

WHEN IS ORAL NARRATIVE POETRY? GENERATIVE FORM AND ITS PRAGMATIC CONDITIONS

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I want to persuade you of three things:

- (1) that spoken narrative has a level of patterning that is likely to be found everywhere, or nearly so, but that has been missed in most research (in the common kinds of entextualization (Blommaert 1997: 15-24));
- (2) that we are only beginning to grasp the complexity of such patterning as a part of narrative competence;
- (3) that such patterning may be present to different degrees, or even absent, in ways dependent upon personal and community circumstances and concerns.

A fair amount has come to be known in regard to the first point (see 1. below). Something has begun to be known in regard to the second. What it would be like to know something about the third can be suggested.

The first point has to do with transcending two conventional practices. One is the long-standing assumption that the narratives consist of paragraphs. Of course one knows that epics like the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and many other long narratives, are organized in terms of lines. We readily recognize their lines because they are organized internally. There are patterns in terms of which a line has a certain number of stressed syllables, alliterating initial consonants, feet of types defined by a tradition. We have a name for such lines, metrical.

When metricality is absent, internal organization has been taken to be absent. Even those devoted to avoiding imposition of alien frameworks on languages, to describing the organization of languages inductively in terms of relations within the languages themselves, scholars such as Boas and Sapir, have left that devotion behind at the sentence's edge. Much of the traditional oral narrative of the world is published only in terms of paragraphs.

Today there is a great deal of work that transcribes oral narratives in terms of lines. The working assumption is to attend to pauses, phrases, tone groups and the like. Such features are noted to divide a narrative. Largely ignored are features that enter into relationships to organize a narrative (see discussion of John L's story below).

In recent years it has become clear that in many languages, perhaps all, there is an organization of lines in terms of which the shape of a narrative can be discovered inductively and shown on the page. The relations are not internal to lines, not metrical, but among lines, 'measured'. There are regularities in the relations among measured lines, just as there are regularities in metrical lines.

These regularities have to do with cultural patterns, but also with the explorations and skill of narrators. In terms of cultural patterns, communities appear to build upon one of two alternatives: Relations in terms of two and four, or relations in terms of three and five. English narratives in the United States appear to work in terms of three and five, but in parts of Ireland in terms of two and four. Among Native American groups, Navajo, Zuni and others build in terms of two and four, while Chinookan and Sahaptian build in terms of three and five. In a flourishing narrative tradition one may find a variety of ways of making use of such relations, and of varying their aesthetic effect. A set of three or of five may be a set of three or five pairs. A sequence of ten lines may be a single rhetorical unit. A set of lines may be balanced internally, or a run from start to end. Uses of quoted speech and of catalogs are variables also. (See Hymes 1994, 1999)

For many narrative traditions, discovering lines and relations is pretty much all that we can do. To be sure, it can lead to understanding and interpretation otherwise not possible. We can recognize artistry and subtleties of meaning otherwise invisible. For a true account of the human capacity for verbal art, this is crucial. But as with the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, there are no people to observe and question, only texts.

The second and third points have to do with when and where and to what degree narrators are conscious of such relations, or sensitive to them, vary in their deployment of them, as in regard to gender, are perhaps unconsciously affected by their presence. Pragmatic research should not be ignorant of the first point, when dealing with narrative. It can make major contributions to the second and third.

1.1. Introduction

Oral narrative is recognized as poetry when it is sung (ballads, many epics). That it is organized in lines and groups of lines is clear.

It has become increasingly clear that unsung, spoken narrative is also organized in lines and groups of lines. That it also is poetry. Such organization has been found in some 73 Native American languages, 12 languages of the Old World, 3 of the Pacific, and a Caribbean creole. (See Appendix 1). It is abundantly true in English in both Great Britain and the United States.¹

If this kind of organization is common, why has it been missed? With regard to earlier work, and still often enough today, it is missed because for a long time *only* that oral narrative which is sung or chanted has been considered poetry. Other narrative has been assumed to be prose and presented in paragraphs. As a result, the form of much of what has been preserved of the verbal art of the peoples of the world remains hidden. The task with such material is first of all to discover that it has lines.

It is common in several lines of work today to transcribe narratives as sequences of lines. The task with such material is to discover that it has shape. Syntax is not simply a sequence of words. Sentences have parts and internal relations. The same is true of stories. They have parts and internal relations. The parts and internal relations frequently are

¹ Especially clear accounts of the identification of lines in spoken narratives are given by Virginia Hymes (1987) and Joel Sherzer (1987, ch.4; 1990, pp.17). On the vocal articulation of lines in ritual wailing in three South American cultures, see Urban (1991), pp. 110-1, 152-9.

signalled. Yet much valuable work proceeds as if it did not notice the signals. (See the second example below, John L.'s story from Labov's work in New York City, and the last two examples, one from work in South America, the other from work in California.)

Any account of a spoken narrative should provide the equivalent of a 'profile', an overview of the relations among lines within it. Descriptive adequacy requires no less.

Such relations have been missed, no doubt, because we have not been used to considering spoken narrative as a level of linguistic structure, as having consistent patterns-patterns far less complex than those of syntax, to be sure, but patterns none the less.

Missed also perhaps because lines in a spoken narrative may not announce themselves as part of a poem. We recognize lines as poetry when there are defining features internal, when they are lines(verses) which are metrical in having a certain number of syllables, stresses, alliteration, or have certain sequences of feet and tones. Or when they are part of a sequence of recurrent parallelism (including rhyme).² Even in isolation, such lines can be heard as poetry.

The constituent units of spoken narrative can indeed usually be heard as units - probably they will have sentence-level intonation contours. (This remains to be tested widely). Such contours allow them to be heard as units. That does not show them to enter into sequential relations. Yet in unrhymed spoken narrative such relations constitute organization.

Often indeed the unit that counts as a constituent of pattern has more than one line. That happens particularly with a sequence of turns at talk. In my experience a turn at talk counts as a single unit in the patterning of the next level, the stanza, even though the turn at talk itself may contain several lines. That is a reason for distinguishing between lines and constituent units. For units, the term 'verse' can serve.

The relevant units, then, the parts of pattern, are verses within a stanza (and stanzas within a scene, and so on). These make up the architecture of the story. In this respect a spoken narrative is, as one says in music, *durchcomponiert*. One can speak of 'measured verse' (relations counted among lines) as against metered verse (relations counted within lines). To be sure, in spoken narrative there may be continua between poles of meter and rhythm, as in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Gammie (1989)), and rhythms characteristic of particular authors and works, but I cannot explore that here. When recognized as poetry, Native American verbal art and vernacular traditions in communities of Europe and the United States may contribute to a deeper understanding of such things (cf. Fabb (1997), Meschonnic (1982)).

² Also in modern times in terms of variation and display of space on the page. Gary Snyder once asked me if familiarity with the poetry of William Carlos Williams and others did not play a part in discovering what is discussed here. I was not conscious of that, but could see that it must have done so. Not in first intimations of the kind of organization involved - linguistic features prompted that - but in being comfortable in working with lines of varying length.

