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EXPERIENTIALITY IN THE NARRATIVE

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As John H. McDowell points out in his article "Beyond Iconicity: Ostension in Kamsá Mythic Narrative," narrative may be seen as a method of recapitulating an experience by using verbal sequences to match the actual sequence of events. This, he states, may be viewed as experiential iconism, borrowing the term from Nils Erik Enkvist. In this respect, the text "becomes an icon of experience" (McDowell 1982:121). It is McDowell's contention that the iconicity "resides in the capacity of the discourse to replicate a chain of temporal juncture located in some experiential substrate. Narratives are verbal icons of experience in that they reproduce intact (or allow for the recovery) an ordered sequence of events presumably encountered beyond the narrative itself" (1982:122). Narratives, then, are presumed to transcend the realm of mere discourse and to operate as "shifters," to use a term from Roman Jakobson, that allow both the narrator and his audience to enter two planes of existence simultaneously--the realm of the here and now as participants in the discourse, and the then and there of the experience itself. This paper shall address this latter notion and will shed some light on the way(s) in which narrative accomplishes such a seemingly arduous task, that of being in two places at one. In order to achieve this end, two versions of the same narrative will be examined: one which is reported and exists primarily in the here and now, the second a performed version, existing both here and now as well as there and then. It is hoped that sufficient differences in the two versions will provide evidence as to the structural efficacy of the performed narrative toward "shifting" our senses and acting as an experiential icon.(1)

Experience is temporal and episodic. Interspersed throughout the "time" of our experiences are high and low points. Even in dramatic circumstances, such as a battle in war, there are moments when nothing happens. Equally temporal is narrative discourse. As Dennis Tedlock states,

"The spoken word is never delivered in the grey masses of boxed-in words we call prose: indeed, as much as half of the time spent in delivering spontaneous discourse is devoted to silence, and pausing is as much a part of the art of speaking as the vocal utterance of words itself" (1971:127). Indeed, in the performed version of the narrative used in this paper, fully one minute out of its total four minute duration is devoted to silence.

More importantly than the use of one-fourth of the time for silence, however, is where and how the silence is employed. There are thirteen pauses in the introductory section, which I have deemed the scene section; eight in the initial action section; six in the main action section; and eight in the resolution. I would posit that these pauses accomplish several actions which directly influence the reactions of the narrative's audience. During the introductory section, the pauses may function as a means of allowing the listener time to enter the experience, to "shift" from "real" time to the story time. Pauses in the scene section could provide the listener with a chance to visualize the setting of the narrative and to localize the events to come in his own reservoir of experience. Pauses in the initial and main action section could serve a similar function, to allow the narrator to stress specific elements of the tale and to allow the listener time to share the experience. A slightly greater number of pauses in the resolution section could allow both the narrator and the listener time to unwind from the experience and to enter "real" time.

If my assumptions are correct, there should be a different amount and use of silence in the reported version, and indeed there is. The introductory section of the reported version has only two pauses, not much time to enter the narrative. The scene section likewise has two pauses. The initial and main action sections have been compressed into one element with the greatest number of pauses, four, and the resolution finishes with two pauses, not allowing much time to leave the narrative. Indeed, the listener has never really been allowed to enter the story, and so there is not much need for a device to allow him to leave.

Silence is not the only temporal aspect of the narrative that may be considered. As already indicated, the story is episodic, consisting of episodes that may be clearly delineated as shifting from one series of events to another. During each of the sections, specific words are stressed either by change in volume or by inflection, following a chronology of textual importance. In the performance of the entire narrative, there is a structural aesthetic, not unlike the composition of a musical piece, with an introductory statement, the introduction of theme, exposition on a theme, and resolution, each with specific "action-related" words being stressed. In structure, too, the reported version differs from the performed one; it contains far fewer stressed words, and its structure seems to have no real bearing on the narrative.

