expression, carrying the traditional authority of collective wisdom. By contextualizing his own words vis-à-vis the collective expression of the proverb, a process that includes naming and evaluating the "*dicho*" in the quotative frame and thus priming the audience for the shape and weight of the argument to come, our vendor skillfully enhances the rhetorical power of his performance.

In broader scope, the comparative analysis of folkloric performance reveals traditionalization, the drawing of explicit or implicit links in the course of performance to antecedent performances, like our vendor's proverb, to be a common mode of contextualizing – and, of course, recontextualizing – practice (Bauman 2004: 25–28; 146–149; Foley 1995; Hymes 1975b: 354; Jackson 2003: 114, 278–279; Jackson 2008). One motivation for a performer to forge traditionalizing links to past performances is to establish an authoritative claim to a particular expressive form. Jón Norðmann, an Icelandic storyteller, closes a performance of a legend concerning Páll Skaldi, a nineteenth-century poet whose verses had magical powers, with the assertion "Now Gudrun, his daughter, told my father this story." By invoking this authorizing chain of transmission, Mr Norðmann constructed for himself a kind of expressive genealogy that ties his ongoing performance directly to the source of the story in Páll's improvisation of a magical poem and subsequent narrative performances by Páll's daughter and his own father. His warrant to perform the story himself is thus secured (Bauman 2004: 25–28).

Or consider the common contextualizing practice among the Limba people of Sierra Leone of framing the performance of a *mb כrכ* ('story'; lit. 'old thing') as a reiteration of a tale that was earlier recounted to the teller, heard, perhaps "from the old people" (Finnegan 1967: 124, 240). Here is a sampling of the ways such a relational orientation may be expressed: "Since I heard that story, I told it" (Finnegan 1967: 137); "Since I heard that story… I had to tell it to you" (Finnegan 1967: 183); "Since I heard that story … I tell it this morning" (Finnegan 1967: 244). Such intertextual alignment of a performance to antecedent instances of production and reception acknowledges a dimension of accountability in Limba storytelling performance: to hear a story is to incur the responsibility of telling it yourself. Each traditionalizing performance, then, "carries it forward" (Finnegan 1967: 102) to projected retellings as well as backward to antecedent ones. Indeed, all performances do so. If performance rests on an assumption of responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative skill and efficacy, it may also include other dimensions of responsibility as well. In the process, for the Limba, acknowledgment of this responsibility becomes one of the keys to the performance of the *mb כrכ* as a genre.

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A more implicit form of traditionalization consists in the use in performance of a linguistic register that is culturally identified as the speech of the ancestors. In Indonesia, for example, this register is a ritual style that is marked by canonical parallelism (Bowen 1991; Fox 1989; Keane 1997; Kuipers 1990). A similar traditionalizing effect may be accomplished through the use of one of a set of genres classified as "the talk of the elders of bygone days," as in the Mexicano communities of Northern New Mexico (Briggs 1988: 59).

I close with one more excerpt from a sales pitch at the San Miguel Tuesday market, this time from the performance of a vendor selling Cannon Mills pantyhose (December 24, 1985), a bit of an upscale item for the predominantly working-class clientele of this market and thus requiring especially engaging and persuasive talk (Bauman 2004: 67–74). This vendor is a prototypical *merolico*, a market vendor who can sell anything that comes to hand; his wares will vary from market to market and week to week (Haviland 2009: 22–24). Pantyhose is simply what he got hold of to sell on the Tuesday that I recorded him.

1 Vale la pena.	It's worth it.
2 Vea usted las medias de categoria.	Examine the classy stockings.
3 Cannon Mills,	Cannon Mills,
4 Cannon Mills.	Cannon Mills.
5 How many? I got it.	[How many? I got it.
6 Too muche, too muche.	Too much, too much.
7 Panty hose,	Panty hose,]
8 la Cannon Mills,	the Cannon Mills,
9 Cannon Mills,	Cannon Mills,
10 para la calidad Cannon,	for the Cannon quality,
11 calidad Cannon Mills.	Cannon Mills quality.
12 Sabemos de antemano	We know to begin with
13 que una mujer sin medias	that a woman without stockings
14 es como un hombre sin calzones.	is like a man without underpants.
15 Vea usted las medias de Cannon.	Examine the Cannon stockings.
16 [Customer]: Y esto?	[Customer]:And this?
17 Mil pesos, nada mas, señora.	A thousand pesos, no more, ma'am.
18 Cannon Mills,	Cannon Mills,
19 la Cannon Mills.	the Cannon Mills.
20 Señora, vea usted,	Ma'am, examine,
21 que se atoro con la canasta,	whether it got snagged by the basket,
22 con la bolsa, no importa.	by the bag, it doesn't matter.
23 Fibra de vidrio Galilei,	Galileo fiberglass,
24 la versatil magia de la nueva ola,	the versatile magic of the new wave,
25 vea usted.	examine.
26 Más elástica y más resistente	More elastic and more resistant
27 que qualquier media.	than any stocking.
28 Vale la pena.	It's worth it.

