

F736 ETHNOPOETICS Spring 2006

Prof John McDowell, Wednesdays, 1-3pm, 501 N. Park, Section No. 24924

This course explores the workings of the world's ethnopoetry, that is, its measured and allusive language existing outside the boundaries of literary canons. We sample widely in a domain sometimes called *oral literature*, *oral poetry* or *orature*, referencing a plethora of speech play and verbal art traditions. We seek to appreciate the mastery exhibited by wordsmiths operating in a variety of settings, from the conversational to the commemorative. Central to our inquiry are key issues surrounding the concept of the *text* – the relationship between a text and its source performance, as well as the best procedures for creating and presenting texts.

There are three content units: theories and approaches, ethnopoetic varieties, and doing ethnopoetics. One book is assigned for each unit, and for each week I will ask you to read an article or two. Additional readings are listed for your reading pleasure. I have sought to sample both the foundational literature and its contemporary extensions. The presence of several titles by John McDowell (that's me, folks!) is (I hope) less a testimonial to my colossal ego than a chance to share with you field materials and the process of working them into publication.

Students are expected to play an active role in class discussions, which presupposes careful attention to assigned readings and some dabbling in the suggested list. There will be three short essays (3-5 pages), one for each unit in the class, a final paper of 15 pages (which may build upon the essays), plus opportunities to share your findings with the class.

SCHEDULE OF TOPICS AND READINGS

I **theories and approaches**

The book: Richard Bauman, *A World of Other's Words: Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Intertextuality* (Blackwell, 2004).

Session 1 (January 11)

Measured and allusive speech. Dell Hymes, "Folklore's nature and the sun's myth," *Journal of American Folklore* (88): 1975: 345-369; John McDowell, "Folklore as commemorative discourse," *Journal of American Folklore* 105 (1992): 403-422.

Additional readings: John Austin, *How To Do Things With Words* (Harvard, 1962); Alan Dundes, "Text, texture, and context," *Southern Folklore Quarterly* (1964): 251-65. Frank Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (Harvard, 1979); Michael Meeker, *Literature and Violence in North Arabia* (Cambridge, 1979); Henry Glassie, *The Spirit of Folk Art* (New York: Harry Abrams, 1989); John Miles Foley, *How to Read an Oral Poem* (Illinois, 2002).

Session 2 (January 18)

Speech is music. George List, "The boundaries of speech and song," *Ethnomusicology* 7

(1963):1-16; Américo Paredes, "Some aspects of folk poetry," *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 6 (1964): 213-225.

Additional readings: Franz Boas, "Stylistic aspects of primitive literature," *Journal of American Folk-Lore* 38 (1925): 329-339; Walter Ong, *The Presence of the Word: Some Prolegomena for Cultural and Religious History* (Yale, 1967); Steven Feld, *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics and Song in Kaluli Expression* (Pennsylvania, 1982); Ellen Basso, *A Musical View of the Universe: Kalapalo Myth and Ritual Performances* (Pennsylvania, 1985); Janice Nuckolls, *Sounds Like Life: Sound-Symbolic Grammar, Performance, and Cognition in Pastaza Quechua* (Oxford, 1996).

Session 3 (January 25)

Patterning as the constitutive device. Roman Jakobson, "Linguistics and poetics: closing statement," in T. Sebeok (ed.), *Style in Language* (M.I.T., 1960).

Additional readings: Paul Garvin (ed.), *A Prague School Reader on Esthetics, Literary Structure, and Style* (Georgetown, 1964); Roman Jakobson, "Poetry of grammar and grammar of poetry," *Lingua* 21 (1968): 597-609; Pierre and Elli Kongas Maranda (ed.), *Structural Analysis of Oral Tradition* (Pennsylvania, 1971); Maurice Bloch, "Symbols, song, dance and features of articulation: is religion an extreme form of traditional authority?" *European Journal of Sociology* 15 (1974): 55-81; Jonathan Culler, *Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics, and the Study of Literature* (Cornell, 1975).

Session 4 (February 1)

Spoken art in social context. William Labov, "The study of language in its social context," *Studium Generale* 23 (1970): 30-87; John McDowell, "Towards a semiotics of nicknaming," *Journal of American Folklore* 94: 1-18.

Additional readings: Bronislaw Malinowski, "The problem of meaning in primitive languages," in C.K. Ogden and I. A. Richards, *The Meaning of Meaning* (Harcourt, Brace, 1930); John Gumperz and Dell Hymes (ed.), *The Ethnography of Communication* (AAA, 1964); Dell Hymes (ed.) *Language in Culture and Society* (Harper and Row, 1964); William Labov, *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (Pennsylvania, 1972); Richard Bauman, *Verbal Art as Performance* (Newberry House, 1977); Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Pennsylvania, 1981); Roger Abrahams, *The Man of Words in the West Indies: Performance and the Emergence of Creole Culture* (Johns Hopkins, 1983); Keith Basso, *Western Apache Language and Culture: Essays in Linguistic Anthropology* (Arizona, 1990).