Recent attention to visual forms of organization is taken up in Frank and Sayre (1988). Fabb (1997) is a textbook informed by both contemporary linguistics and analyses of oral literatures; note, e.g., pp.203-6, 212-3, and ch.9, 'Performance' for attention to ethnopoetics.

1.2. *A plea for the unspoken*

A basic definition in terms of spoken lines is a characterization in principle. It does not mean that nothing can be learned about narratives for which current performances or past recordings do not exist. One worth of verse analysis (as this work can be called) is that it helps recognize the worth of oral traditions for which we have only written evidence. Most of the native oral traditions of the part of the world from which I come, the Pacific Northwest, are in that state, and much of my effort over the years has been devoted to recovering them. When lines, verses and relations are recognized, indeed, one can venture to perform the narratives again, given appropriate circumstances.³

Much of the oral narrative of the world's peoples is in such a situation. The primary documents have line ends determined by edges of pieces of paper. No marking of intonation. Yet the pages can reveal lines that enter into relations that give regular, some powerful, shape. Intonation is not the only clue. Verses are often, so to speak, overdetermined. Often they are marked by lexical elements initially, conjunctions and expression of time (('then', 'now', 'again', 'next day', 'a long time...'). A turn at talk counts as a single unit, a verse, in the makeup of stanzas. When a tradition uses a quotative element ('they say'), its presence marks a verse. And as patterning emerges, it contributes to interpretation. In my experience, a lack of patterning shows a lack in interpretation. Often I have come back to an unsatisfactory result and discovered something new.⁴

Here we engage the principle Roman Jakobson (1960: 369-2) christened *equivalence*. Speaking of Finno-Ugric and Russian folk poetry, and referring to all the levels of language, he remarked:

“we learn what elements are conceived as equivalent” (369).

The statement holds generally. Working with a text, a tradition, a narrator as source, one learns what enters into relations that give shape. One works back and forth between details and contexts, nearer and farther relations. The work cannot be mechanical. A tradition provides resources, but a resourceful narrator can put them to fresh use. In the event, one both interprets and analyzes, doing justice as fully as one can to the original.

This kind of work corresponds to a concern of importance to native peoples, *repatriation*. The term came to attention first with regard to bodies and material goods taken to museums and other repositories. In the United States many such things are being

³ In August (1998) I will record one or more Chinookan texts for the language program of the Grand Ronde community in western Oregon.

⁴ *Couplets*. Cf. Hymes (1994) vis-à-vis Hymes (1981), ch.4 The earlier presentation was never satisfactory. It had inconsistencies and irregularities. Finally I realized that it was not the case that each verse counted separately in the expected patterning in terms of three or five. Certain pairs of lines, semantic couplets (e.g., ‘All died in the water/the people were drowned’) go together, count as one unit (see Hymes 1994), pp.346-7).

The Northeast Coast narratives I have examined, indeed, agree with the concern of Kugel (1981) and Alter (1989) to recognize that in the poetry of the Hebrew Bible the second of two ‘parallel’ lines goes beyond the first, adding to it or intensifying it. Cf. ‘died in the water’ vs. the specificity of ‘drowned’ in the example just given. And cf. The pairs of lines at the end of the Sun’s myth (given below.)

returned to the descendants of those from whom they came. It has strengthened sensitivity to the right of people and their cultures not to be treated merely as objects of science and scholarship. I think of this kind of recovery of the implicit form and meaning of texts as repatriation (Hymes 1991c, 1994: 353-4).⁵

Most work so far has indeed been undertaken in the spirit of early work with unwritten languages: To show that what is spoken only has order too. The one case was to make universal the scope of general grammar. The second case makes universal the scope of poetry.

1.3. *Two examples*

Let me present two examples, one Native American from a language no longer spoken, one contemporary African-American from New York. Discovery of intrinsic form heightens effect and meaning in each.

To recognize the value of oral narratives, one must recognize patterning of lines. Often enough one must also recover the wording of the original.⁶ A story may be translated in words that are felt respectable, but that conceal its artistry).

Two Native American examples have become fairly well known: 'Seal and her younger brother lived there', told in Clackamas Chinook by Victoria Howard, and 'Sun's Myth', told in Kathlamet Chinook by Charles Cultee.⁷

EXAMPLE 1. VICTORIA HOWARD, 'TONGUE' (Clackamas Chinook)

Here is an a passage from another narrative from Victoria Howard. The accompanying material shows the text as it was first translated and displayed in publication, then as patterned lines. In wording and shape, the first translation conceals the presence of a three part reiteration of a transcendent moment, resurrection of the people themselves.

The people known as the Clackamas (they called themselves 'people having vine-maple') lived along the Willamette River just south of what is now the city of Portland, Oregon. Almost all that will known of their narratives (smidgens apart) comes from one woman, Victoria Howard, who told a great many in the months before she died (1929, 1930) to Melville Jacobs, trained by Boas, and able to transcribe them in her language. Like others of his generation, and many still, Jacobs assumed the narratives were prose and presented them in paragraphs. Like others, he tended to avoid repetition in English.⁸

⁵ Cf. The last page (214) of Alter (1985).

⁶ Cf. Discussion of the published English for a Tillamook narrative in Hymes (1994), pp. 355-7.

⁷ 'Seal...' is reprinted in Swann (1995), pp. 307-10; 'Sun's myth' is in Swann (1995), pp. 273-8 and in Penn (1997), pp. 88-93.

⁸ The textual sources are Jacobs 1958, 1959. He discusses each text in Jacobs 1959b, 1960 and several articles. See also Hymes 1984 for a short text recorded by Boas. My translation of 'Tongue' has been published in Penn 1997.

Mrs. Howard grew up on Grand Ronde reservation near the coast, but this story takes place on the Willamette river where the Clackamas originally lived. A chief's wife had died and her body put out in a tree. 'Tongue' comes from the river and starts to take the body. Two watchmen (cut fish) cut off its tongue, and put the body back. Tongue cries day and night, 'Give me back my tongue'. The watchmen tire, give it back, and Tongue eats everyone. Only one woman survives. Other people played all the time, but she had gone to dig camas. When she returns to her house, there he is. She is (already) pregnant and has a son who grows swiftly, a fine hunter. Told what happened to the people, he trains in the mountains for power, then turns rotten wood into quantities of deer. Tongue brings them in and eats until he falls asleep in a stupor. Mother and son set the house afire and he burns with it.

Now comes the moment in question. The son goes again to the mountains, there he collects feathers and bones, as many of each as Tongue had killed people. The climax comes in lines 265-71. A ritual act is reiterated verbatim three times: 'They became people' (In Clackamas, *idəlxam nuxax* 'people they-became').