First, if we examine this brief excerpt from a much longer, continuous pitch against the earlier passages from our medicine vendor, we can discern more clearly the defining features of the sales pitch as a genre. In formal terms, it is *continuous*, extendable for as long as there are potential customers to buy; *measured*, that is, segmeted into relatively short lines by breath pauses and syntactic structures;

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formulaic, insofar as it depends heavily upon ready-made verbal units that recur frequently in the course of the utterance; *repetitive*, not only with regard to the recycling of formulas, but also in its frequent recourse to grammatical parallelism (repetition with systematic variation); and *incorporative*, encapsulating within the overall pitch other voices and other genres, such as *dichos* (proverbs and other aphoristic sayings: "*Sabemos de antemano/que una mujer sin medias/es como un hombre sin calzones*"). Thematically, the sales pitch revolves around the description of the product(s) for sale and their salient, desirable qualities. And pragmatically, the sales pitch is designed to enhance fluency, elicit the participative engagement of the audience/customers through the appeal of form and the forging of ties of identification with the product based on one or another of its purportedly desirable qualities (here durability, cachet of prestige, leading-edge materials, etc.). Our pantyhose vendor, selling what for him is a novel item, creates his performance on the moment by aligning it to the discursive orienting framework provided by the broader genre of the market pitch. The genre is capacious, adaptable to the selling of any wares that demand an extended effort of persuasion, as against a routine purchase – as of eggs or vegetables. It allows the *merolico* to sell merchadise he has not sold before fluently, continuously, persuasively, and with virtuosic skill. And the creative entextualization of his sales pitch, as with the medicine vendor, involves also the creative, on-the-moment contextualization of his performance: in lines 5–7, the vendor's code-switch from Spanish to English was occasioned by my approach. Spotting me as someone from the United States (there are many American tourists and expatriates in San Miguel de Allende), he shifted playfully into my language, and enacted a little send up of those Americans in Mexican markets who seem to believe that they have to bargain and commonly respond to the seller's quotation of an initial price by saying "too much." In other words, he was personating me and my kind, appropriating and speaking in our voice. As we know, aligning your discourse to the discourse of others is itself a generic feature of the market pitch, but the particular act of personation (Coleman 2004) that our vendor fashions on the moment is an emergent, creative actualization of the generic device that is a conventional feature of market performance.

Conclusion

I have endeavored in this chapter to chart the trajectory of folklorists' interest in performance from an ancillary, unanalytical attraction to the theatricality of their star informants' delivery of classic folklore texts to a broadly synthetic, comprehensive conceptual and analytical framework for the investigation of artfulness in communicative practice. The systematic development of performance theory has amounted to a full-scale reorientation from text-historical philological perspectives to practice-centered understandings of folklore as "equipment for living," a set of resources for the enhancement of experience in the accomplishment of social life. At the same time, I have wanted to make clear that the turn to performance has provided highly productive vantage points on fundamental and enduring concerns that are part of the bedrock of folklore as a field of inquiry: textuality; the web of contextual relationships within which folklore is bound as a social, cultural, and discursive phenomenon; the generic regimentation of folklore texts; the dynamic tension between the socially

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given, collective aspects of folklore and the situationally emergent, contingent elements that shape the production and reception of folklore in use.

