

# **The Traveller and the Hare: Meaning, Function, and Form in the Recontextualization of Narrative**

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In the summer of 1988, I was in Scotland at a ceilidh in Duncan Williamson's living room. It was a gathering of friends, family, and fellow performers that took place following a more formal public ceilidh earlier that evening. During the course of the evening, Duncan told "The Traveller and the Hare," a narrative I had heard him perform several times the year before. This time he stumbled over one line of the narrative, most likely because he had "quite a dram on him" as they say in Scotland (as had many other ceilidh participants), and opened himself up to the mocking laughter of the ceilidh participants. Duncan regained control of the audience and continued his narrative with a virtuosity that both made up for his infelicitous mistake and commented on the laughter's implicit critique of his drinking habits. Duncan's story struck me as not a breakthrough into performance, in the sense Dell Hymes defines this term (Hymes 1975), but as a breakthrough from performance to a highly saturated performance.

Duncan's performance provides an opportunity to explore the active and creative role of the narrator in adapting traditional narrative resources to the needs of the ongoing performance interaction. Richard Bauman and Charles Briggs suggest a theoretical framework for investigating how discourse can be separated from one situational context and then recontextualized through performance in another context (Bauman and Briggs 1990:72-78). I will explore some features of the process of recontextualization by examining the emergent properties of Duncan's 1988 performance of "The Traveller and the Hare" in relation to performances of this narrative I recorded in 1987. In particular, I will explore how one narrator can recontextualize a narrative in performance as a rhetorical resource for accomplishing social business both grounded in and transcending the performance event. This will lead me to comment on how a performer can set up a hierarchy of

linguistic functions in performance and use an ambiguous hierarchy of function to accomplish multiple social functions in a single communicative act.

“The Traveller and the Hare” is a narrative that Duncan frequently performs. Certain formal features of the narrative remain constant from performance to performance and can thus be considered entextualized resources available to Duncan in any given performance event. Before I examine the formal features of the 1988 performance which contributed to its uniqueness, I will examine three previous performances of this narrative in order to identify the formal features and strands of meaning that were brought into the 1988 event.

In this discussion, I am intentionally avoiding the question of the ontological status of the entextualized narrative. For the present argument it is sufficient to suggest that this narrative may exist as a memory or potential performance that is accessible to the performer. My focus is to explore the competence of Duncan Williamson as performer. The meanings that I discover in Duncan’s narrative must therefore be seen as partly my interpretation instead of as existing in objective form (Braid 1996).

### **Previous Performances of “The Traveller and the Hare”**

In the fall of 1987, I recorded three performances of “The Traveller and the Hare” from Duncan Williamson during a visit I arranged for him in the U.S. It is possible to extract several entextualized features of the narrative from continuities that exist between these three performances. Other narratives that I recorded from Duncan both in Scotland (1985, 1988) and in the U.S. (1987) exhibit a remarkable continuity in both the content and the performance style. I suggest, therefore, that it is the dynamics of the performance event that are responsible for the changes in the 1988 performance.

The three 1987 texts are similar despite the different performance contexts. I have chosen to focus here on the text I recorded on October 15, 1987. The performance was recorded during a public concert that took place in Kane Hall at the University of Washington. The concert was advertised as an evening of “Traditional Stories and Ballads from Scotland” and featured Duncan as sole performer. While the event was set up to be informal, the microphones for the sound recording and the physical arrangement of the performer and audience added a sense of formality (cf. Irvine 1979:778–79). This becomes clear in the politeness of many of Duncan’s comments as he interacted with the audience—often referring to them as “ladies and gentlemen.” He was clearly conscious of performing for a group of people who, though familiar with the storytelling art form, were not knowledgeable about Scotland or the Travelling People.

The Traveller and the Hare—1987<sup>1</sup>

- 1 The local Travelling man, like myself, traveled through  
Scotland for many years.  
He had never married and he didn't have any family.
- And one day he was far away in the West Highlands  
when he took a thought to himself,  
5 and he said to himself,  
"You know I'm getting old.  
And I've traveled far and I've seen many things. But what  
have I got for it? Nothing!"  
He said, "I'll have to do something I can't go on like this."  
And he's walking on talking to himself.
- 10 He said, "You're terrible.  
You haven't a penny to your name.  
All you have is the clothes that stand on your back.  
And you're hungry."  
Talking away to himself.
- 15 Then beside the wood  
he came to a little field.  
And in the field sat a great big brown hare.  
Eating away at the grass, you know? [hand gesture of hare's ears?]  
And he stopped.
- 20 And he looked at the brown hare,  
and he smiled to himself.  
He said at last,  
"I've found my fortune."  
And the hare sat on eating away at the grass.
- 25 He said, "I'm going out to that field and I'm going to catch that hare.  
And I'm going to take it to the butcher and sell it, for two-and-  
sixpence."  
"And," he says, "With that two-and-six I'm going to the local  
market and I'm going to buy myself a little pig.  
And I'm going to breed with that little pig and I'm going to get  
some more pigs  
and I'm going to sell them."  
30 And the hare's still eatin away at the grass,  
payin no attention.

- And he says, "Then I'm going to start myself a little piggery  
and get many many pigs."  
And the hare's still eatin away at the grass. [hand gesture + laughter]  
35 "And then," he says "I'm going to get myself a nice young wife to  
run my pig farm."  
(?) [laughter with wiggling fingers as rabbit ears?]  
Paying no attention to him.  
"And," he says, "Then I'm going to get two lovely young boys  
and I'm going to grow them up to work for me."  
40 By this time I'll be retired and I'll have plenty of money."  
And the hare is still eatin away at the grass. [quiet laughter]  
"And," he says, "These boys will be lazy they'll not be lazy.  
Because I'll (?) and make them work hard.  
And they'll not lie in their beds in the morning and sleep."  
45 **GET UP YOUSE LAZY BOYS!** [shouted]  
And the hare got such a fright, it was off. [laughter]  
And he watched it disappear in the distance.  
And he said to himself, "Well," as he turned away,  
"It could have happened." [laughter and applause]
- (TS87016)

There are a number of features of this narrative that remain constant through all three 1987 versions and the 1988 version. Most fundamental is the basic plot outline of the narrative.

