Richard Bauman

A World of Others' Words

Cross-Cultural
Perspectives on
Intertextuality

Blackwell
Publishing

A World of Others' Words

Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality

Richard Bauman

A World of Others' Words

Acknowledgments

This book, no less than the performers and texts it represents, lives in a world of others' words, and I want to acknowledge at least some of the dialogues that have had a formative influence on the making of the text now before you. I want first to offer my thanks to those patient, hospitable, and generous interlocutors in Nova Scotia, Texas, and Mexico who made a special effort to help me hear and understand the world of talk in which they live: Howard, Basil, and Isabel Bush, of Bush Island, Lunenburg County, Nova Scotia; Ed and Alma Bell, of Luling, Texas; and Pedro Muñoz and Refugio Ramírez, of Tierra Blanca, Guanajuato, Mexico. I am grateful also to a number of equally generous colleagues who shared with me some of their own field materials: Pat Mullen, Pat Jasper, Hallfreður Örn Eiríksson, and Hamish Henderson. For assistance with transcription and with the nuances of translation, I thank Birna Arnbjörnsdóttir, Ana Ochoa, Josefina Vasques, and Ramón Gódinez Estrada.

A number of institutions have supported and encouraged the research on which this work is based: the School of Scottish Studies, Edinburgh University, and the Stofnun Árna Magnússonar, Reykjavík, have granted permission to use materials from their collections; the Center for Transcultural Studies, Chicago, provided an intellectual environment for stimulating collegial dialogues that shaped my thinking about textuality and intertextuality; the National Endowment for the Humanities, the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation, and the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences at Stanford (with funds from the Mellon Foundation) offered fellowship support that gave me time to think and talk and write about the materials and ideas treated in the pages that follow. The American Council of Learned Societies, the University of Texas, and Indiana University also provided valuable financial support. I am grateful to all of these benefactors.

Note on Transcription

I have employed various modes of transcription in rendering the oral texts presented in the chapters that follow, guided by heuristic and analytical considerations. In transcribing narratives, I have segmented the texts in terms of a combination of devices employed by the narrators, principally initial particles and other discourse markers, including prominently conjunctions that mark the paratactic structure of the narration; speaker change in the rendering of reported speech; and/or topic change. For the market language of Chapter 4, narrative excerpts in Chapter 6, and the oral poetry treated in Chapter 7, I have set out the transcriptions in lines marked by a combination of breath pauses and syntactic structures, or other devices of measure. New lines begin flush left. When presenting texts published by others, I have retained the transcriptional formats of the published versions, except where explicitly noted. The representations of non-standard phonology and syntax in Chapters 3, 5, and 7 do not pretend to strict linguistic accuracy. Rather, they are intended to foreground the vernacular oral style of the spoken originals.

Contents

I

Introduction: Genre, Performance, and the Production of Intertextuality

I live in a world of others' words.
Bakhtin (1986:143)

The relationship of texts to other texts has been an abiding concern of literary theorists since classical antiquity, certainly since Aristotle speculated on the potential shape of tragedies based on the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as against other relations of the fall of Troy and its aftermath (*Poetics* xviii.4, xxiii). Whether by the attribution of literary influence, or the identification of literary sources and analogues, or the ascription of traditionality, or the allegation of plagiarism or copyright violation – or, indeed, by any of a host of other ways of construing relationships among texts – the recognition that the creation of literary texts depends in significant part on the alignment of texts to prior texts and the anticipation of future texts has drawn critical – and ideological – attention to this reflexive dimension of discursive practice.