As first published, the lines are a paragraph (#27). The reiteration is not distinct, in lines or wording: 'He wished them to become persons'.... Those feathers and bones became people....Now there the people were..." (The word for his act means, not 'to wish', but 'to transform (by power)').

More than that, the first two words are (1) markers of a structural unit, (2) inverted from their usual order: 'Then now', instead of 'Now then'. That signals a turning point. The three repetitions of 'they became people' show three parts. 'Then now' marks the first as a turning point, 'now' without 'then' shows the third to be a summing up.

Then now, he transformed them,
 they became people
 Those feathers,
 bones,
 they became people
 those different feathers were for canoes.
 Now *they became people*.

The remaining part of the story now begins. The restored people are ungrateful. When the young man comes where the people are working in the river, fishing as instructed by his father, they scold him for not working. His mother scolds them for not realizing it is he who revived them, but *schon begleitet*, already insulted, he continues into the river. He weeps but continues. Such pride is associated in other Chinookan stories with Salmon, and a version of this story told in English by a man partly of Clackamas descent, indicates that it is Salmon here. Not a chief who returns each spring, but one who leaves. The last words of Mrs. Howard's text indicate that the people in the story are of the myth age. Because Salmon leaves, so must they, to be what they will be in the age to come.

Had you not done like that to him,
 You would have lived on here.
 Now then.
 Now we shall make our separation. ...

(One can imagine association of this outcome with the outcome in historical time when the Clackamas could not stay in their own place, but were forced to Grand Ronde reservation, those that had survived disease. The implication is that the cause lay in not heeding their chief. Such a difference in outcome is the interpretive voice of the narrator.⁹

EXAMPLE 2. JOHN L., 'WELL, ONE WAS WITH A GIRL' (NEW YORK CITY)

William Labov's path-breaking work in New York City has included influential work on oral narrative. Himself a story-teller, he sought to show the worth of narratives that many in the society disregarded, often because of the variety of English in which they were told. The starting point of the method was contrast between clauses which carry a narrative forward in time, and those that do not. Those that do not are interpreted as evaluation. Overall shape has been interpreted in terms of six general categories derived from rhetoric (abstract, orientation, complicating action, evaluation, resolution, coda). A text is presented in lines, taken as syntactic clauses, but as a continuous series, not as having internal organization in terms of verbal form.¹⁰

The limitations of such an approach appear with a principal example, a story from a narrator highly regarded among the African-American young men with whom Labov worked, John L. (cf Labov (1972), pp. 358-9 and *passim*). The relations among the lines are not governed by sequence alone. There are relations of equivalence as well. A variety of words and phrases both say what they say for the content of the story and by recurrence

⁹ For the other version known to us, cf. 'The Skookum's Tongue' and 'Skookum and the Wonderful Boy' in Ramsey (1997), pp. 94-5. Ramsey's source is Lyman (1900). There the young man revives the people by shooting an arrow. When the arrow hits the ground, they are revived and come back from downriver. Only then does the young man meet his father (for the first time). His father does not recognize him and hits him. The young man turns himself into a fish. His travels determine which streams fish who climb the falls at Oregon City will enter. There is no speech such as that with which Mrs. Howard ends.

The myth of Tongue thus was told in more than one way. Either ending is prophecy realized (), as one expects from these myths, but the ending Lyman heard from Louis La Bonte was of a kind Native American myths are likely to have - where a food would be found when the people came, and why. Mrs. Howard's ending gets Salmon into the water, but not to particular streams. Instead, for their misbehavior the people themselves are forced to disperse. This anticipation of an ultimate historical fate makes me wonder if Mrs. Howard, or her mother's mother or mother-in-law, from which she heard it, had absorbed an element of the Hebrew Bible. That the myth mattered to her may be reflected in the fact that she told it to Jacobs in the first days of their work together (1959a: 635, n.314).

¹⁰ For the considerable influence of Labov's work, see Bamberg (1997). The fact that none of the contributions in this volume of 415 pages considers narratives in terms of the kind of relationships taken up here is one reason for taking up this story here. It is rich in form.

Such things may not seem a problem in stories for which one needs no translation. The point is that one may need a translation, an interpretation, not of words, but of form. The principle has been stated by Jakobson (1960), pp. 377):

"poeticalness is not a supplementation of discourse with rhetorical adornment, but a total re-evaluation of the discourse and of all its components whatsoever."

That statement may be too sweeping. Yet when someone has given motivated form and point to what they say, we should attend to it.

convey its form.

Here is John L.'s story in terms of lines and verses, followed by a profile that makes relations and features explicit.

What was the most important fight that you remember,
one that sticks in your mind.... [i] (A) [Question]

Well, one was with a girl. (B)
Like I was a kid, you know,
And she was the baddest girl, 5
the *baddest girl in the neighborhood*.
If you didn't bring her candy to school,
she would punch you in the mouth;
And you had to kiss her when she'd tell you.

This girl was only about 12 years old, man, (C) 10
but she was a killer.
She didn't take no junk;
She whapped all her brothers.

And I came to school one day, [ii]
and I didn't have no money. 15
My ma wouldn't give me no money.

And I played hookies one day.
[She] put something on me.

I played hookies, man,
so I said, you know, 20
I'm not gonna play hookies no more
'cause I don't wanna get a whapping.

So I go to school [iii]
and this girl says, "Where's the candy?"

I said, "I don't have it." 25
She says, powww!

So I says to myself,
"There's gonna be times my mother won't give me money
because a poor family
And I can't take this all, you know, 30
every time she don't give me any money."

So I say,
"Well, I just gotta fight this girl.

She gonna hafta whup me.
I hope she don' whup me."

35

And I hit the girl, powww!
and I put something on it.
I win the fight.

That was one of the most important.

[Answer]

Profile

| <i>Scenes/Stanzas/Verses</i> | <i>Lines</i> | <i>Features</i> | <i>Contexts</i> |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---|--------------------|
| [i] A a | 1-2 | <i>Turn</i> | [Framing question] |
| B abcde | 3, 4, 5-6, 7-8, 9 | <i>Turn, Well</i> | [the girl] |
| C abc | 10-11, 12, 13 | <i>man</i> | [the girl] |
| [ii] | | | [Ma and me] |
| A ab | 14-15, 16 | <i>And, one day, no money</i> | |
| cd | 17, 18 | <i>hookies, one day</i> | |
| ef | 19, 20-22 | <i>hookies, man, said</i> | |
| [iii] | | | [Girl and me] |
| A ab | 23, 24 | <i>So, says (he, she)</i> | |
| B ab | 25, 26 | <i>said, says (he, she) (1st round)</i> | |
| C ab | 27-31, 32-5 | <i>So+says ,So+say (deliberation)</i> | |
| | | <i>[he as to she₁, he as to she₂]</i> | |
| D abc | 36, 37, 38 | <i>And I...</i> | (second round) |
| E a | 39 | | [answer] |

There are a variety of recurrent features in the story. Several show that it has three scenes. After an introductory answer to the question that prompts what John L. says, there are two changes of location and time. These begin the second and third scenes. The thematic word 'whupped' occurs in each scene. In each of the first two scenes it is in the last line. In the third scene it is in the last two lines of the third stanza, a turning point. The first line of the last stanza in each of the first and second scenes each end with the term of address, 'man'. The second scene is organized in part by interlocking repetitions of the phrases 'one day' (stanzas A, B) and 'played hookies' (stanzas B, C). In terms of theme, the worth of the opponent is built up in the first scene; moral constraint on the narrator is established in the second scene; the resulting dilemma is faced and overcome in the third.

