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II. The Tabwa Context: Mature Shifting of Frames and Adolescent Assertion

Umusha afwa ne fyebo mu kanwa [A slave dies with words in his mouth]
(Stanley Kalumba 1989)

Accepted African oral literature scholarship, under normal circumstances, harbors a built-in mechanism to silence the African voices. By concomitantly reducing African oral performance to writing, and their performers to the role of "informant," the collectors/editors, with the best of intentions, promote themselves to the status of the heroic midwife of an exercise in literary parturition for the international, mostly non-African, gaze. (Olabiyi Yai 1999, p. 5)

Folklorists, after all, did fieldwork; and in an academic world grown sensitive to power relationships and exploitation of the marginalized groups folklorists traditionally studied, the image of the folklorist as collector, strip-mining folklore while traveling and surveying the field, was not a pleasant prospect." (Titon 2003, p. 82)

As we continue to look for ways to adequately represent performance art forms, several dialectical arguments recur in scholarship that will shape the theoretical basis of this discussion. One debate focuses on the ethnographic process itself. How much can scholars, particularly foreign scholars, learn about a society's artistically created self-images?⁴⁵ How do

45 The preceding chapter discusses these concerns in some detail. Beninois scholar Olabiyi Babalola Yai (1999), cited in the epigraph to this chapter, in an insightful evaluation of Frances and Melville Herskovits's well known study of Dahomean oral narrative tradition, finds numerous faults with western scholarship's approaches to African verbal arts.

we collect and evaluate the data? How much weight do we give explanation and commentary of local people and how much do we apply our own perceptions of context and intention in devising theoretical frames for the material? Another side of the same relationship treats the question of compensation and cooperation. Is simply paying a performer for his or her efforts enough to justify what we do with the material? Do, or should, scholars discuss these arrangements and negotiations?⁴⁶ Finally, can we create opportunities for the experienced and empathetic researcher to incorporate the voice or personality of the artist and his or her milieu in the way we write about the event? I will first discuss some of these issues, then describe two Tabwa performance events and their contexts, and conclude by reviewing the methodology my description employed.

The performance and appreciation of oral art forms is a multi-layered experience for even the simplest manifestations. There is a lifetime of knowledge and interaction involved in recognizing allusions, assertions, or even deliberate obfuscation. This complexity extends from the pliability of language, to the uses of subtle gesture, and to the mundane knowledge of the performer's relationship to the audience. Even the indigenous researcher needs to take various levels of interactions and links into account when evaluating what his or her participation in these activities means for the resulting scholarly description. So we begin by acknowledging the difficulty, if not the impossibility, of completely describing and evaluating these performances.

To this end, we need to balance the desire for analysis and explanation—which in some ways might reiterate colonial practice, or *praxis*—and the desire to let the performers and audience speak for themselves, by either limiting intrusive commentary and “simply” presenting the performance or by taking the performer's retrospective explanations as the true analysis. A great deal depends on how we move between these two approaches, since the former opens the material to certain critical frames and the latter more closely approximates the immediacy and self-contained nature of living performance.

46 While the concerns are mostly legally-based and often pertain more to medical experimentation than to the social sciences and humanities, it is significant that most US universities require the vetting of research involving “human subjects,” and stipulate the careful documentation of “permission” agreements between researchers and their subjects/targets. It is an acknowledgment that more and more people cooperating in all manner of research endeavors are either recognizing their positions as actors in this process or having that recognition drawn for them in a legalistic manner.

Folklorist Linda Dégh recognizes the vital role of performers in the externalizing of ancient images and plots in storytelling, claiming that in “no other form of folk poetry does personality play such an important role as the folktale.” (Dégh 1995, p. 38) She goes on to suggest that “[f]actual knowledge, creative imagination, the gift of formulating and structuring the intricate web of episodes into an enrapturing story, and sensitivity to adapt to audience expectation are the abilities that qualify the narrator to fulfill the mission of entertaining.” (pp. 38–39) Dégh, finally, sets out a program of study that ideally treats the living role of storytellers within the wider oral tradition of a society.

We need more thorough and detailed analytical characterization on the basis of the total corpus of tales individuals possess. We also need to know how these individuals acquired their tales, and how they shape and formulate and perform their texts under the influence of personal motivations and social situations....To study personal creativity of storytellers may enlighten us not only about how personal variants originate but also what function the tales can fill in the life of the person. (p. 39)

For the most part, this study will at best approach but not truly fulfill the goals and methodological steps she proposes. The nature of the brief visits that characterize most collection sessions in this project militates against the depth Dégh proposes. The dimensions, then, that will be considered will mostly frame and explore the immediacy of the performance situation and the conditions that spawned them while, when possible, using a broader sense of narrative repertoire in descriptive and analytical remarks.