- I A lone Traveller is wandering the roads having second thoughts about his wasted life. He talks to himself commenting on his lacks.
- II He sees a hare eating grass in a field and claims to himself that he has found his fortune.
- III The Traveller recounts the sequence of actions that will result in his fortune and the development of his new life.
- IV In parallel with this narration are references to the hare's continued eating—oblivious to its certain demise.
- V The Traveller gets carried away with his fantasy and shouts—"Get up youse lazy boys!"—an action which scares off the hare.
- VI The Traveller, now alone, suggests the whole sequence was only a possibility—"It could have happened."

This sequence of events actually involves a number of interconnected frames that are created in the course of the event (Goffman 1974:82). The largest frame (frame A) I will consider here is of the concert itself. This frame is what Richard Bauman following Roman Jakobson calls the narrative event

(Bauman 1986:2). This frame is clearly marked by the physical arrangement of the space, the event advertisements, and my behavior and comments in introducing Duncan. These markers set up the expectation that Duncan will assume responsibility for a display of communicative competence in the genres of storytelling and ballad singing. The frame invokes conventionalized understandings of what behaviors are expected to take place and how the audience should interpret those behaviors. These conventionalized understandings and linguistic conventions, which transcend this event but are implicit in the framing, become resources which are available to Duncan to use or to manipulate in his performance. It is within this frame that Duncan recontextualizes his narrative.

Duncan uses formal features of the narrative to generate or suggest nested interpretational frames. Lines 1–3 introduce and frame the narrated event (Frame B). The content of these lines also contextualizes this frame—setting it away in the West Highlands of Scotland. The event is projected to some unstated time in the past through the use of past tense which acts as a shifter, referentially indexing the narrated event (Silverstein 1976). Duncan further contextualizes the “hero” in line 1 by making the comment “like myself.” This brief comment references the audience’s entire knowledge of Duncan and the Travellers, including knowledge gleaned through the event publicity, the performance introduction, and Duncan’s performances of and comments about Traveller folklore. This knowledge becomes a resource that is used by the listeners in understanding the narrated event.

A third frame (Frame C) is keyed by the meta-narrational comments in Lines 4 and 14 (Babcock 1977:68). These comments key the present tense dialogue as being the Traveller’s comments to himself within the narrated event. Lines 5–13 take place within this frame. The comments serve to contextualize further the narrated event by giving details of the Traveller’s age, history, poverty, and hunger. In parts II–VI, frames B and C maintain their relationship within the narrative. But there is a temporary reframing (frame D) that is crucial to the efficacy and meaning of the narrative. In lines 25–45, the Traveller spins out his daydream of how the hare in the field will prove to be his fortune. His thoughts are portrayed as future actions, but they are also expressed with a certainty and detail suggesting that the events are actually occurring for the Traveller in the narrative. This sequence of events is contrasted with the presumed actual state of events (frame B) by the parallel descriptions of the hare in lines 24, 30–31, 34, 36–37 and 41 (e.g. “And the hare sat on, eating away at the grass”). These lines remind the listener that the Traveller’s projected future action really is a creation of his mind. In this sense, they frame his thoughts as a “self-fabrication” or “self-deception” (Goffman 1974:111–16) to be contingently accepted as actually taking place as the narrative unfolds (cf. Gallie 1964:29–50). The repeated descriptions

of the hare also act as a meta-narrative comment on the absurdity of the Traveller's fabrication by creating a tension between the earnestness and detail of his vision and the fact that the hare, long since sold to the butcher within the fabrication, continues eating and calmly paying the Traveller no attention at all (see especially lines 31 and 37). Listening to the audience's reactions to this tension is one source of the narrative's humor. The Traveller's sudden shout in line 45, "GET UP YOUSE LAZY BOYS," scares the hare off and thus discredits the self-deception by removing its one tenuous link to reality. The fantasy world (frame D) and the frame of the narrated event (frame B) collapse together leaving the Traveller alone, poor, and hungry as he was in the beginning of the narrative. The audience also perceives this sudden turn of events as humorous. The Traveller, deprived of the wondrous results of his dream, is calm and reflective as he comments in line 48-9: "Well . . . it could have happened."

I do not believe that this narrative is only a humorous anecdote. There is another layer of significance implicit in the unfolding of the narrative events that reframes the Travelling man's actions in a way that reveals one main strand of the narrative's entextualized meaning. By labeling the main character of this narrative a Traveller, the storyteller uses the audience's knowledge about the Travellers to contextualize his story. The character's direct speech ambiguously coexists as present tense speech in the narrative event and as reported speech from the narrated event (Jakobson 1960:370-71). This uncertainty of reference creates the possibility that the Traveller's comments are not purely fictional but that they might accurately reflect general Traveller experience. Note that lines 1-3 do not frame this narrative as a folktale but leave open the possibility that it could be interpreted as a true experience narrative. The depiction of the Traveller in the narrative is therefore suggested to be metonymical of actual Traveller life and experience. To a non-Traveller it is believable that a person living in poverty, uncertainty, and hunger might long for the security of a house, a stable job, and family.

But the disappointment of having made nothing of himself, his dream to settle down and create a cozy life, and the whole future orientation that can be seen to permeate American (Dundes 1969), and perhaps European, worldview is antithetical to Traveller ideology.<sup>2</sup> As Duncan once explained to me with respect to the fact that Traveller stories never ended with "and they lived happily ever after":

DW      They never, no, never married the princess and lived happy ever after in my stories. You see the Travelling tales, Travelling stories, there were no ever happy ever after, or once upon a time. There were no once upon a time. You'll never find any of my stories once upon a time or happy ever after.

- DB Is that the Travellers' way?  
 DW That was the Travellers' way.  
 DB —with the future.  
 DW You were na. You see the Travellers didna live for one day. Who was going to know if they were gonnae live happy ever after. See what I mean?  
 DB Yeah.  
 DW So according to the Travellers they only lived one day at a time.

(TS87015)

Similar sentiments about living only for one day have been expressed by Betsy Whyte in her autobiography (Whyte 1990:17). But perhaps the most succinct statement of this belief comes from an article by Timothy Neat where he quotes an Aberdeenshire Traveller's comments about the distinctions between Travellers and tramps:

To differentiate himself from a windmilling tramp from Donegal, an Aberdeenshire Traveller remarked, “that kind of lad's not one of us—Charlie Doyle just lives from day to day—but we, we live entirely in the past.” (Neat 1979:40)

This comment adds an important insight to the nature of Travellers' day-to-day living. Unlike tramps who are solitary and live without ties to the past or future, the Travellers' day-to-day life is informed with powerful shared traditions.