But to address these considerations is merely to make a beginning. Performance-oriented analysis has enriched folklorists' understanding of a widening range of other factors in the social life of folklore. One fruitful line of inquiry, again continuous with the concerns of earlier scholars like Tillhagen and Dorson, centers on the expressive styles, performance careers, and social lives of individual performers, virtuosic singers and storytellers like the Ozark singer Almeda Riddle (Abrahams 1970), the Texas Gulf Coast fisherman Ed Bell (Bauman 1986: 78–111; Bauman 2004: 82–108; Mullen 1976, 1978, 1981), the North Carolina singer and storyteller Bessie Eldreth (Sawin 2004); the Indian teacher Swamiji (Narayan 1989), the Finnish sexton Juho Oksanen (Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1996) or the whole cast of "stars" in Ballymenone (Glassie 2006). This renewed turn to the individual performer and "master speakers" (Haviland 2009:48) includes also, in a number of studies, the close analysis of reperformances by the same performer, for example multiple iterations on separate occasions and under different circumstances of "the same" narrative. Viewed both as reentextualizations and recontextualizations, such retelling offer an especially illuminating vantage point on the classic problem of variation in folklore, taking account of such variable factors as the co-textual environment of the performed text, participant roles and structures, power dynamics, the information states of participants, obligatory versus variable elements in generic schemata, the dynamics of memory, and other selective forces (Bauman 1986; Briggs 1993; Hymes 1985; Kaivola-Bregenhøj 1996).

Another very productive focus of investigation, enriched by the refinement of semiotic perspectives in folklore, is the analysis of the interplay of expressive means, not limited to verbal language, in folkloric performance. Examples might include the interrelationship between verbal forms and material objects in ritual performance (Keane 1997), the integration of spoken words and bodily movement in storytelling (Farnell 1995; Farnell and Graham 1998; Haviland 1993), or the multisemiotic texture of ritual curing (Briggs 1996). The multisemiotic density of many performances appears in turn to be one of the factors that contributes to the intensification of experience that attends the display of virtuosity. This heightening of affective engagement has emerged as yet another focus of interest in performance, generally involving close attention to the integrated and cumulative effects of formal means and devices in the unfolding of performances (Brenneis 1985, 1987; Feld 1990; Urban 1986; Wilce 2009). The same close attention to form-function interrelationships characterizes the nascent line of investigation exploring the re-mediation of performance, as oral/aural folklore forms are adapted to new media technologies such as sound recording, film, or digital media (Bauman 2010; Bauman and Feaster 2005; Goodman 2005; Silvio 2007).

Finally, I would direct attention to the ways in which a close understanding of performance provides a critical vantage point on the ethnographic encounter between the folklore fieldworker and his or her interlocutors (Briggs 1986; Haring 1972; Hymes 1975a; Paredes 1993[1977]; Silverstein 1996). How the getting and giving of information is framed and co-constructed in ethnographic practice – as pedagogical exchange, as performance, as interview, or as any other interactional exchange – has profound epistemological implications for our discipline.

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In a chapter on performance, it is also important to acknowledge that there is a complementary line of performance-oriented analysis, centered in anthropology and theater studies, that folklorists have found productive in their analyses of collective, public, participatory, reflexive enactments. I refer to the theoretical framework that extends from Durkheim through Singer (1955, 1958), Turner (1982), Schechner (1985), and Geertz (1973) and centers on cultural performances as affording a privileged vantage point on society and culture (Bauman 1992). Folklorists and anthropologists, in their studies of festivals, fairs, markets, ceremonies, folk dramas, and the like, have been actively engaged in this line of inquiry (Abrahams 1981, 2005: 149–174; Bauman 1996; Bauman and Ritch 1994; Bendix 1985, 1989; Beeman 1993; Fabian 1990; Falassi 1987; Glassie 1975; Nájera-Ramírez 1997; Noyes 2003; Seizer 2005; Stoeltje 1993, 1996; Stoeltje and Bauman 1988), interested especially in the reflexive dynamics of these cultural forms about culture.

Over the four decades of its development, then, the close study of performance has developed from a vigorous, sometimes hortatory reform movement in folklore, offering a critical corrective to long-entrenched, even canonical approaches in the discipline, to a mature, broad-based, and well-established vantage point on what have remained core concerns of the discipline since the concept of folklore first took shape in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Performance draws our attention to the most highly valued, engaging, persuasive, memorable, replicable, and durable expressive forms and practices in human social life. The more we know of performance, the deeper our understanding of the most meaningful and affecting aspects of human experience.

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