Yet another "shifter" that is incorporated into the performed version along with the stressing of words is speed. Words are manipulated per their duration, and the sense of time is altered. During the introductory section of the performed narrative, words are stated at an average of 2.4 words for every second, a rather slow pace, once again allowing time for the listener to enter the experience. The scene section increases speed slightly, signalling increasing involvement, but only achieves a rate of 3.1 words per second. The initial action section makes a jump to 3.7 words per second and the main action takes place at a rate of 4 words per second, reaching an amazing peak of 4.9 during a particularly active portion. The resolution of the performed narrative drops down to the normal 2.2 words per second, returning "real" time. As we have found with all the other "shifters," the reported version of our story does not match the performed version on this criterion. Although the entire reported version occurs somewhat faster on the average than the performed one, there is little variation in speed. The introductory section places 3.7 words per second, the scene section 3.3, initial and main section 3 words per second, and the resolution 3.6 words per second. It is almost as if the narrator here wants to "get the story over," so that he may go on to other things.

The change in speed during the performed version seems to equate in a closer way to the way

an experience might actually take place. The constant speed of the reported version seems to echo a text in print--it is all there at once. This distinction is a prime example of the role that time plays in narrative, as identified by Tedlock: "Foremost among paralinguistic devices that give shape to narrative and distinguish it from written prose...is the element of time" (1971:127).

Pitch is the final "shifter" used in achieving narrative experientiality. It has already been demonstrated that time may be altered through the use of pauses, episodic action and word rate. These devices offer the listener the opportunity to enter the realm of experience. Pitch, on the other hand, is the way of adding dramatic importance to the events of the narrative body. To facilitate an understanding of the use of pitch in the narrative, each piece (performed and reported) has been transcribed in graph notation, an idea borrowed from ethnomusicology, specifically the work of James Reid (1977). In the transcriptions, dots have been placed equi-distantly in a series of five lines. The space between each dot is one word of the narrative, transcribed above the lines. The five lines represent relative pitch in the narrative, with the middle line representing normal speaking pitch, and the two above and below representing high and low extremes.

In the introductory section of the performed narrative, it appears that the pitch remains in the area of normal speaking, occasionally dipping below it in the very beginning, intermittently jumping above it at stressed words. The scene section does likewise. As stated earlier, I would theorize that this is due to the relatively undramatic nature of this section of the narrative. Its chief role is to allow the listener the opportunity to enter the narrative, and as such, a great deal of dramatic pitch alteration would be unwise. In the initial action section, however, the pitch is gradually raised one level, so that by its completion, it is operative at a higher level of pitch, and subsequently of involvement. During the main action sequence, the performer not only sustains this higher level of pitch involvement, but is alternating within the uppermost reaches of speech pitch limitations.

The main level ends with a drop down to normal pitch levels, and the narrative ends, slightly higher than normal, but normal than not.

In the matter of pitch, as in all other aspects presented, the performed version has not failed to deviate from the reported one. Throughout the reported version, speech maintains an even flow within the normal pitch range, with only occasional excursions into the first pitch level above normal. The reported version is just that, reported. It has no more dramatic impact than an objective newspaper account of a new traffic light.

As Henry Glassie states, "stories are narratives, artfully ordered to do the serious work of entertainment" (1982:40). I would add that entertainment works only through involvement, and that **involvement** is one of the primary tasks of the narrative. In this paper I have attempted to show how that involvement, the shift from the here and now to the then and there, is accomplished. I have deliberately stayed away from devices such as detail expansion or word play, for I believe that they have been covered and are being covered in sufficient manner. I have chosen, rather, to focus on the elements of narrative that seem to directly affect time, for time shifting is essential to narrative involvement. I have attempted to show, by comparing reported and performed versions of the same narrative, that there are several elements within narrative structure that can alter time in this way. Pauses within the narrative may function to provide the listener with time to enter the narrative, visualize the setting and localize the events, as well as providing the narrator with a manner in which to stress specific elements of his tale. The stressing of words may act within the narrative as a compositional device, giving the narrative the added dimension of a structured aesthetic. Further, the speed with which different portions of the narrative are told, enable the narrator to approximate a dramatic situation, one in which events do not happen all at the same pace. Finally, pitch alteration is a means of adding importance to the narrative, helping to sweep the listener away in the action of the moment. These elements of the performed narrative

moment. These elements of the performed narrative, create the "real from the unreal," the there and then, in the here and now.