For the Travellers, and those who understand their culture, the actions of the Traveller in the narrative are based on the cultural absurdity that a Traveller would accept the settled population's values, be ashamed of his previous life, and wish to imitate the settled folk. The narrative manages to comment on the apparent sensibility of the Travellers' change of life plan by following this proposed life plan *reductio ad absurdum*. The illusion of security is humorously revealed to collapse at the slightest provocation—the shout that scared off the hare—thus vindicating the Traveller worldview. In lines 46–49 the Traveller is returned to his senses, literally (to his eyes and ears) in the narrative frame, and culturally in his reflection on the previous events from within Traveller ideology. His detached comment, “Well . . . it could have happened,” reflects the uncertainty of the future implicit in Traveller worldview. From this perspective, the narrative can be seen as an object lesson about the value of deeply held cultural beliefs. Whether it is told to a Traveller or non-Traveller audience, this narrative can situate these cultural values within an imagined context that explicates their validity. To an outsider the

narrative may only function to teach about the Traveller worldview. To a Traveller the narrative may be a vehicle for enculturation. One further possibility emerges from a comment by Betsy Whyte about Travellers who actually choose to hide their Traveller background, abandon their Traveller beliefs, and live in houses as if they were settled folk (Whyte 1990:87). The narrative may be a critique of this self-denial of Traveller heritage.

One additional fragment of cultural context is less central but is still relevant to the logic of the narrative. To those who know the Travellers, there is a clue that something is very wrong from the beginning of the narrative. Traveller culture is based on very close ties between individuals especially at the family level. Timothy Neat describes Travellers as having a "highly communal family culture" (Neat 1979:40). The fact that this Traveller has chosen a solitary lifestyle already indicates there is something marginal about him with respect to Traveller norms. This marginality creates a logical context for the Traveller's lapse in his attempt to embrace the settled ideology. The final line might be read as a statement of relief in that the Traveller was returned to his senses just in time to avoid actually going through with living his life in non-Traveller ways.

Both the humor of the situation and the underlying lesson in cultural values can thus be seen as aspects of meaning in this narrative. The resources by which these meanings are implemented in performance, the formal features, and the structure and aspects of content show continuity between all three versions of this narrative I recorded in 1987. I suggest that these resources are carried as part of the entextualized narrative into novel performance events such as the 1988 ceilidh in which Duncan recontextualizes this narrative.

### **The 1988 Ceilidh**

Duncan retold "The Traveller and the Hare" in the context of the 1988 ceilidh. Several features of this event are integral to understanding the emergent properties of the recontextualized narrative. The evening started with a public ceilidh in the nearby town of Strathmiglo. This ceilidh was organized and emceed by Duncan Williamson. A number of friends from around the region, both Traveller and non-Traveller, had come specifically to perform in this event. The performances were formal with Duncan providing introductions and performances of his own. When this event ended, most of the performers and their friends returned to Lizziewell's farm, Duncan's home at that time. The living room was filled with people and the tins of ale and bottles of whiskey that they had brought with them.

Unlike other ceilidhs I had attended where the rule was explicitly "tell a story, sing a sang, show your bum, or out you gang," this ceilidh



was less focused. It is important to note that the event took place in Duncan's living room and he therefore felt the responsibility, as host, to see that the event went well. He had the informal role of "master of ceremonies," calling upon people to contribute to the entertainment. Many times Duncan called upon individuals to perform a story or ballad, and he rarely took no for an answer. In his requests Duncan frequently extolled the person's competence in performance. When ballads or narratives were being performed, group attention was focused on the requested performance. At other times, instrumental music filled the air, holding the attention of some while others engaged in small group conversations.

One fundamental ceilidh rule seemed to be that everyone must have their trochs, or drinking glasses, full to the brim with alcoholic beverage at all times. As host, Duncan took the role of policing the liquid level in glasses. The frequent cry "Is anyone needing their trochs filled?" came from Duncan regularly. Those who did not have to drive that evening had no excuse for an "empty troch," as Duncan teasingly let them know. The topic of alcohol consumption also permeated a great deal of conversation and performance time. Songs, stories, jokes, and speech plays about drinking were performed as the evening progressed.

In order to capture the sense of the ceilidh and the prevalence of the focus on alcohol, I present here the segment of conversation which includes Duncan's request that Betsy Whyte sing a song. Since I am primarily interested in the content of this conversation, I have transcribed only one thread of conversation and have ignored several voices where they are masked by louder voices with similar intents—DW = Duncan Williamson; WM = Willie MacPhee; BW = Betsy Whyte; RK = Robin Kuller; SD = Sheila Douglas; SG = Susan Grizzell. Betsy's ballad performance, which follows this conversation, immediately preceded Duncan's narration.

- DW     Eh? Whose troch is empty? And then we'll hae another  
           song--from Sheila. Oh a wee song from Betsy for a  
           change. Eh? Whose trough is empty? Bella your troch is  
           empty. Willie?
- WM     No thanks I've had enough.
- DW     You're asleep. Ted's not getting any more [laughter]. Your troch  
           are okay. And eh Gavin? You're fine. And you're sitting all  
           right. And Ted—you're no going anywhere so where's your  
           troch? Donald and Sue's no going anywhere tonight. Neither  
           is Alec or (?). And Sheila Douglas is no going to drive tonight.  
           So. Alex you're you're just free. So. Anyway it's my, it's my  
           troch. I - I - H - I my own troch! I forgot about myself!
- BW     It's your ain troch.

- DW I was so interested (?) other people I forgot about myself. Wait till you hear this.
- RK Well there's no much in that one.
- DW Ah it's no much.
- RK Are you going to sing a song for us?
- SD Betsy, Betsy.
- SG Let Betsy sing Duncan.
- SD Something about the silly old man.
- DW Aye, Betsy is going to sing us a song.
- SD I like that one.
- BW I was going to sing "The Isle of France."
- SD Well sing that.
- DW Oh! "The Isle of France." Go on, "The Isle of France."
- BW It's a ballad you know. Mind I'm no singer.
- SG Yes you are!
- DW Ahhh. You're just kidding yourself. You're no kidding us all right.
- BW [Starts singing "The Isle of France."]