One parallel corrects Labov's statement that the narrative proper does not begin until line 23 ('So I go to school'). Line 14 begins 'And I came to school one day'. Each line indicates change of location, indeed, the same change. As it turns out, each introduces a consistent pattern of verses as well (see the profile).

A particular feature of this narrative is emphasis and evaluation of action, not by non-temporal clauses, as Labov would have it, but by doubling (see Hymes (1996), pp. 202-3). Particularly important is the doubling of initial 'So' at the mid point of the last scene. The two verses complete a sequence of three pairs. Both are reflections, spoken by John to himself. The first recalls that situation at home, as to his mother and money, while the second considers the immediate situation, facing and fighting the girl. Each leads to a moral decision.¹¹

The narrative departs even further from linearity. It is a sequence of actions, of course; it is also a sequence of doublings, and moreover, a series of enclosing circles.

Some scholars think traditional stories should be expected to have ring-like structure, the end returning to the starting point. That is not generally true in my experience, but it is true of John L.'s story, when seen in its context. The first line is an interviewer's question, and the last line is an explicit answer, capping the narrative that has come between. Moreover, question and answer enclose two other circles. The initial account of the girl as a fighter follows the opening question; the dramatized fight precedes the concluding answer. This is the second circle. It in encloses the account of the boy and his mother, the second scene. This central scene is highly marked. It initiates grouping of verses in pairs, and has three pairs of verbal repetition. It establishes John L.'s moral resolve in relation his mother. And it has a double within the third and final scene. The central stanza of the third scene is to it what the second scene is to the story as a whole. It is intensified (initial 'So' twice), and doubles the theme of moral resolve, thinking first of

¹¹ The interpretation of scene [iii] may be objected to on the ground that the pairing of verses in the first three stanzas ignores that the second line of (A) is a question to which the answer is the first line of (B). There are three reasons not to couple those two lines.

First, since the start of scene [ii] the action proper has been in pairs, and the two verses following the part of scene [iii] that is in question are the most strongly marked pair in the story (So..., So...).

Second, the central theme is how the narrator deals with moral and practical dilemma. That the third scene opens with him going to school is not incidental. It is based on an answer to one part of the dilemma, that is, a decision not to play hookies, because his mother will whup him if he does. The basis of that is played out in scene [ii].

In scene [iii] the other part of the dilemma, the girl, is faced. The focus is on what he does. He goes to school (rather than play hookies), and the girl confronts him. He says he has no candy, she says powww! *Notice that the narrator equates speech and action, using 'say' for both.*

"I said, 'I don't have it.'

She says, powww!"

The parallel supports the pairing of the two verses.

Overall, there are two sequences, before the final comment. Each begins with 'So'.

(1) He goes, she demands; he answers, she responds with powww!

(2) He reflects doubly (So, So), he proceeds with a powww! Of his own in a triplet of action and outcome (I..., I..., I...).

A breakthrough in decisiveness and victory is matched with a formal flourish. All this agrees with Labov's report that John L. was admired as a story teller. One could still insist that it can't be so, that question and answer must always be bracketed together, that John L. is not (at least here) a remarkable narrator. To do so is to insist that a lower level of ordering must command all into which it enters. (As if syntax had to fit into phonology, as some thought a generation or two ago. It is to fail to recognize that interpretation of meaning has a role in discovering what is to be explained, and the possibility that poetic principles may be more than coating, but play a part (cf. the quotation from Jakobson given above). And as said it is to prefer an interpretation which shows a story and its narrator in a poor light, as against one that finds artistry.

the mother, then the girl.

In sum, the story begins by enhancing the opponent as a fighter, and ends with victory in a fight against her, but John's resolve to fight has his mother at its heart.¹²

2. Two principles for relations (2 and 4, 3 and 5)

An example of a text with each kind of principle is presented in Hymes (1982 (reprinted in Kroeber 1997)).¹³

2.1. *Innate?*

If the two kinds of relations continue to be found throughout the world, one might ask, are they in some way innate? I suggested that they might be in commenting on a paper by Newmeyer (1991) in which he sought to extend the scope of what might be considered innate in generative grammar (Hymes 1991c). Newmeyer rightly resisted any temptation to agree. Universality would not be enough. One should be able to show that exposure to the relevant data would not be enough for the feature in question to be learned (pp. 105). And from a functional standpoint, it is easy to argue that the kinds of relations involved could come about through cultural adaptation.

Assuming that patterned organization beyond the sentence or line would be found rewarding, the two kinds of relations would seem to be just what would make pervasive patterning of texts possible. Two and three seem to be the minimal bases which could provide a variety of perceptible and manageable sequences and effects. Four is a multiple of two. Five seems everywhere associate with three. Six is in fact found, but as a grouping of three sets of two. Seven is found ceremonially (e.g., the number of required drums in a ceremony), but not as a regularly repeated basis for verbal organization. (We are considering only spoken narrative). Eight again is a multiple of two. Nine is a multiple of three. Ten is twice five. Eleven apparently is too large to be a minimal starting point. And so for other larger numbers (cf. Hymes 1991c: 51).

This argument obviously only indicates a possibility, it is not a proof. The likely universality of internal organization of spoken narrative in terms of lines (verses) points to a grounding in human nature. One can hope that future work will clarify just what that is.

2.2. *Choice and movement*

¹² I draw here on Hymes (1996), ch.9, pp. 205, reprinted from Hymes (1995b). An earlier version of this account was part of my talk at September 1996 Sociolinguistics Symposium in Cardiff.

¹³ Two and four relations are shown in a Zuni myth, 'Coyote and Junco', told by Andrew Peynetsa to Dennis Tedlock. Three and five relations are shown in the Clackamas myth, 'Seal and her younger brother lived there' already cited (n. 5). For two and four relations, see also Hymes (1995c).

Common patterning allows for choice, for particular effects and personal styles. When one becomes familiar with a tradition, this becomes clear. If a tradition makes use of relations of three and five, there is a choice of either three or five at any point. A stanza may have three or five verses. For elaboration or emphasis, it may have three or five *pairs* of verses. And there are options as to the kind of movement within a sequence, what Kenneth Burke called 'arousal and satsifying of expectation'.¹⁴

Often a sequence of three has a movement of onset, ongoing, outcome, as in Wishram Chinook: *Gayúya*, *gayuyá:*, *gayuyám* 'he went, he kept on going, he got there'. (cf. Caesar's *veni, vidi, vici*).