Session 5 (February 8)

Composition and performance. Bruce Rosenberg, "The formulaic quality of spontaneous sermons," *Journal of American Folklore* 83 (1970): 3-20; Jeff Opland, "Imbongi nezibongo: the Xhosa tribal poet and the contemporary poetic tradition," *PMLA* 90 (1975): 185-208.

Additional readings: Ruth Finnegan, "How to do things with words: performative utterances among the Limba of Sierra Leone," *Man*, n.s. 4 (1969): 537-551; Bruce Rosenberg, *The Art of the American Folk Preacher* (Oxford, 1970); John McDowell, "The Mexican corrido: formula and theme in a ballad tradition," *Journal of American Folklore* 85: 205-220; John Miles Foley, *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (Indiana, 1995); Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs, "Poetics and performance as critical perspectives on language and social life," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 19 (1990): 59-88; Albert Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Harvard, 2000).

II ethnopoetic varieties

The book: Kwesi Yankah, *Speaking for the Chief: Okyeame and the Politics of Akan Royal Oratory* (IU, 1995).

Session 6 (February 15)

Repertoires, genres, forms, varieties. Dan Ben-Amos, "Analytical categories and ethnic genres," *Genre* 2 (1969): 275-301; Gary Gossen, "Chamula genres of verbal behavior," *Journal of American Folklore* 84 (1971): 145-168.

Additional Readings: Judith Irvine, "Formality and informality in communicative events," *American Anthropologist* 81 (1979): 773-790; Joel Sherzer, *Kuna Ways of Speaking: An Ethnographic Perspective* (Texas, 1983); Charles Briggs, *Competence in Performance: The Creativity of Tradition in Mexicano Verbal Art* (Pennsylvania, 1988); Gary Gossen, *Chamulas in the World of the Sun: Time and Space in a Maya Oral Tradition* (Harvard, 1974); Roger Abrahams, *Everyday Life: A Poetics of Vernacular Practices* (Pennsylvania, 2005).

Session 7 (February 22)

Playing games with words. William Labov, "Rules for ritual insults," in *Language in the Inner City: Studies in the Black English Vernacular* (Pennsylvania, 1972), pp. 297-353; John McDowell, "Sociolinguistic contours in the verbal art of Chicano children," in *Spanish in the United States: Sociolinguistic Aspects*, Lucia Elias-Olivares and Jon Amaestae (ed.). Cambridge, 1982), pp. 333-353.

Additional readings: Iona and Peter Opie, *The Lore and Language of Schoolchildren* (Oxford, 1959); Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett and Mary Sanches (ed.), *Speech Play: Research and Resources for the Study of Linguistic Creativity* (Pennsylvania, 1976); Susan Stewart, *Nonsense: Aspects of Intertextuality in Folklore and Literature* (Johns Hopkins, 1979); John McDowell, *Children's Riddling* (IU, 1979); Elliott Oring, *Jokes and their Relations* (Kentucky, 1992).

Session 8 (March 1)

Conversational poetics. John Gumperz, "Prosody in conversation," in *Discourse Strategies* (Cambridge, 1982), pp. 100-129; John McDowell, "The poetic rites of conversation," *Journal of Folklore Research* 22 (1985): 113-132.

Additional readings: Roger Abrahams, "Introductory remarks toward a rhetorical theory of

folklore, *Journal of American Folklore* 81 (1968): 143-158; Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Pennsylvania, 1981); Keith Basso, "'Stalking with stories': names, places, and moral narratives among the Western Apache," in E. Bruner (ed.), *Text, Play, and Story: The Construction and Reconstruction of Self and Society* (American Ethnological Society, 1984); Richard Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies in Oral Narrative* (Cambridge, 1986); Ilhan Basgoz, "Digression in oral narrative: a case study of individual remarks by Turkish romance tellers," *Journal of American Folklore* 99 (1986): 5-20.

Session 9 (March 8)

Narrative poetics. Lauri Honko, "Introduction: epics along the silk roads; mental text; performance and written codification," *Oral Tradition* 11 (1996): 1-17; John McDowell, "The corrido of greater Mexico as discourse, music, and event," in Roger Abrahams and Richard Bauman (ed.), *And Other Neighborly Names": Social Process and Cultural Image in Texas Folklore*, (Texas, 1981), pp. 44-75.