As the applause was dying down from Betsy's song, Duncan took control of the ceilidh in his role as emcee and began the following narrative. The performance is highly marked by various poetic devices. I have avoided loading this transcription with too much of this detail since I will return to a description of some of these poetic devices in a later section of this paper. In order to preserve the clarity that is afforded through paralinguistic features in the verbal performance, I have rendered the text in three distinct styles. The words of narration and meta-narration are presented in roman type. The two "voices" of direct speech which emerge in the frame of the narrated event are distinguished from the narrator's voice and each other by italics and underlined text respectively. These two voices, though they exhibit a full range of expressive qualities, are distinguished in performance by intonational and timbral qualities as well as contextual features within the narrative. The "he said" and similar phrases are included in the typographic styling of these segments of direct speech, since they are usually marked similarly in performance. This marking may result from an intentional redundancy in performance that lessens the ambiguity of their reference.

### **The Traveller and the Hare—1988**

- 101 Wonderful Betsy Wonderful! [applause continues]  
 Okay.  
 So.  
 The old Travelling man had travelled far that morning.

- 105 He was alone.  
 He'd travelled far and wide.  
 He was hungry, -he was down and out he was poor.  
 His shoes were coming through—his soles were coming through  
 the shoes of his feet toes was coming through [gentle laughter  
 builds in intensity]
- 110 He was hungry, he never had a **bite all day long**. [Laughter increases  
 in intensity. Duncan's volume increases to reassert control.]  
 He says to himself, [as the laughter dies away, Duncan's voice  
 returns to normal]  
 "Something must be done about you chap.  
*Something must be done about you chap,*" he said. [laughter]  
 So he stopped.
- 115 He said, "Listen.  
 Consider yourself."  
 Talking to his self. [Laughter still gently in background]  
He said, - "Who do you think you are talking to?" / He says, "I'm  
 talking to you." [laughter]  
"Me," he said, "you are talking to me?"
- 120 *I said "Oh I'm talking to you."*  
 He said, "Listen.  
*you never did a honest day's work in your life."*  
 "Oh," he says, "you work at the farms you get a couple of shillings  
 you blow it and you go on and you travel on."  
 He says, "You know—you're coming up forty?"
- 125 "Well," he says, "maybe I am."  
 "You're coming up forty years of age," he says, "you've no wife,  
 you've no home,  
 you've no family,  
 you've nothing.
- 130 *What have you got to show for yourself for all your years walking  
 on the road?*  
*People," he says, "got jobs.*  
*They've homes and houses. / You've nothing.*  
*My old mother," he said, "would be ashamed of you."* [laughter]  
He says, "What can I do about myself then?" [laughter]
- 135 "Well," he says, "it's your own fault."  
"Ah," he said, "I'll change it though. I'll change it."  
 "Well," he said, "sure change it. You bet you can."  
 He's talking to himself you know?  
 So.
- 140 He said, "Look.

- You walked all day didn't you?* [laughter]  
*You came over hills and down dales and you walked all along  
 and you have nothing to show for it.*  
*You are hungry aren't?* / "Oh," he said, "I'm hungry." [Laughter]  
 145 *"And you're poor, not a penny in your pocket?"* / "Oh," he said,  
       "not a penny, not a penny." [Duncan's words swallowed by  
       laughter]  
*"Well," he says, "take a look at yourself."*  
"I'm looking at myself," he says. [Laughter]  
"I'm looking at myself," he said, "so I am," he said, "I'm looking  
       at myself."  
*"Well," he says, "look, -you'll have to start a new life."*  
 150 "(Och?) where am I going to start it?"

And then-he stopped.

Because he'd stopped beside a green field, ladies and gentlemen.

And sitting in the field was a big - brown - hare.

Sitting with it's two lugs up like that [demonstrates using index +  
 second finger wiggling in the air—laughter]

- 155 *Sitting-picking-at the grass-eating away.*  
*And he looked across and he said, "Ha Ha Ha," he said,  
 "hahahahaha," he said, "You have you you called me a fool didn't  
       you?"*

*"Well," he said, "I did."*

Telling he's talking to himself. / He said, "Talking to a fool." / *He  
 said, "I called you a fool."*

- 160 "You think," he said, "I spent my all my life," he said, "wasting  
       my life all these years?"

*"Course you did," he said, "you're forty years of age," he said,  
       "no home, no wife, no nothing."*

"Ahh but," he says, "it's changed it right now," he says, "this minute  
       it's changed."

*"What do you think," he says, "why are you going to change it?"*

He says, "Look out there

- 165 sit a big brown hare."

Two lugs, [hand gesture again] - cropping the grass.

"Hahaha pal," he says,

"this is where my life  
 goes when I start."

- 170 He says, "I want no more talk fra you."

*"Okay," he said, "no more talk fra you. [Laughter] No more."*

- “Because,” he says, “out there in that field there sits a brown hare.  
 [laughter continues through this line]  
And,” he said, “that hare is going to make me my fortune.  
 [laugh]
- 175 Because, you see,” he said, “I’m going out there to catch that hare,  
and I’m going to take that hare to the butcher’s,  
and I’m going to sell that hare for two and six—half a croon.  
Hahaha. But,” he says, “I’m not going to spend it in drink! You  
think I’m going to spend it in drink!”  
*“I never said so,” he said, said the voice. [Loud laughter covers*  
*several words]*
- 180 He said, “No way,  
I’m no spendin it in drink.  
I’m going to go down to the market,” he said,  
“and I’m going to buy - myself - a piglet for two and six. [meas-  
ured spaced words]  
That’s all they’re worth-two and six.”  
*“Okay,” he says, “go buy a piglet for two and six,” said the voice.*  
*You see? [laughter]*
- 185 *“Buy yourself a piglet.*  
*But what are you going to do with it?”*  
“Oho,” he says, “what do you mean what am I going to do with it?  
I’m going to bring it up,” he said, “I’ll rear it up  
a sow piglet, not a male a female.” [laugh]
- 190 *“Okay, said the voice, “you do it.”*  
 [Andrew Douglas] It would be a boring story otherwise. [laughter  
 and some boos]  
 It’s not a boring story. [laughter]  
 So - he says  
*“OK go ahead get yourself a piglet.”*
- 195 So.  
 There sat the hare eating away - crumpling his two ears going in  
 the field. [Hand gesture again /laugh]  
“And,” he says, “after I get the hare I’m going to sell it for two  
and six.”  
*“Okay, so you’ve got yourself the two and six. What are you going*  
*to do next?”*
- 200 “Buy a piglet.  
And I’m gonna rear it up.”  
*“Okay you’re going to rear it up.”*  
“I’m gonna I’m gonna covered and I’m gonna (?) a lot of little  
piglets.