NOTES

1. This narratives were collected on the night of April 2, 1983, in Bloomington, Indiana in a local gathering spot commonly frequented by folklorists. The informant wishes to remain anonymous.

Performed Version
Introductory section

this densely wooded area so we started on this expedition out toward uh out toward the wooded area to search
dark there was an area where people would uh bring their kids and stuff and then sur- rounding it there was all
cities of gold and uh so we headed out into the um more dense area of the woods you know of this
cided as you know things happen when when you get stoned that we were to go on a search for the seven
we'd get real high see and um this one this one after noon we got real stoned at lunch and we de-
we used to go down to this this park at lunch time and uh that's how we'd spend our lunch hours and

Scene setting section

woods there was this little clearing that was right at the top of the stream and there were these uh there were
 just a little way off in the distance like maybe I don't know 50 60 yards away from us in the uh
 this little stream that was running through the woods and we came up through uh through the bushes and we could see
 in the darkest darkest continent now we were really roughing it and um we started going through the woods and there's
 these long rods to help us beat our way through the brush 'cause we were explor- ers you know we were
 for the seven cities of gold and you know we started going single file and we started picking up these

the pygmies but uh still in the woods so they couldn't see us and a couple of us would come up from
 us would go on the other side of the stream and go down um stream till we got across the stream from
 to make our plans 'bout how we would uh we'd sur- round the pygmies and we made plans where a couple of
 plovers and we had to try and um and uh get by these pygmies and so we crouched down and we started
 fire a every thing but uh to us they weren't uh cub scouts they were pygmies you see we were the ex-
 these cub scouts that were down there and they they were making a little camp down there they were buildin' a camp

all the water splash- ing and every- thing scream- ing
 and um you know thcse of us who were on the other side of the stream came runnin across the stream with
 from them and um at * a at a given signal you know like some- body yelled, and we all came runnin out
 there we were a couple of us behind them and a couple of us on the other side of the uh stream
 every- thing to to darken our- selves to act as camo- flage and so we put uh we put mud on our faces and
 behind the so we had them com- pletely sur- rounded and um we put uh we put mud on our faces and

and they all just freaked out and ran away and we just sat there laughing and uh and uh col- lecting our spoils, the other way and another kid just stood there with his leg in the fire almost till he caught on fire you know blind he ran smack into a tree and uh bounced off the tree and uh just got up and kept on going in just like ran off in one direc- tion and uh he i mean he was so excited he couldn't even see he was mies they didn't know what to do they started running around in circles an' started to really freak out and this one kid

our hands and the people be- hind them came run- ing out going yi yi yi yi yi the uh the pyg-

Resolution section
 from the uh from the attack because it was a successful attack we sat there and uh and couple of us had cub
 scout hats on and uh well that was it we had successful attack we fully defeated the pygmies then we went collected ourselves
 and washed our faces off and went back to school but you know we just thought it was a scream
 and washed our faces off and went back to school but you know we just thought it was a scream

Reported version

going to go on um an adventure and went looking for the seven cities of gold and so we went walkin' through the
 well you see what happened was we went down to this park for lunch and got really high and um decided that we were

the forest and um that was it and then we went back to school i guess you hadda be there
 didn't hurt them um or anything um but we chased them away and had uh successfuly been the adven-
 turers in them and uh and chased them away we had made this plan where we would at-
 tack 'em and chase 'em away we woods till we found this group of cub scout and we de-
 cided that they were pyg- mies and so we at- tack

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 = pauses in narration