In the domain of oral poetics, intertextuality has been a defining focus since the latter part of the seventeenth century, when oral tradition became a key element in marking the juncture between premodern and modern epochs in the evolution of language and culture. In the late eighteenth century, Herder's celebration of the "sung again" quality of oral poetry, its circulation among the people, and its capacity to "spite the power of time," established the foundational orientations of the study of oral poetics toward the genetic relationships among "variants" and "versions" and the durability of the "oral tradition" constituted by the intertextual relationships that link these cognate texts. In this philological perspective, which had a formative influence on textual criticism more generally and which was inscribed into the scholarly tradition of folklore and anthropology by

the Brothers Grimm and Franz Boas, the texts are conceived essentially as cultural objects: durable, repeatable, classifiable, linked to other texts by relationships of descent (both textual and national) and generic similarity (Bauman and Briggs 2003).

Moreover, one may find apparently corresponding – taken as corroborative – understandings among the "tradition bearers," those who carry and pass on the textual objects. When, for instance, Jón Norðmann, an elderly Icelandic storyteller, concludes a story about a nineteenth-century poet with magical powers – a narrative that figures centrally in a later chapter of this book – by remarking "Now Gudrun, his daughter, told my father this story," he would appear to be confirming the traditionality of the narrative, handed down from the past by repeated tellings, as well as identifying it by genre (*saga*: "story").

I would submit, however, that there is more going on here than simple folk confirmation, ancillary to the text, of what we have long known about folktales: that they are traditional and fall into generic categories. I would ask, rather, what might induce Jón Norðmann to follow up his narration with an account of the story's genealogy? What does he accomplish, in this instance, by explicitly linking his telling of the story to his father's telling to Gudrun's telling? Approached in these terms, the question is not about confirmation of the *a priori* traditionality of the story, but rather about Jón Norðmann's discursive practice. From this vantage point, his linkage of his performed text to other texts by filiation and genre is part of the discursive work by which he accomplishes his performance; the relationship of intertextuality that ties his story to an antecedent story is an interactional accomplishment, part of his management of the narrative performance.

The perspective that I am suggesting here is founded upon a conception of social life as discursively constituted, produced and reproduced in situated acts of speaking and other signifying practices that are simultaneously anchored in their situational contexts of use and transcendent of them, linked by interdiscursive ties to other situations, other acts, other utterances. The sociohistorical continuity and coherence manifested in these interdiscursive relationships rests upon cultural repertoires of concepts and practices that serve as conventionalized orienting frameworks for the production, reception, and circulation of discourse. Two such metadiscursive concepts that have proven especially productive in the domain of oral poetics and have provided a ground of convergence linking linguistic anthropology, literary theory, and the study of oral tradition are *genre* and *performance*. As a career-long denizen of that border territory, still devoted to charting its riches, I employ them again in this work as conceptual organizing principles. I have written a number of works on performance over

the past several decades (see esp. Bauman 1977, 1986, 1992; Bauman and Briggs 1990); in this book, I foreground the concept of genre, against a background in which performance is never far from view. The focus on genre and performance, in turn, proves to illuminate still other metadiscursive concepts and practices that will provide further lines of connection among the chapters to follow.

Genre

The concept of genre has played a significant role in linguistic anthropology since the inception of the field, part of the philological foundation of the Boasian program.[1] The centrality of texts in the Boasian tradition demanded discrimination among orders of texts, and generic categories inherited from the European (especially German) study of folklore served this classificatory purpose. Genre received little critical or theoretical attention in the field, however, until the latter part of the 1960s, under the convergent impetus of ethnoscience, with its analytical focus on indigenous (emic) systems of classification, structuralism, in both its morphological and structural-symbolic guises, and the ethnography of speaking, in which genre served as a nexus of interrelationships among the constituents of the speech event and as a formal vantage point on speaking practice (Hymes 1989[1974]). More recently, the influence of Bakhtinian perspectives on genre as the compositional organizing principle that "guides us in the process of our speaking" under "definite conditions of performance and perception" (Bakhtin 1986:81; Medvedev and Bakhtin 1978[1928]:131) has given further prominence to the concept of genre in the work of linguistic anthropologists (Hanks 1987, 1996a, 1996b). The collective work of the Bakhtin Circle is especially productive, I believe, in its insistence on the radical integration of the formal and the ideological in the construction of genre (Bakhtin 1986; Medvedev and Bakhtin 1978[1928]; Voloshinov 1973[1930]). With Bakhtin (1986:63–67), I begin with style (as also Hymes 1989[1974]) as a point of entry, which will lead, ultimately, to ideology. In the chapters that follow, I foreground one or another aspect for analytical purposes, bearing always in mind, however, that they are inextricably interrelated.