- And I'll sell all the piglets."  
 "Okay," said the voice he said, "you do that." [laughter]
- 205 "Well," he says, "that's what I'm gonna do."  
 So there sat the hare in the field, going away - croppin  
 with his ears going like that cropping away.[hand gesture]  
 "Now," he says, "what are you going to do next?"  
"Oho," he said, "what are you going to do next?" he said,
- 210 "What do you think I'm going to do next?" he says, "I'm going to  
rear them up,  
make them fat, and sell them.  
And then I'm going to get more money and I'm going to buy more  
piglets.  
And," he says, "I'm going to buy myself a little farm  
with the money I got from them.
- 215 And then I'm gonnae  
start - and be a pig breeder and have all many pigs."  
 And the voice said, "Well I hope you manage." / And the wee hare  
 sat there with his ears going. [hand gesture and laughter]  
 "And then," he said, "what are you going to do next?"  
"Oh what do you mean am I going to do next? I am going to get a  
wife," he said, "and marry her
- 220 and start a piggery." [laughter]  
 "Okay," said the voice, "go ahead." [laughter]  
 And the hare sat with his two ears, sitting like that [hand gesture]  
 in the field going and the hare never paid any attention to him.  
 And the voice said, "What are you going to do next?"  
And he said, "What do you think I am going to do I am going to  
marry and I am going to have two baby sons.
- 225 "Oh two sons oh two boys oh."  
"Yes I am going to have two boys.  
And by God," he said, "they'll no be as lazy as me-and they'll no  
be as lazy as me. [laughter]  
They'll never be as lazy as I was. I've wasted my life but they'll  
never waste their life.  
They'll get up every morning,
- 230 and they'll go to work,  
and they'll feed the pigs.  
**Boys!** [loudly]  
**GET UP!** [shouted]  
**IT'S TIME TO FEED THE PIGS!** [shouted]
- 235 And the wee hare got such a fright - it went off. [explosion of  
 laughter]

Loppity loppity loppity lop.  
 And he watched it disappear in the distance. [laughter]  
 And the hare disappeared and was gone. [laughter]  
 And he turned round and the voice said, "*Well are you pleased  
 are you pleased?*" / "Well," he said, "it could have happened."  
 [laughter and applause]  
 240 [Willie MacPhee] It could have happened. / DW—well it could've  
 / [Andrew Douglas] I couldn't resist that joke Duncan.  
 [Duncan Williamson] Aha OK. Its a' right Andrew. I I'll  
 forgive you. Anyway whose trough is empty? . . .  
 (TS88004)

This narrative contains entextualized aspects of the 1987 performance. There are, however, some differences which I will examine in an attempt to discover the role the performance context played in the recontextualization of the narrative.

The first line (101) of the narrative transcription is the second half of Duncan's framing of Betsy's ballad ("Wonderful, Betsy. Wonderful"). This comment derives from Duncan's role as master of ceremonies, but it also establishes Duncan's control of the ceilidh speech. Duncan then "self-selects," a legitimate move in this speech environment (Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974). The "Okay" of line 102 appears transitional as it is still partly covered by the applause from Betsy's song. But it also marks Duncan's intent to continue speaking. The "So" of line 103 acts as an initial marker (cf. Hymes 1981:318), orienting the listener to expect an extended turn of speech. This "So" also marks the initial segment of the narrative. It is a common marker for Duncan as he uses it also in lines 139 and 195 and in a less separated way in lines 114, 193, and 206. There is a second very important meaning in lines 102 and 103. As the initial framing markers of a narrative performance, they implicitly state that Duncan is assuming responsibility for a display of communicative competence that is open to the evaluation of the audience members (Hymes 1975:18–19). Note that this claim is a bold one since many people in the audience, competent performers themselves, are capable judges of performance.

After a short pause, the narrative proper begins. It closely follows the entextualized pattern recentered from previous narrations in lines 104–107. But then, things go wrong. Duncan makes an infelicitous slip. He garbles what I guess should have been "his feet were coming through the soles of his shoes" with lines 108 and 109: "His shoes were coming through—his soles were coming through the shoes of his feet / toes was coming through. . . ." The audience responds to this slip with loud laughter. This laughter can be interpreted as a challenge to Duncan's competence. This

challenge might profitably be termed a challenge to Duncan's "face," thereby invoking Goffman's insights on social value and the dynamics of self-image and social interaction (Goffman 1967). Duncan has based much of his private and public image on his competence as a storyteller. Duncan learned the value of stories very young and started performing at age seven (McDermitt 1979:142). Throughout his life, Duncan consciously sought out new stories from other Travellers and the settled people he met—thus gaining the admiration of other Travellers for having stories they had never heard. Among Travellers, Duncan is noted as a good storyteller. At the time of this recording, Duncan's competence as a storyteller had also gained him an international reputation among non-Travellers. Further, stories are extremely important to Travellers not only as entertainment, but also as vehicles of the memory of friends and family (Williamson 1981). The story that Duncan is performing will represent him in others' memories when he is gone (TS87001). It is, therefore, very important to Duncan to respond to this challenge to his competence.

There are mitigating circumstances to his slip. It is clear that both he and the rest of the ceilidh participants have consumed a great deal of alcohol. But herein lies another problem. Duncan has been criticized by friends from time to time for drinking too much, a behavior which on occasion has created some friction in social encounters. While the interpretation that Duncan's slip is a confirmation of his overindulgence in alcohol is dependent on insider knowledge, I believe that a critique of his drinking is potentially present in the laughter of some of the participants.