Hence, I want to emphasize the importance of setting the context of a performance within the wider frames of the researcher’s project. The outside observer did not materialize out of nowhere then disappear in a wisp of smoke when the event ended—though in the case of most of the sessions described below, this is more or less what happened. Our presence at these events is often the excuse or impetus for the occasions themselves.⁴⁷ Our various techniques of soliciting material are important to what we get back. So before the performance and its evaluation, we ought to set a broader context, the ethnographic deal-making involved in

47 In one of the earlier accounts of this relationship, Haring 1972, asserts that researchers, just by their presence, influence what they collect from their sources. “The interviewer—anthropologist, historian, literary critic, folklorist—is inescapably a participant, not an observer, in an aesthetic transaction.” (p. 387)

most research efforts.⁴⁸ This is a basic responsibility for all researchers if we hope to open up the process to demystification and acknowledge the impossibility of totally objective recording.

This brings me to the question of voice and how we employ it in our scholarship. The balancing act between methods becomes a juggling act for the writer, as we try to avoid being transformed into either “mere essayists or stenographers” (Snow and Morrill 1993). At the same time we are revealing the mundane machinations of our efforts to gather data, we must use what we know, or think we know, to supply texture and understanding to the performance event. As we keep admitting that we were there and influenced—and were influenced by—at least some of what happened, we must keep describing away, as accurately and dynamically as possible, creating space for the reader to appreciate some of the event’s intricacies and the performer’s self-assertions. One way we do this in our writing is by moving from the “objective” third person descriptive voice to the first person questioning voice, and back again, as often as the shift is necessary to underscore relevant ideas and processes.⁴⁹ We also need to refer to the people we work with by their names and fill in what we know about them, their lives, personalities, and performance styles. As often as possible, we must cite the performers or audience as commentators on the event or on its participants. Then we need to add dimension to those remarks by looking at them contextually. If “authority” is ultimately less shared than it is unfixed, this resulting lack of synthesis is in some ways the best result we or, certainly in this instance, I can hope for.

Representational options can be weighed by considering two particularly dense and detailed studies of oral narrative performances. The first is a well-known work by Richard and Sally Price, providing a thorough account of oral performance in a Surinam community in *Two Evenings in Saramaka* (1991). The second is a more recent book by Annekie Joubert on two South African societies’ performance events, *The Power of Performance: Linking Past and Present in Hananwa and Lobedu Oral Literature* (2004). The former is a product of years of research and deep cultural knowledge of Saramaka society, using many personal details about performers and their lives and

48 See Deborah Kapchan citing Joni Jones’s humorous, reflexive “performance” text, wherein she asks “was I really making friends, or was I making deals?/laughs How about this for my next article!” (Kapchan 2003, p. 129)

49 Titon 2003, p. 85, provides a good summary of the usual ethnographic text, as it begins with a first person kind of immediacy and reflexive frame and then soon devolves into the third person voice that characterizes most ethnographic observation and analysis.

even providing transcriptions of the music that accompanied song lyrics and photos of the participants. The latter is a similarly dense evocation of performances that spends a lot more time on the smaller details of the events, including descriptions of body movements, non-verbal techniques of gesture and mime, parallel English translations with original language texts, and a lot of theoretical and technical framing of what is presented. There is also a DVD video record of the performances that accompanies the book. While the Prices' work reads more like literature, moving almost viscerally into the experiences of the two nights, Joubert's text is more directly, self-consciously "scholarly" in its intentions and presentation. The first smoothly takes us along for the ride, while the second keeps stopping to look very carefully at almost every imaginable angle of examination. The feeling one gets in comparing the two approaches is of gazing at an impressionist painting from a certain distance and seeing the seamless evocation of colors and shapes, versus looking at the same painting close up and studying the textures of brush strokes. Both methods are valid, but they reveal their subjects in strikingly different ways. While I simply do not have the depth of knowledge, information and, indeed, the inclination to replicate the Saramaka study, I do prefer its overall tone and approach and choose it as a guide in what I do with the Bemba-language performances in this current project.

Taking Geertz's notion of thick description even further, and aware of the postmodern and postcolonial scholarly wariness of "writing" other cultures, Titon proposes a style of scholarly, ethnographic writing he calls:

...'knowing texts.' By a knowing text I mean a text that a reader will find to be self-knowing (reflexive), aware of the basis for limits of its knowledge-claims (authority). I mean a text skillfully crafted, particularly in terms of point of view, to establish an intersubjective relation among author, text, the 'characters' (persons represented in the text), and reader. I mean a text written to take full advantage of the techniques available to authors. (2003, p. 82)