Additional readings: Vladimir Propp, *The Morphology of the Folktale* (Texas, 1968); Dennis Tedlock, *Finding the Center: Narrative Poetry of the Zuni Indians* (Dial, 1972); John Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Indiana, 1991); John McDowell, *Poetry and Violence: The Ballad Tradition of Mexico's Costa Chica* (Illinois, 2000); Michael Jackson, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression, and Intersubjectivity*, (University of Copenhagen, 2002); John Johnson (ed.), *Son-Jara: The Mande Epic* (IU, 2003).

Session 10 (March 22)

Ceremonial speech. Michelle Rosaldo, "I have nothing to hide: the language of Ilongot oratory," *Language in Society* 2 (1983): 193-223; John McDowell, "The semiotic constitution of Kamsá ritual language," *Language in Society* 12 (1983): 23-46.

Additional readings: Greg Urban, "Ceremonial dialogues in South America," *American Anthropologist* 88 (1986): 371-386; Nora and Richard Dauenhauer (ed.), *Haa Tuwunáagu Yis, for Healing Our Spirit* (Washington, 1990).

Session 11 (March 29)

Ritual language. Michael Brown, "The role of words in Aguaruna hunting magic," *American Ethnologist* 11 (1984): 545-558; John McDowell, "From expressive language to mythemes: meaning in mythic narratives," in *Myth, A New Symposium*, (ed.) William Hansen and Gregory Schrempf (IU, 2002), pp. 29-45.

Additional readings: Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (Dutton, 1961); Richard Bauman and Joel Sherzer (ed.), *Explorations in the Ethnography of Speaking* (Cambridge, 1974); David Murray, "Ritual communication: some considerations regarding meaning in Navajo ceremonials," in J. Dolgin et. al. (ed.), *Symbolic Anthropology: A Reader in the Study of Symbols and Meanings* (Columbia, 1977); Annette Weiner, "From words to objects to magic: hard words and the boundaries of social interaction," *Man*, n.s. 18 (1983): 690-709.

III **doing ethnopoetics**

The book: John McDowell, *“So Wise Were Our Elders”*: *Mythic Narratives of the Kamsá*. (Kentucky, 1994).

Session 12 (April 5)

Documenting oral performances. Barre Toelken, “The ‘pretty language’ of Yellowman: genre, mode and texture in Navajo coyote narratives,” *Genre 2* (1969):211-235.

Additional readings: Elizabeth Fine, *The Folklore Text: From Performance to Print* (Indiana, 1984); Richard Flores, *Los Pastores: History and Performance in the Mexican Shepherd’s Play of South Texas* (Smithsonian, 1995); Dwight Reynolds, *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Epic Tradition* (Cornell, 1995).

Session 13 (April 12)

Transcribing ethnopoetry. Dennis Tedlock, “On the translation of style in oral narrative,” *Journal of American Folklore 84* (1971): 114-133.

Additional readings: Peter Seitel, *See So that We May See: Performances and Interpretations of Traditional Tales from Tanzania* (Indiana, 1980); Dennis Tedlock, *The Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* (Pennsylvania, 1983); Larry Evers and Felipe Molina, *Yaqui Deer Songs* (Arizona, 1987).

Session 14 (April 19)

Translating ethnopoetry. John McDowell, “Collaborative ethnopoetics: a view from the Sibundoy Valley,” in *Translating Native American Verbal Art: Ethnopoetics and Ethnography of Speaking*, Marta de Gerdes, Kay Sammons, and Joel Sherzer (ed.). (Smithsonian Institution Press, 2000), pp. 211-232.

Additional readings: Karl Kroeber (ed.), *Traditional American Indian Literatures: Texts and Interpretations* (Nebraska, 1981); Ellen Basso (ed.), *Native Latin American Cultures through their Discourse* (Folklore Institute, 1990); Brian Swann (ed.), *On the Translation of Native American Texts* (Smithsonian, 1992).

Session 15 (April 26)

Presenting ethnopoetry. Dell Hymes, 1989. "Tlingit poetics." *Journal of Folklore Research 26*: 236-48.

Additional readings: Melville Jacobs, *The Content and Style of an Oral Literature* (Chicago, 1959); Jerome Rothenberg, *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, and Oceania* (Anchor, 1969); Brian Swann (ed.), *Smoothing the Ground: Essays on Native American Oral Literature* (California, 1983); Nora and Richard Dauenhauer (ed.), Joel Sherzer, *Verbal Art in San Blas: Kuna Culture through its Discourse* (Cambridge, 1990); Charles Briggs and Julian Vigil (ed.), *The Lost Gold Mine of Juan Mondragón* (Arizona, 1990);

Dell ymes, *Now I Know Only So Far: Essays in Ethnopoetics*, (Nebraska, 2003).