Duncan elegantly responds to both of these challenges without ever having to acknowledge publicly that there is a problem. He continues with his performance, masterfully managing to recontextualize his traditional narrative text to serve the social function of repudiating both challenges. Duncan has two general strategies in this process. First, as he recontextualizes the narrative, Duncan blurs the distinction between the narrative event and narrated event by using the ambiguities of direct speech. The events taking place in the frame of the narrated event thus become resources that Duncan can use to respond covertly to the criticism he has endured in the narrative event. Second, he intensifies his performance of the narrative in ways which show off his virtuosity as a performer. He regains face through a display of communicative competence that transcends all expectation. His ability to recontextualize a traditional text to the business of social relationships can be interpreted as part of this display of communicative competence, and this might reinforce his first strategy (Bauman and Briggs 1990:77). But recognition of this strategy depends on audience awareness of a number of factors, including their knowledge of Duncan's reputation, their familiarity with the "normal" performance of the narrative, and their understanding of narrative formal structuring. I will examine the implementation of these two strategies in



Duncan's recontextualization of this narrative in performance. My first focus will be Duncan's use of narrative resources in responding to audience criticism, and my second will be the poetic devices that he uses to accomplish this reframing and the heightening of the overall performance.

The first line after Duncan regains the focused attention of the audience is line 111, "He says to himself," which sets the frame for the Traveller's reflexive commentary. As I argued about the 1987 performance, there is an ambiguity between the Traveller as hero of the narrative or Duncan as narrator being the object of this self-reflection. In this performance, Duncan "plays" this ambiguity to create a channel through which he can respond to the audience criticism. Duncan frames his direct speech as the reflexive thinking of the Traveller in the narrated event in line 117, "talking to his self." But he also intimates the possibility that these words may be his own by not only asking questions reflexively but also answering them. In line 118, for example, Duncan clearly differentiates the two voices by having the Traveller ask who the reflexive critic thinks he is talking to. In line 119, the Traveller clarifies the critic's answer by stating "me;" he says, "you are talking to me?" This leaves little doubt that Duncan himself is the target of this criticism. In lines 112 and 113, the voice of the critic makes the comment: "Something must be done about you chap." On the one hand, this can be understood as the opening move of the narrated event. On the other, this comment suggests Duncan's recognition of the criticism implicit in the audience laughter. The identity of the critic is left in limbo. Perhaps this voice represents Duncan in a self-deprecatory, reflexive referencing. But the "interchange" from lines 176 to 180 opens another possibility. In this sequence, the Traveller has just projected selling the hare for two-and-sixpence. In lines 177–180, "Hahaha. But," he says, "I'm not going to spend it in drink! You think I'm going to spend it in drink!" / "*I never said so,*" he said, *said the voice.* / He said, "No way. / I'm no spending it in drink," the Traveller triumphantly rejects the critic's unstated, but expected, comment that this money will be immediately used to buy drink. Line 178, "*I never said so,*" sarcastically affirms this was indeed the critic's assumption. Given the implicit criticism of Duncan's drinking and the ambiguity between narrated and narrative event, lines 177–80 can be interpreted as Duncan's direct response to the criticism that he drinks too much. The suggestion that the critic represents someone other than Duncan himself is supported by Duncan's references to the critic as a disembodied "voice" as in line 184 and frequently thereafter (lines 190, 204, 217, 223 but not 178, 208, 218). In the same way that Duncan uses this voice to give form to the unspoken criticisms of the Traveller in the narrated event, he uses this voice to give form to the audience's unspoken criticisms of him. Like the critic, the audience "never said so" but still holds their assumptions about Duncan's drinking as indexed by their laughter. Like the Traveller in the nar-

rated event, Duncan triumphantly rejects the audience's unspoken criticism—but he does this through his use of narrative resources without ever publicly acknowledging that a criticism has been made.

Through his use of direct speech, Duncan has suggested an additional interpretive frame that the audience can use in comprehending the meaning of the narrative performance. Though it is initiated in the reflexive dialogue, this frame persists throughout the whole narrative performance. It might be termed a meta-narrative frame in that it brings Duncan's life and the dynamics of the performance event into the interpretive domain of the narrative performance. Within this frame Duncan suggests he has contingently accepted the audience criticism. He makes a parallel between himself and the Traveller in the narrated event, suggesting that, like this man, he has conditionally accepted the premise that changing his identity and trying to "better" himself is the solution to his problems. As the unfolding narrative logic vindicates the identity and behavior of the Traveller in the narrated event, it simultaneously vindicates Duncan's identity and life choices in the real world. The ideology that informed the choices of both men, prior to their misguided attempts to embrace non-Traveller values, is revealed to be sound. Through this additional frame, Duncan has managed to transform the entextualized narrative meaning and use it as an answer to the criticisms laid before him in the performance event. One consequence of the indirect references inherent in this strategy is that it lends vindication to other unspoken critiques of his behavior that may have been aimed at other aspects of his life.

Duncan's second strategy for answering the audience's challenge to his competence is to intensify his performance of the narrative to reassert unambiguously his storytelling ability through direct example. The narrative has increased from 49 lines in 1987 to 139 lines in the 1988 performance, a factor of almost three. But the narrative has retained a very similar structure. The same basic sequence of action takes place in both performances—yet significant changes have been made. Duncan has intensified the dramatic aspect of the narrative by having the Traveller not only speak to himself but answer as well. This opens an additional degree of expressive freedom that allows Duncan to generate dramatic tension and therefore additional potential for comedy and meaning in the narrative performance. Duncan has also increased the density of poetic marking in the narrative. I have commented above how this marking is at times used to potentiate the alternative narrative meanings. This marking also contributes significantly to the audience's enjoyment of the way the narrative is performed. Richard Bauman notes this enjoyment to be one of the properties of utterances framed as performance: "[the act of expression] is marked as available for the enhancement of experience, through the present enjoyment of the intrinsic qualities of the act of expression itself" (Bauman 1977:11). This enjoyment results,

in part, from a foregrounding of the poetic function of language. The poetic function involves “a set toward the message as such, focus on the message for its own sake” (Jakobson 1960:356). Thus, attention is focused on how the narrative unfolds as well as on what is unfolding.