I conceive of genre, then, as one order of speech style, a constellation of systemically related, co-occurrent formal features and structures that serves as a conventionalized orienting framework for the production and reception of discourse. More specifically, a genre is a speech style oriented to the

production and reception of a particular kind of text. When an utterance is assimilated 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 "Once upon a time" or "*Voy a cantar estos versos*" or "Bunday!" carry with them sets of expectations concerning the further unfolding of the discourse, indexing other texts initiated by such opening formulae. "Once upon a time," of course, has come to signal the modern literary rendition of a fairy tale; "*Voy a cantar estos versos*" announces the singing of a *corrido*, the ballad form of Greater Mexico (Paredes 1976:83); "Bunday!" marks the beginning of a Bahamian "old-story" performance (Crowley 1966:19–22). These expectations constitute a framework for entextualization, the organization of a stretch of discourse into a text: bounded off to a degree from its discursive surround (its co-text), internally cohesive (tied together by various formal devices), and coherent (semantically intelligible).

The process of entextualization, by bounding off a stretch of discourse from its co-text, endowing it with cohesive formal properties, and (often, but not necessarily) rendering it internally coherent, serves to objectify it as a discrete textual unit that can be referred to, described, named, displayed, cited, and otherwise treated as an object (Barber 1999). Importantly, this process of objectification also serves to render a text extractable from its context of production. A text, then, from this vantage point, is discourse rendered decontextualizable: entextualization potentiates decontextualization. But decontextualization from one context must involve recontextualization in another, which is to recognize the potential for texts to circulate, to be spoken again in another context. The iterability of texts, then, constitutes one of the most powerful bases for the potentiation and production of intertextuality.

By *intertextuality* I mean the relational orientation of a text to other texts, what Genette calls "the textual transcendence of the text" (1997[1982]:1).[2] I take my primary inspiration in this exploration of intertextuality as discursive practice from Bakhtin. "The text," Bakhtin proposes,

> lives only by coming into contact with another text (with context). Only at this point of contact between texts does a light flash, illuminating both the posterior and anterior, joining a given text to a dialogue. We emphasize that this contact is a dialogic contact between texts . . . Behind this contact is a contact of personalities and not of things. (Bakhtin 1986:162)

What is of interest here, then, is the ways in which each act of textual production presupposes antecedent texts and anticipates prospective ones.

For Bakhtin, dialogue, the orientation of the now-said to the already-said and the to-be-said, is ubiquitous and foundational, comprehending all of the ways that utterances can resonate with other utterances and constitutive of consciousness, society, and culture. My concern in this book is considerably narrower: I focus in the chapters that follow on a range of relationships by which speakers may align their texts to other texts. But it is worth emphasizing again that my interest in intertextuality is not simply in the relational nexus between texts, but in how intertextuality is accomplished in communicative practice, including both production and reception, and to what ends. Generic intertextuality, as noted, is my primary concern, having to do with orienting frameworks for the production and reception of particular types of text. Reiteration, as I have suggested just above, is another: saying again what has been said before, in what may be construed as "the same" form. The reiterated text may be quoted or attributed to a prior speaker, that is, reported as having been said by another (or by generalized others: "The old people say . . ."), or it may simply be said again, without explicit attribution. Briggs (1986) and Barber (1999) demonstrate persuasively that within particular communities, genres may vary in the degree to which they are conceived as quotational, that is, framed as not-for-the-first-time reiterations of the already said. Parody, a third mode of intertextuality that figures in the chapters to follow, involves the ludic or inversive transformation of a prior text or genre.[3]