Sometimes a sequence of five is an *interlocking* of two sets of three. In John L's story the third scene has five stanzas. The third is a culmination in relation to the first two stanzas in the scene, and a beginning for the final two. (Cf. Hymes 1996: 202-3). In Louis Simpson's 'The deserted boy' (Wishram Chinook) the same is true of the opening scene (cf. Hymes 1994: 336-7). In a narrative taken down in a Philadelphia department store by Nessa Wolfson there is interlocking at several levels of organization, ('She's a widow' in Hymes 1996, ch. 10, 'Inequality in language: Taking for granted'; see especially p. 215). The middle point of a sequence of five both completes one three-step series, and the onset of another.

A five-part sequence may thus have a variety of internal relations: Interlocking, as just described (ab(<c>)de); a run from first to last (abcde); two pairs completed by a fifth element (ab cd e). (For examples of other possibilities, see Hymes (1992)).

2.3. *Alternation*

Recently it has become clear that there is a further kind of choice, choice of underlying principle itself. Even if a tradition is pervasively one kind of relations, three and five, or two and four, a narrator may not be limited to just the one. I have summarized several examples and presented one in detail in a recent article (Hymes (1997b)). Let me call attention here to the example which first compelled me to recognize such alternation in terms of *gender*.

2.4. *Social distance*

In the narratives of the Tillamook of the northern Oregon coast, four is the pattern number in feminine contexts, five in masculine (Jacobs 1959: 116, n. 21). A story taken down twice from Clara Pearson, 'Split-His-Own Head', has that. An older sister tries to tell a younger brother how to do things, but speaks ironically, and is misunderstood. The first part has five scenes, the second part four. The first part has to do with activities proper to a male, such as building a canoe; the second part has to do with getting a wife. (At the end

¹⁴ For the phrasing, cf. Burke (1957), pp. viii and 241). For major analyses, cf. 'Psychology and form' (Burke (1925)) and 'Antony in behalf of the play' in Burke (1957), pp. 279-90.

the sister speaks plainly, and the effort succeeds).

For patterning of parts, each telling is the same. For patterning of stanzas within scenes, the two tellings differ. In one Mrs. Pearson used three or five stanzas within scenes. In the other she used two or four.

This alternation can not have to do with gender in the sense of what a part of the story is about. In both tellings they are the same.

Nor can it have to do with the language in which the story is told. Patterning within scenes is commonly in relations of two and four in Tillamook, in terms of three and five in English. With these two tellings of 'Split-His-Own-Head', the opposite is the case. It is Tillamook, a Salish language, that has relations of three and five. It is English that has relations of two and four.

The telling in Tillamook was taken down by May Mandelbaum (Edel), the telling in English by Elizabeth Jacobs. Comments by both, and other information, indicate that Mrs. Pearson felt closer to Mrs. Jacobs, who was, like herself, a married woman, and was nearer in age. May Mandelbaum was young, unmarried, and by report, brash.¹⁵ Evidently Mrs. Pearson associated closeness with the relations associated with focus on women (two and four), but relations associated with focus on men with social distance.

2.5. Transfer of control from one gender to another

Sometimes alternation of underlying principle of pattern is associated with change of control from one gender to another. When Mrs. Frances Johnson told Edward Sapir a story involving Coyote rushing to a girl's puberty dance, the opening act is a brief portrait of what he did every day, catch gophers. The second act shifts from *moderato* to *agitato*. He hears the sound of the puberty dance and rushes toward it. He keeps pausing to listen, thinking he is almost there, when he is not. Now in Takelma (a language of the Rogue River in southern Oregon) narrative relations are usually in terms of two and four. The almost bucolic first act is such. The second act changes to relations of three and five. After it relations of two and four are resumed.

Certainly the interval of three and five fits the expression of energetic, if fitful movement. Coyote keeps stopping, thinking he is almost there, when he is not. Perhaps relations of three and five, used this way, indicate masculine control, mocking it.

In the Pacific Northwest examples are coming to light in which alternation between the two kinds of relation goes with alternation in controlling gender. A succinct instance is a scene in the myth of 'Gitskux and his older brother', as told in Clackamas Chinook by Victoria Howard.

EXAMPLE 3. VICTORIA HOWARD, 'GITSKUX AND HIS OLDER BROTHER' (Clackamas)

This myth is in essence about two kinds of women, one properly assertive, one alternately petulant and aggressive. (See Hymes (1983)). The latter, a Grizzly Woman, comes to a chief to be his (second) wife. In anger, she destroys the people of the village, all except

¹⁵ I am indebted to Lewis Feuer for discussion of this.

Gitskux and his brother Gitskux (probably Marten) she takes away with her as slave whose head she uses to wipe her anus. The older brother (presumably Panther) escapes alone. Eventually he reaches a house and goes in. There he sees someone enter the other end, carrying a deer. He assumes it is a man. Then the person goes out returns, and washes and braids her hair. It is a woman. She butchers the deer and feeds him. (All this is in relations of three and five).

Panther is permitted to stay the night, and during the night the woman causes him to come beside her in her bed. (Five steps are involved; for the first three she has him bitten by fleas). She joins five nights together. They rise as man and wife. Then comes this scene (Part Three, Act I, scene iii):

Now the two stayed.
 She told him,
 "Now you will be doing the hunting.
 You will have thought,
 'Perhaps there is some man.'
 Here I have lived alone.
 I would be the one hunting.'
 "Indeed," He told her.
 Now that is what the two did.

There are four verses, not three or five. The opening and close are marked by initial 'now'. In between are two turns at talk. A role that would have taken for granted to be that of a man, hunter, is conferred on this man by a woman who does not need him for it.

EXAMPLE 4. CHARLES CULTEE, 'SUN'S MYTH' (KATHLAMET CHINOOK)

I have become convinced that a scene in Charles Cultee's Kathlamet Chinook 'Sun's myth' also shows transfer of control to women, in form as well as content.

The myth tells of a chief who has five towns of relatives. He becomes determined to travel to the sun. His wife tries to dissuade him, but he persists. He travels ten months to where it rises and reaches a large house. Inside is a young girl. On each side of the house many kinds of wealth (human goods) and asks the girl about them. It all belongs to her father's mother, who will give it away when she matures and is eligible to marry. He decides to stay, and eventually takes the young girl. Every day the old woman is gone by the early light, every evening she brings home wealth.

Eventually he feels homesick. The old woman asks what he would like to take with him. He refuses human wealth. He wants only the large shining thing she puts away at the end of the house. His wife tells him she will never give it. But at last the old woman's heart becomes tired (one cannot refuse a relative forever). She warns him, gives him the shining thing, and an ax.

At each of the five towns, that which he has taken makes him lose consciousness. He recovers to see he has destroyed it. He tries to rid himself of what he carries and cannot. At the last town, his own town, he tries to stand and his feet are pulled.