Evidence that the audience’s attention is focused on the message itself can be found in the timing of audience laughter during the two performances. In the 1987 recordings, audience laughter occurred during the descriptions of the hare calmly eating grass, paying no attention to the Traveller and his fabrication. It also came when the fabrication collapsed with the Traveller’s shout. In the 1988 performance, laughter occurs at these same places, but it also permeates other segments of the narrative, including the interchange between the Traveller and himself. I suggest that the additional laughter in this segment results from attention to how this interchange is presented in performance.

In order to clarify the contribution that both the additional expressive channel and the increased poetic marking contribute to the intensification of performance, I will transcribe a short section of each performance in some detail. My transcriptions will focus mainly on the prosodic features of intonation, loudness, timing, and the paralinguistic feature of voice quality, as all of these are frequently tapped as resources. Prosodic features of conversation carry essential information for the proper understanding of verbal utterances in conversation: “Of primary importance . . . is the role that prosody plays in enabling conversationalists to chunk the stream of talk into the basic message units which both underlie interpretation and control the turn-taking . . . strategies” (Gumperz 1982:107). Duncan uses prosody to delineate narrative voices clearly and to clarify the referential meaning of speech in the narrative. He also uses prosody to provide non-semantic contextualization of the speaker’s feelings and state of mind.

As an example of Duncan’s use of poetics in his narration, I focus on the section of the narrative that begins with the Traveller’s self-reflection and leads up to the discovery of the hare eating in the field. The 1987 performance is given in a fairly even, relaxed tone of voice. The bulk of expression is given by the intonational variations in Duncan’s speech. There is very little variation in either pacing or loudness except for some additional emphasis in the second half of line seven—“but what have I got for it—nothing”—which is spoken in a slightly louder tone. In the following prosodic transcriptions of the narrative segments, pitch contours are given above the phrases—an upward movement of this line indicates increasing pitch; a downward movement, falling pitch. Note that the contours reflect the tonal pattern within a tone group, but that the amplitude of pitch change is only roughly comparable with other groups. Stress is crudely indicated by use of bold type for stressed words.

5 and he said to himself,

6 "You know I'm getting old.

7 And I've travelled far and I've seen many things. But what have I got for it? Nothing!"

8 He said, "I'll have to do something, I can't go on like this."

9 And he's walking on talking to himself.

10 He said, "You're terrible.

11 You haven't a penny to your name.

12 All you have is the clothes that stand on your back.

13 And you're hungry."

14 Talking away to himself.

15 Then beside the wood

16 he came to a little field.

17 And in the field sat a great big brown hare.

There is intonational closure on all lines except 11 and 13. Line 11 leads into the further criticism of line 12, where the intonational closure takes place. Line 13, on the other hand, is not resolved. The criticism breaks off in what is prosodically marked as the middle of a sentence. The meta-narrative comment in line 14 carries an implication that the criticism continues in the Traveller's mind as the narrator moves to discuss other aspects of the immediate situation. Through the rest of this segment of the narrative, intonation is mainly used to highlight words central to referential meaning in the narrative.

Timing is invoked to create an equation of meaning. For example, in line 7 the sequence of closely-spaced phrases tends to create an equation between travelling far and seeing many things, and having nothing in the end. Pauses mainly serve the function of chunking the narrative into thought-sized

pieces that are easy to comprehend. The 1988 performance stands in contrast to this fairly unmarked performance. I have added comments on voice quality in the right hand column):

- 121 *He said, "Listen.*
- 122 *You never did a honest day's work in your life.*
- 123 *Oh," he says, "you work at the farms you get a couple of shillings you blow it and you go on and you travel on."*
- 124 *He says, "You know —you're coming up forty?"*
- 125 *"Well," he says, "maybe I am."* [submissively]
- 126 *"You're coming up forty years of age," he says, "you've no wife,* [accusative]
- 127 *you've no home,*
- 128 *you've no family,*
- 129 *you've nothing.*
- 130 *What have you got to show for yourself for all your years walking on the road?*
- 131 *People," he says, "got jobs.*
- 132 *They've homes and houses. / You've nothing.*
- 133 *My old mother," he said, "would be ashamed of you."* [Laughter]
- 134 *He says, "What can I DO about myself then?"* [panic stricken]  
[Laughter]
- 135 *"Well," he says, "its your own fault."*
- 136 *"Ah," he said, "I'll change it though. I'll change it."* [resolved and positive]

137 "Well," he said, "sure change it. You bet you can."

138 He's talking to himself you know?

139 So.

140 He said, "Look.

141 You walked all day didn't you?

[Laughter]

142 You came over hills and down dales and you walked all along

143 and you have nothing to show for it.

144 You are hungry aren't—." / "Oh," he said, "I'm hungry."

[pathetic  
response]

145 "And you're poor, not a penny in your pocket?" / "Oh," he said, "not a penny not a penny."

[Duncan's  
words  
swallowed by  
laughter]

146 "Well," he says, "take a look at yourself."

[demanding]  
[laughter  
continues]

147 "I'm looking at myself," he says.

[reflective]  
[Laughter  
continues]

148 "I'm looking at myself," he said, "so I am," he said, "I'm looking at myself."

149 "Well," he says, "look / you'll have to start a new life."

150 "(Och?) where am I going to start it?"

[frustrated]

151 And then / he stopped.

152 Because he'd stopped beside a green field, ladies and gentlemen.

153 And sitting in the field was a big - brown - hare.

[deliberate,  
paced]

In this performance, there is a wide variation of intonational patterns, loudness, voice quality, and timing. These prosodic and paralinguistic features of the narrative performance serve to animate the argument the Traveller has with himself about his failure as a normal human being. Loudness, intonation, and timing are sometimes allied, as in lines 121–124, to represent the “unquestionably correct” and effective accusatory comments of the critic. At other times—for example, line 125, “‘Well,’ he says, ‘maybe I am,’” and the responses in lines 144 and 145—prosody is used to portray vividly the “pathetic, tired, and hungry Traveller.” Parallelism in intonational contour is used to clarify and tighten the critic’s argument. For example, in lines 126–129 the parallelism in unresolved intonational contour equates the terms “no wife,” “no home,” and “no family” with the term on which the intonational sequence resolves—“nothing” (see Jakobson 1960:368). A similar parallelism is used in lines 130–132 to add the Traveller’s lack of a job to the list of his failures.