The formal relationship implied in the notion of generic intertextuality has pragmatic and thematic correlates as well. The situated production of generically informed discourse indexes prior situational contexts in which the same generic conventions have guided discursive production. The associational links might invoke any of the constituent elements of the situational context (e.g., settings, participant roles and structures, scenarios, goals and outcomes, etc.). Genre thus transcends the bounded, locally produced speech event. From this perspective, genre appears as a set of conventional guidelines or schemas for dealing with recurrent communicative exigencies – greetings, for example, as a means of establishing interactional access (Günthner and Knoblauch 1995; Luckmann 1995). It would be misleading, however, to assume – as some have done – that there is a one-to-one correlation between genres and speech events. While particular genres may be primarily identified with specific situational contexts of use – for example, curing chants with healing rituals – it is of the very nature of genre to be recognizable outside of such primary contexts. Thus a curing chant may be performed in another context for entertainment, for the pleasure afforded by the chanter's display of virtuosity, or recited in still another as pedagogical demonstration in the instruction of a novice curer (Sherzer

1983:118–120). Such recontextualization amounts to a rekeying of the text, a shift in its illocutionary force and perlocutionary effect – what it counts as and what it does.

Among the conventional expectations for textual production and reception that genre invokes are sets of roles and relationships by which participants are aligned to one other. Such participant structures must be approached in terms of local understandings of role eligibility, recruitment, and enactment (e.g., Maya shaman/patient/spirit (Hanks 1996b), or Akan chief/*okyeame* (spokesman)/petitioner (Yankah 1995); see also Chapter 7 of this book). But insofar as the texts emergent out of such generically regimented structures of participation are intertextually tied to antecedent texts and anticipate subsequent ones, so too do they presuppose and entail other participant structures. A shamanic performance of ritual exorcism, for example, presupposes a prior shaman–patient consultation and anticipates, perhaps, the patient's narrative account to her family of her healing experience (Hanks 1996b; cf. Irvine 1996).

The emergent configurations of such fields of discursive production and circulation are what motivated the functional-typological participant frameworks suggested by Goffman in his decomposition of traditional dyadic speaker-hearer models, discriminating, for example, the formulator of an utterance (the author) from the speaker who actually voices it (the animator) (Goffman 1981:167; see also Levinson 1988). We should be reminded here as well of Bakhtin's insistence that behind the contact between texts that establishes relationships of intertextuality "is a contact of personalities and not of things" (1986:162). That is to say, with regard to genre, that it is a primary means not only for dealing with recurrent social exigencies, but also for the expressive enactment of subjectivity; different genres implicate different subject positions and formations. Studies of gender and genre have taken the lead in exploring this line of inquiry (see, for example, Cox 1996; Gerhart 1992).

In addition to the pragmatic dimensions of genre just outlined, each genre will be distinguished in terms of thematic or referential capacities, as a routinized vehicle for encoding and expressing particular orders of knowledge and experience. Consider the *fairy tale*, for instance, set in an indeterminate time and place ("Once upon a time in a land far away . . .") in which the relationship between appearance and reality is characteristically ambiguous, often because of magical agents and transformations, as against the *myth*, set in a formative period in the development of the cosmos, when supernatural forces effected the transformations that shaped the world as we now know it. Such orientations to the world, implicated in Bakhtin's notion of chronotope, are part of the associational field implicated in relationships of generic intertextuality.