Here is what the myth says next:¹⁶

He looked back. (Act VI) (stanza A)
 Now she is standing near him, that old woman.
 "You,"
 she told him,
 "You."
 "In vain I try to love you,
 in vain I try to love your relatives.
 Why do you weep?
 It is you who choose.
 Now you carried that blanket of mine."

Nothing explicit is said as to an alternation of form at this point. But already with the woman's speech, pairing appears. The stanza itself has three parts: He looks, she stands, she speaks. But when she speaks it is first, 'you....you' and then 'in vain.... in vain.' And the two final stanzas are entirely in terms of two and four, not three and five, as the myth has been until this point.

The first of these stanzas (VI B) has two parts, each introduced by 'Now'. The second also has two parts, partly indicated by parallel occurrence of 'there'. Each of these parts indeed, is a semantic couplet.¹⁷

The action of the myth is driven by the desire of the chief. Three women attempt to divert him without avail. Only at the end of each part is there a steady state - when he has first married the Sun's granddaughter and she brings them goods in her large house, and when having destroyed all his people, he builds a small house. The change from threes and fives accompanies is a change from a male domain of hubris and terror. Somehow the final pairs suggest a recognition of the limits of human control with which the women of the story have been in touch all along.

Future work most likely will extend the range of purposes for which alternation may be used. Such alternation in type of relation among narrative elements is analogous to the kinds of alternation called style-switching and code-switching. General explanations are clearly premature, even more so in this regard than with regard to code-switching, as Cheshire and Gardner-Chloros (1998) have shown. Both phenomena may have different meanings within different communities, and different meanings within the lives of individual speakers (*ibid.* pp. 29).¹⁸

3. Variation

¹⁶ Cf. The printings of my analysis cited in n.5 above. The alignment of the final stanzas varies slightly.

¹⁷ In each couplet indeed the second member adds something, may be more pointed. Cf. Took it > lifted off what he had taken; left > went home; stayed > went a little distance; built a house > a small house. Cf. The discussion of couplets earlier in note 3.

¹⁸ For examples of alternation in underlying pattern as between narrators and across texts in the northern California language, Karok, see Hymes (1985b). For an instance within a Karok text, see Hymes (1997b).

I have stressed the need to recognize the presence of patterned relations. It is important as well to recognize variation in their presence. Narrations differ in the degree to which patterning is present, and what its role is.

One dimension of variation is elaboration and intensification. This may involve devices that are more than temporal sequence, and that need to be recognized as such. Let me give a rich example.

3.1. *Devices of elaboration*

Rhythm of movement may change dramatically despite regularity of patterning. An expected number of verses in a stanza, of stanzas in a scene - may be maintained, but weight and expressive effect take the center of the stage. (Just as the count of beats in a measure of music may be constant across a range from one whole note to a run of sixteenths.) Five ways in which this focussing within a regular frame can occur are *itemization*, *extraposition*, *catalog*, *inset*, and *lyric moment*. All occur in one act of a widely known Native American narrative, 'The Deserted Boy', as told to Edward Sapir by Louis Simpson in Wishram Chinook (cf. Hymes 1994 - the analysis in that article supersedes that in Hymes 1981, ch. 4).¹⁹

The frame of the narrative is that in the first part a child is deserted and left to starve. In the last part it is now the people who lack food and the child who has much. Discovering that, the people set out. A narrator's sense of justice will determine whether all, some, or none of them arrive.

Louis Simpson's second act first shows the boy being self-reliant, making a cloak against the winter cold and finding a way to catch fish. Each step of his effort each day is *itemized* - how much he caught, how much he ate, how much he saved, each time. One more of each each day. The fifth day, however, we do not learn what he has caught or what he does with it. The scene ends with telling us that having fished five times, he has become a grown man, something not before mentioned.

What he has gotten the fifth day as to food is carried over to a second scene. I call this *extraposition* (cf. Hymes (1981), pp. 167).

What he has gotten is a prepared food (a mixture of fish and berries). When he finds the delicacy, he sings. The plot stops for this (*inset*).²⁰

The daughter of a spirit-power in the river has given food, and when he has camped over five times, he wakes to find her beside him. There are just three verses here (marked by 'Now then'), but seventeen lines. The second marker introduces the woman, that she is beautiful, her hair, bracelets and rings, a painted house and a mountain-sheep blanket. The third marker lists kinds of food she has brought, naming fish from the river. In short, two *catalogues*.

¹⁹ The related devices of rank shift, fading explicitness, and amplification are discussed and exemplified in Hymes (1985a), pp. 408-13.

²⁰ Mr. Simpson repeated the verses three times for Sapir. Fifty years later I was told a narrator could sing them an indefinite number of times.

The scene ends with five verses, marked only with 'now'. No 'then' for succession of time, just 'now'. Such a moment in which time is not marching, *lyric moment*, seems to have been well known to Oregon narrators. When the chief seeking the Sun first stays with her daughter, there is such a moment. In the Takelma myth of 'Coyote and Frog' Coyote's opening catching of gophers has similar character. Indeed, both are told in terms of 'every day'. (In 'Gitskux and his older brother' Mrs. Howard reports such a moment for Panther and the woman to whom he comes, but a single night extended, a series of nights.).

The ending of a story of desertion characteristically varies in how others are treated. Here, when the village that deserted the boy finds out he has food, the people set out across the river toward him. First come the grandmothers who had left the boy food and fire, and he lets them arrive safely. As to the rest, he raises an east wind in which they drown. He comments on his reasons in each case. In Mrs. Howard's telling of the story a motive of remorse is added to those of gratitude and revenge. It is the wife who came to the boy who has had power to deal with the people of his village. The story continues after his revenge. She leaves him, ashamed of having used her power in such a way.

It would be a mistake to recognize motives only in what happens, not also in how it happens. Gratitude and revenge complete Louis Simpson's story, but at its center is exultation. The central act is a virtuoso display of traditional ways of modulating action. They adorn the boy's accomplishments like an accumulation fine blankets at a potlatch. The final act enacts moral judgments. The central act displays identification.

3.2. *Routines of verbal interaction.*

Verse patterning may serve metalinguistic and metapragmatic purpose by giving shape to a reported routine of verbal interaction. Victoria Howard dictated several cases to Jacobs. Each is built upon quoted speech ironically deployed. (See discussion of 'Perennial whistling', 'Laughing at missionaries' and 'Maybe it's Milt' in Hymes (1987). (Ramsey (1995) adds to understanding of the last.) These seem to be well known routines, repeated for amusement. See also the account of Kilipashda's joking in the same article, to which quoted speech is central (pp. 313).