Voice quality, loudness, and timing are also used to generate humor in the way the narrative is developed. Lines 139–50 embody a carefully orchestrated building of tension that relies not on an increased speed of narrative development, but on an intensification of conflict that actually slows narrative development and delays the expected resolution. This is a very conscious strategy that Duncan often employs (TS87013). The questions of lines 144 and 145, “You are hungry aren’t [you]” and “And you’re poor . . . ,” receive immediate and pathetic answers—the immediacy reflecting certainty of meaning. This quick contrast vividly symbolizes the absurd events and generates a good deal of laughter. The reflexive frame in the narrative is reinforced by the intonationally framed demand of line 146, “Well,” he says, “take a look at yourself.” In lines 147 and 148, the Traveller acknowledges that he is indeed looking at himself. But, intonationally, these lines have the form of questions—implying that he is looking but finding only more questions and not answers. Again, the audience finds this portrayal amusing. The Traveller’s acknowledgment that he is reflexively examining himself is repeated with a similar lack of intonational resolution until a final repetition, at the end of line 148, has intonational closure and therefore suggests apparent defeat. The critic concludes that the Traveller will just have to start a new life (line 149), to which the Traveller responds with a frustrated and hopeless “Where am I going to start it?” (line 150). Line 151 marks a transition from the Traveller’s feeling of hopelessness, to the discovery of the hare that will lead him out of his dilemma, and to the ultimate resolution of his choice to abandon Traveller ways.

The increased density of poetic features in the 1988 performance suggests that Duncan has focused his attention on how he has structured the narrative. This focus simultaneously generates a complex performance that

can be enjoyed for its intrinsic qualities and that reflects an affirmation of communicative competence back on its performer. The expanded use of poetic features is largely motivated by the demands of the 1988 performance event. These poetic devices have been mobilized by Duncan to answer his critics and to reaffirm his communicative competence. Yet the interrelations between form and meaning in the entextualized narrative provide the resources that Duncan uses to create this intensification of performance.

### **Conclusion**

I have attempted here to show how the entextualized features of narrative can become resources for an emergent performance when the narrative is recontextualized. In this recontextualization, the narrator brings the formal features, structure, and content of the entextualized narrative into the performance event, where they can be manipulated to fulfill novel functions within that event. Entextualized meaning can thus be combined with or transformed into emergent meanings. In the 1988 *ceilidh*, the narrative maintains its original meaning despite the fact that it has been adapted to perform social business in the event. The narrator may use formal features to suggest multiple meanings. The listeners, depending on their access to the background information, may or may not be able to decode these intended meanings. I suggest that these meanings are encoded simultaneously in the emergent performance text by Duncan. This results in a complex text that suggests a polyphony of meanings that coexist in performance.

Goffman's question "what is going on here?" (Goffman 1974:8) cannot be answered simply except with a fairly general response such as: "meaningful communication is taking place." If a more specific answer is desired, the possible responses proliferate: simple storytelling, challenge and vindication of competence, challenge and vindication of lifestyle, cultural education, and social commentary. There is no "correct" answer and the perception of some answers is dependent on the differential knowledge of listeners. Further, there is no one correct answer for any given individual. Duncan's virtuosity as a performer has insured that there are many things going on simultaneously. In his recontextualization, Duncan uses the formal features of performance to frame and reframe the listener's interpretation of the narrative. This creates an ambiguity of "correctness" that allows a sequential experience of many of the possible interpretations as the listener struggles to follow the narrative and understand its meaning (cf. Gallie 1964:29-50).

This performance also suggests that a performer does not simply develop a single dominant or hierarchy of linguistic functions within a performance (Jakobson 1971; 1960:353). Rather, performers can develop multiple hierarchies by shuffling the importance of individual functions as they frame



and reframe the narrative. This implies that there can be multiple dominants that serve the multiple social functions and meanings of a single performance. I would like to borrow the word “multiplexing” from electronics to describe this process. Multiplexing involves the coding of multiple strands of information, and the information needed for their decoding and ultimate separation, into a single communicative channel. I am suggesting that a performer uses formal features sequentially throughout a performance to multiplex all the various meanings they wish to communicate into a single performance channel.

What features of this performance will be entextualized and carried into future performances? I have no answer to this question. I can only suggest that it is possible that various features of Duncan’s intensified performance will be remembered as particularly effective and will therefore be absorbed either into the entextualized resources of this narrative, or perhaps into a more general category of resources for performance.<sup>3</sup>

### Notes

1 The notational system I have used in the transcriptions has been developed to reveal several specific features of performance style. Since I am interested in the temporal aspects of vocal delivery, I have broken the narratives into lines based on pauses in performance (Tedlock 1972:127). Hesitations or brief pauses are indicated by a dash “—”. Where there is no audible pause but there is a change in voice reflecting a change in “speaker” within the narrative, I have used a “/” to indicate this shift. I have also used a change in typographic style to clarify further these shifts in “speaker” in the 1988 transcriptions.

In cases where my attention is specifically focused on stylistics of performance, I have tried to indicate features of the intonation and loudness of the performer’s voice. My interest in examining prosody, and my transcription style in doing so, is strongly influenced by the ideas of John Gumperz (Gumperz 1982:100–129). In the transcriptions, pitch contours are given by lines above the text—an upward movement of this line indicates a rising pitch; a downward movement a falling pitch. Note that the contours reflect the intonational pattern within a tone group but that the amplitude of pitch change is only roughly comparable with that of other groups. Loudness or stress is crudely indicated by the use of bold face type for stressed words.

Comments in square brackets “[ ]” represent my comments about non-verbal aspects of the performance. Text within parenthesis “( )” represent my best guess as to the proper transcription of inaudible or muffled speech.

2 I am using ideology in the non-pejorative sense of a system of ideas and thought that constitutes and informs the beliefs and practices of a group (cf. Ricoeur 1986).

3 Since writing this paper, I have recorded later versions of this narrative and have obtained copies of archival recordings that predate the 1987 performances. These recordings are consistent with the analysis I have presented here. They also suggest

other insights into the process of recontextualization. I have extended the current analysis as one facet of my forthcoming doctoral dissertation.

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