While generic intertextuality is a means of foregrounding the routinized, conventionalized formal, pragmatic, and thematic organization of discourse, the same relational nexus also suggests that generic convention alone is insufficient to account for the formal-pragmatic-thematic configuration of any given utterance. This is so because the fit between a particular text and the generic schema – or other instances of the generic class – is never exact. Emergent elements of here-and-now contextualization inevitably enter into the discursive process, forging links to the adjacent discourse, the ongoing social interaction, instrumental or strategic agendas, and other situational and extrasituational factors that interact with generic orienting frameworks in shaping the production and reception of the utterance. These in turn will influence the ways in which the constituent features of the generic framework are variably mobilized, opening the way to generic reconfiguration and change. Thus, generic intertextuality inevitably involves the production of what Charles Briggs and I have called an intertextual gap. The calibration of the gap – its relative restriction or amplification – has significant correlates and effects. Certain acts of entextualization may strive for generic orthodoxy by hewing as closely as possible to generic precedent and assimilating the utterance to conventional practices for the accomplishment of routine ends under ordinary circumstances. Think of the boilerplate fill-in-the-blank templates for the production of legal documents – wills, contracts, leases, and the like. By contrast, widening of the intertextual gap allows for the adaptation of generic frameworks to emergent circumstances and agendas, such as the hybrid forms of oratory developed by the first generation of Moroccan women to become vendors in the public markets (Kapchan 1996). Such adaptive calibration may involve manipulation of any of the formal, functional, and thematic elements by which an utterance may be linked to generic precedents (cf. Briggs 1993; Duranti 1994:87–100). It may also extend to the assimilation of a text to more than one generic framework, drawing upon and blending the formal and functional capacities of each of the genres thus invoked. Such generic mixing may yield what Bakhtin designates as "secondary genres," which "absorb and digest various primary (simple) genres" (1986:62), incorporating them into more encompassing generic structures. Oratory is a good case in point, as characteristically incorporating narratives, jokes, proverbs, and other genres. Or, mixing may yield various hybrid forms out of the merger of two primary genres – several of the chapters to follow deal with such blended genres, including riddle tale and cante-fable, which are themselves conventional genres. Likewise possible is a more ad hoc generic blending, produced in response to emergent circumstances, as in the market sales pitches discussed in Chapter 4.

The calibration of intertextual gaps offers a useful vantage point on the ideology and politics of genre (see, for example, Goodman 2002; Tuohy 1999). Within any speech community or historical period, genres will vary with regard to the relative tightness or looseness of generic regimentation, but certain genres may become the object of special ideological focus. Prescriptive insistence on strict generic regimentation works conservatively in the service of established authority and order, while the impulse toward the widening of intertextual gaps and generic innovation is more conducive to the exercise of creativity, resistance to hegemonic order, and openness to change. These factors will be closely tied as well to hierarchies of value and taste (which genres are evaluated as relatively higher, better, more beautiful, more moral) and to the social regimentation of access to particular generic forms (who can learn them, master them, own them, perform them, and to what effect). Ochs' classic analysis of the tactical struggles over the stricter versus looser regimentation of Malagasy wedding-request *kabary* – oratory in which spokesmen for the prospective bride and groom negotiate the terms of the marriage arrangements – provides a suggestive example, elucidating not only the contrasting genre ideologies, but the ways in which such ideologies are sited, interested, multiple, and contested (Keenan [Ochs] 1973).

Performance

The linked processes of decontextualizing and recontextualizing discourse – of extracting ready-made discourse from one context and fitting it to another – are ubiquitous in social life, essential mechanisms of social and cultural continuity. Clearly, however, these processes operate in different ways and with different degrees of salience across the various sectors of social life and the modes of discourse by which they are constituted. One measure of this variance, and a useful key to the nature and significance of the decontextualization and recontextualization of discourse in social life, is the mode of discursive practice we call performance. The performance forms of a society tend to be among the most markedly entextualized, generically regimented, memorable, and repeatable forms of discourse in its communicative economy. Likewise, performance forms tend to be among the most consciously traditionalized in a community's communicative repertoire, which is to say that they are understood and constructed as part of an extended succession of intertextually linked recontextualizations (Bauman and Briggs 1990). In one influential con-