Such examples of the modeling of interaction are especially interesting because there is little other evidence of conscious analysis of the organization of narrative in the materials with which I have worked. People may be comment on pattern numbers, such as 4 and 5 in the Tillamook case presented above. They certainly evaluate narrators in terms of such traits as verbosity or conciseness, ability to use uncommon words, to bring a story alive with gestures and voices. It may be that when Native American traditions were part of flourishing communities comments about patterned organization occurred as well: *'so and so really knows how to get a lot into a stanza'*. I have not heard them, nor do I know of them among contemporary narrators in English. As of the present moment, it would seem that the skill deployed, like that of syntax, is productive, but out of awareness, or at least not given terminology.

3.3. Breakthroughs in performance: Framing and reframing

Narrators may differ in their relationship to the stories they tell, and the relationship may change in the course of telling. In the cases I know from Chinookan languages, verses are always present as constituents of organization, but their explicitness by marking may vary. Observations on differences among several Chinookan narrators in relation to personal outlook and situation are given in Hymes (1981), chapters 3 and 6.²¹

Especially interesting are cases in which a narrator may intervene in what he or she is saying, to frame or reframe it. An instance memorable to me occurred when working on lexicon with Philip Kahclamet, once a source for Walter Dyk and Edward Sapir, in a restaurant booth. Discussion of the word for 'crier', someone who announces to the village, led Mr. Kahclamet to assume the role and perform it.²² The words are perfectly organized throughout in five stanzas, of three, and once five, verses. Having broken into performance, Mr. Kahclamet ends by breaking from English into Wishram.

Verse patterning may be a factor when the unfolding of a narrative brings a narrator to a halt. This occurred when Victoria Howard told Jacobs a myth in which foods that appear in spring are noted, one by one. They are asked about, named and described, and something said about where they will be or how they will be used. As told by Charles Cultee to Boas in Kathlamet (the language downriver from the Clackamas), the foods are encountered by people travelling upriver in a canoe with Salmon as headman (see Hymes 1985a). As told by Mrs. Howard, there is no journey. Foods appear in place.

The two accounts share a verbal tradition. The first formulaic line in Mrs. Howard's telling is a frozen, incomplete version of a line in Cultee's. The change from journey to encounter in place is part of a transformation of male adventure into a recital of domestic instruction.²³

Mrs. Howard presents a series of three kinds of food, plants, birds and fish, in sets of three members each. There are two sets for fish, who are last. When the series reaches the fifth set, and second one for fish the third (and last) of that set is to be named, Mrs. Howard gives no name. Instead she says:

All the things in the water like that,
I don't know their names.
I can't think what their many names were.]
They all spoke that way.
I think I remember only up to there now.

²¹ See esp. pp. 82-9, 102-5, 118, 132. The use of initial markers by the narrators, Louis Simpson, Hiram Smith, and Philip Kahclamat (Wishram-Wasco speakers) and Victoria Howard (Clackamas) differs significantly, as is shown in Chapter 6 of *In Vain I tried to tell you* (1981), written after I had discovered verse analysis.

²² See Hymes (1981), pp. 87ff., 203-5.

²³ The details are subtle and intriguing. They are discussed in Hymes (1986). I can add now that the fact that Mrs. Howard falls into four-part relations in this myth no longer seems a puzzle, but is a formal signal of woman's control.

And continues with a shift in gears.

My mother's mother would say,
"Coyote did like that,
all the things we eat here.
On the other hand, my mother-in-law would say,
"I don't recall who made the things that are good to eat here."
My mother's mother would say,
"Coyote did like that to all these things here.
He went past all the things that are berries...

She continues with a humorous encounter with berries, in which each kind of berry addresses Coyote by a special proper name, *štánkiiya*.

The narrative breaks off because the course of its telling has given rise to contradiction. For Chinookans the culminating name for a series of fish would be salmon. (Possibly sturgeon for some, but the series has already included sturgeon: Mudfish, chub, trout; eel, sturgeon, -). But at the start Mrs. Howard indicated that the one who encounters the foods is a fish person, maybe Salmon. If the series is to culminate in salmon, however, it cannot be (or have been) Salmon who announces. If the announcer is (and has been) Salmon, salmon cannot be what he announces.

To be sure, myths can have an actor who is also an ordinary source of food, but the roles are separated. The actor becomes a food at the end, after the action of the myth is over, when those within it separate to become what they will be when human beings arrive. Here the two stages confront each other. It seems an incomplete transformation of a male-centered version such as that of Cultee. Perhaps Mrs. Howard was thinking through the transformation as she spoke. In the event she leaves the conflict unresolved, and resorts to another tradition altogether.

3.4. Variation and its evaluation: Social levels

Marking of verses may play a part in distinguishing levels of a language. One example comes from 'Frontier Norwegian' (see Hymes (1997c)).

In the summer of 1929 the young Einar Haugen chauffeured his mother in southeastern South Dakota, and took down from dictation narratives his mother would then use in an annual publication for settlers from Oppdal, Norway. He did not think the materials could be published as linguistic texts, given their imperfections, but did hope to publish them for content. Years later Haugen published and compared two versions of an incident as told by a principal source, Halvor O. Aune (Haugen 1980).

Both versions tell of two men on a long trek. They reach a host who gives them whiskey in which to bathe. They fear the cost, but in the end he does not charge them at all.

Haugen prefers the version in local idiom. Although it omits some details, it

"has a narrative directness and cohesion that is far superior: It establishes the rancher-saloonkeeper as a man with a heart beneath his crude exterior and dubious mode of life....a small study in character, an encounter between two cultures, a true frontier exemplum" (1980: 26).

The text in local dialect does have an explicit evaluation as outcome, gratitude for a kindness to strangers that could not have been taken for granted. That personal touch seems to encourage or reinforce a prior attitude on Haugen's part toward the two levels of language. He goes on to say that the two versions offer

'evidence of how radically the speech situation can alter a speaker's language, inducing a virtual diglossia that can inhibit even a practiced and skillful narrator when he believes he must elevate his language" (Haugen (1980: 27).

In point of fact, when the two texts are compared in terms of analysis into verses, the first text, the text in a nearly standard Dano-Norwegian of the time, is the one that is consistently marked and integrated, more so than the text in the local idiom. Indeed, the concern for the host's reputation found at the end of the text in local idiom is framed by that text's one switch to the literary code.

In sum, verse analysis shows the version in the literary code to be more consistently marked and integrated, shaped neatly toward the end of a dramatic telling. As with grammar, so with narrative: One needs to discover implicit relations and form. Labov has often remarked that many narratives in standard speech are in fact poorly told. This is not one of them.²⁴

3.5. *Continua, continua*

There must be many dimensions of variation and contrast in explicitness and elaboration of verse form in oral narrative. I should like to notice one that may reflect development of a relationship between narrator and audience. In this case the audience is an inquirer.

Victoria Howard and Melville Jacobs worked together twice, in the summer of 1929, then again for two months in January to March 1930. Early on she told Jacobs a story that at its end she unwittingly told him again. (The first text is in his second field notebook, the second in the 18th and last).²⁵

The second version expands the title of the story. Mrs. Howard first called it 'They died of hunger' (literally, 'hunger killed-them'). The second time she specified the place by name: '*K'ášxəkšix*/ its-name/ where/ they died of / hunger.'

Memory enhanced by working together with the language and traditions may explain that difference. Increased confidence in command of the fullness of her narratives is likely a factor as well. During the course of her work with Jacobs she began to use a formal close. She does so at the end of the second telling of this story: *k'ánik'áni* ...! 'Story! Story! (Formal endings may have words before 'Story story' that explicitly say 'That is all (complete)')

The second version is more fully performed as well. It includes the onomatopoetic expression for the sound the headman makes when he hits something to call his people (*dək dəl dəl dəl*). When the headman goes to find out why his people are covered by

²⁴ Haugen took down some ten hours of dictation from Aune. There may be much of value as to narrative form and meaning waiting to be found.

²⁵ The first text is published as no.57, the second as no.58, in Jacobs (1959a), pp. 458-61, 459-62.

snow, the second version elaborates his actions five times with quotation of his inner speech.²⁶

The surprising difference between the two versions is that it is the first which marks verses again and again with an initial particle (*aga* 'now'). This occurs in a number of the narratives Mrs. Howard told Jacobs early in their work together. All her narratives are couched in relations of verses, but later initial particles are uncommon. This stands in sharp contrast to the earliest narratives we have in the language itself from a speaker of Kiksht (Clackamas and Wishram-Wasco), Louis Simpson, where particularly the initial pair, 'Now then', is standard. Simpson varies his use of initial particles for effect, as we have seen above with the second act of 'The Deserted Boy'. When Mrs. Howard comes to use them sparingly in what she tells Jacobs, her use seems analogous to the variation for effect found with Simpson. There they seem alike.

Why then the superabundance of 'now' in Mrs. Howard's early dictations? I think it is a sign of uncertainty about her command of the device, of a formal style. At the outset she sprinkles 'now' as if it is a token of reassurance. Later she has no need for tokens.²⁷

Continua in the use of devices are likely to appear in all manner of circumstances. This will be true as well for genres other than narrative (speeches, sermons, kinds of writing). The Seneca (an Iroquois group) have been shown by Chafe (1993) to have three speaking styles, conversation, preaching, chanting, that are on a continuum, reflecting 'decreasing responsibility of the speaker, or an increasing responsibility of a remote authority for the content being expressed'. If the styles involve the kinds of relations considered here, as speeches in the Native Northwest do, a continuum in formal marking might show degrees of responsibility both across and within genres. When narratives are recognized as having verses, and relations among verses, one can recognize such variation as evidence.

3.6. *Absence?*

There may be cases in which one pole of a continuum, of variation, is absence of any evident marking. Over the years Virginia Hymes and I have seen many narratives brought to class by students, and nary a one without verse form, to be sure, but these narratives have been valued by those who took them down. Whatever the reason for valuing them, they have form. But it is quite possible that they acquired form in the course of repetition.

The fact that children's narratives give evidence of the same kind of form encourages the thought that such form is natural, in that it will emerge among members of a community if not hindered. (Cf. Hymes (1996), chs. 7 and 8). Nonetheless, it may be hindered, or perhaps avoided. Verbal art attracts, for its own sake and as an attribute of those who possess it, but research needs to consider its absence. Absence may tell something as well. Perhaps communities and individuals vary from thoroughgoing

²⁶ On performance as a dimension of texts, cf. Ch.9 of Hymes (1981).

²⁷ In the narratives discussed in Moore (1993), '*now*' is the initial particle used by Lucinda Smith when she does use one. Moore's article demonstrates nicely another kind of alternation, alternation between speakers and languages by a speaker in one kind of performance situation.

patterning to rudimentary presence, even virtual absence. Two recent studies suggest one factor that may contribute to such variation.

3.7. *Valuation and repetition*

(a) The presence of patterning, and its degree, may be governed by valuation, particularly as to centrality to a group or person, and consequent repetition, rehearsal. The anthropologist Greg Urban provides an example from his work with a Brazilian Native American group, the Shokleng. Urban (1996) stresses the importance of ceremony and assemblage. At one point he touches on repetition of lines (pp. 185):

"....group assemblage is one way of heightening non-referential communication - the relatively more direct experience of social reality. It is one way of making nonreferential communication salient, and, simultaneously, of backgrounding the referential, of backgrounding language-based consciousness. The mechanism for doing this is the repetition of units, such as the line, which brings discourse as sound into prominence. Repetition is the basis for such phenomena as chanting and singing. It is the basis also of dance and dancelike kinesic forms. Repetition does not require group assemblage, but when the group does assemble, repetition tends to occur."

In other words, ceremony and some narratives 'embody' experience, and weave a spell that engages participants in community.

In this context Urban presents a narrative which he says brings the sensible, perceptible qualities of discourse into awareness more than any other from the community with which he is familiar, because it is the only one which endeavors to represent a ceremony in words (pp. 182). He remarks (pp. 184):

"In representing communication within the ceremony as taking place largely beneath the level of consciousness, this narrative captures the opposition I have been positing--the world of ceremony is built out of contextual, nonreferential meanings. Such meanings I understand to be aligned more closely with the unconscious than with reflective consciousness...a modality of experience of the world that is distinct from reflective awareness".

Analysis of the narrative in terms of relations among lines and groups of lines does indeed show the kind of patterning I have discussed (Hymes 1998).

(b) Centrality and repetition may be an attribute of a personal story. In their important book, *Constructing panic*, Capps and Ochs (1995) investigate the development of narratives in the life of a woman suffering from agoraphobia.

Clinical literature has not recognized such narrative accounts, Capps and Ochs report. There is attention to responses from questionnaires, but not to what patients formulate for themselves. Such accounts may show underlying patterns and help therapy to overcome them.

Capps and Ochs indeed consider a number of linguistic characteristics of the stories told by Meg (a pseudonym for the narrator). They refer to the *architecture* of the major narrative on which they focus, and to the *structure* and *structuring* of a story (*ibid.*, 39, 40, 47). They remark that meaning arises as much from how something is said as from

semantic content (pp. 28). A verse analysis (V. Hymes, 1996) brings out dimensions of this, while showing that this much-rehearsed story is patterned in verses and stanzas throughout.

Jill McRae (1998) has explored the presence of such patterning in a long, moving narrative from a victim of rape. The narrative is presented in terms of relationships of the kind found in other English language narratives. In certain respects the analysis is a step removed from verbal detail - single word answers and most initial affirmations or denials are omitted. One might also question some details of the assignment of lines to patterned units, but further reflection of that sort is normal in the course of interpreting a complex narrative occurs. The full account is impressive.

Jan Blommaert (1998) is exploring the emergence of patterned narrative pattern in interviews with Belgian missionaries who had spent a significant portion of their lives in Africa. Patterns like those of verse-relations appear to be present.

One can hope that others will take up this kind of analysis, and thereby enrich understanding of the part language plays in the understanding of both community and individual lives.

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