A study of North African oral traditions is particularly strong in asserting the repositioning of views by both the scholar/writer and the performers. In *Romancing the Real*, Sabra J. Webber investigates the genre of *hikayat*, practiced by the people of Kelibia in the Cap Bon on Al Wata Al Gibly region of Tunisia. The *hikayat* is a form that combines a content of "real" or personal histories with the conventions of storytelling performance. This means that Webber can work within a frame of the stories being asserted as true events, which in turn allows her a wide scope to illustrate how the immediate world and the history of place and individuals come to the fore in these

traditionally structured tales. They are seen as highly individualistic at the same time as being representative of the lives of people in this small town. Webber succeeds in emphasizing the active and transformative role this type of storytelling plays in the community. Rather than simply dredging up and fixing archaic or conservative imagery, the performers show themselves to be aware and part of the historical and creative processes of their town, region, nation, and world. Mostly, they live in the present, not timeless or unfixed ethnographic neutrality. Webber recognizes that “all culture, including cultural history, derives from social negotiation, my interest is in understanding something of a Kelibian artistic perspective on the past, present and future.” (p. 11) As a result of her moving in and out of the stories while employing the words of speakers, Webber balances what the storytellers have to say with her own soundings of the local society and its wide network of associations. She resists the notion of closure at almost every juncture. Webber’s work is particularly suited to evaluating a genre of personal assertive storytelling. Beyond “narrating the self,” these performances touch many nodes of the wider society.⁵⁰

Though the Tabwa of Zambia tell similar stories about their lives, I want to focus in this chapter on the fictional genres of narrative. Without spending a lot of time looking at the stories as allegorical or symbolic constructs, I choose to examine the way in which two performers used the occasion to boost their status or self-image in front of particular audiences. To do this, I will situate the performances, talk about the tales’ traditional contexts—or, their relationship to other stories in the Tabwa repertoire—then point out their immediate application to the performance context. In the case of Tabwa storytellers, where I am more familiar with their repertoire of tales and images, raising elements of a traditional context and even comparing versions of the same story told by a single performer are analytical stances I can more confidently assert. This will firm up some of the methods applied to performances in the chapters that follow.

Performance Studies encompasses a broad approach to numerous genres, enactments and expressions. It grows out of a number of disciplines and frames. One main assertion is that performance is usually marked off, or contextually framed apart, from ordinary life. (Goffman 1974; Hymes 1975; Bauman 1977; Schechner 2003) This is clear in the genres of fictional storytelling or simply speaking on important topics

50 For an extensive, thorough study of personal narrative and its vital links to several social science and humanities fields of research, see Ochs and Capps 1996.

while employing narrative-performance conventions. What seems just as important as acknowledging the characteristics of performed narrative is also the complex relationship between speakers and audiences, between performance and social reality. Kapchan cites Keeler on this relationship in a clear and informative manner.

'An art form,' he asserts, 'provides us indigenously generated representations of people's lives while still constituting a part of those lives. Both observed and lived, and so both a representation of social life and an instance of it, a performance provides a commentary upon interaction and yet also exemplifies it' [Keeler 1987: 262]. Implicit in Keeler's astute rendering of the art form's double function is the observation that performance is not only a specular event but a way of inhabiting the world. (2003, p. 131)

When we consider a performance session, and all the factors that brought it into being, there will always be the two areas of analysis that relate the efforts of performers and audience in their creation of artifice and the actual time and place of the event that emerges from its social context. As Kapchan reiterates:

Performances are cultural enactments ... they appeal to all our senses, recalling us not only to our bodies and selves, not only to the subjectivities of others, but to the perpetual task of limit making, where we balance on the edge of the imaginary and the real. It is the task of performance to pivot on this border and to pluck the tense string of differences between the two realms, sending sound waves out in all directions. (p. 137)

So when we consider any of the performances examined below, we can acknowledge the deep complexity of any such expression while also look to identifying as many of the immediate and wider connotations of the specific event/enactment as possible.

Even the scholarly notions of "performance" are complex, nuanced and at times debatable. McKenzie does a good job of synthesizing some core ideas contributed by Schechner and Turner to the, paradoxically stated, centrality of liminality in understanding performance. As McKenzie notes, liminality is "a crucial concept for the theorizing of the politics of performance: as a mode of embodied activity that transgresses, resists, or challenges social structures." (1989, p. 218) This formative concept for the discipline will be "troubled" as McKenzie puts it, by the work of Judith Butler, who is mostly concerned with the performance of gender as seen partly through the lens of "existential phenomenology" and partly through proposing a view counter to the transgressive in performance, "a dominant and punitive form of power, one that both generates and

constrains human subjects.... She theorizes the transgressivity and the normativity of performance genres." (pp. 220–221)⁵¹ While it is difficult to reduce Butler's wide-ranging scholarship to any one or two key ideas, the point that I want to emphasize is the importance of viewing the complex nature of "performance," both the embodied and discursive types, as contextually framed and flexible enough to be used in various, sometimes diametrically opposed, modes. In particular, when we consider storytelling or narrative performance, we need to acknowledge the embodied qualities of performance while also focusing on its discursive dimensions. The intentions of performers or the outcomes/themes of their efforts must also be seen in their shifting frameworks, whether transgressive, normative or even a combination of the two.

Several schools of thought exist concerning the ways that members of oral societies remember the material they use in their performances. One of the most obvious practitioners this question applies to is the oral historian, who must produce on demand kingship lists or detailed chronicles of events or actors in those events.⁵² While there is no doubt that memory is a primary factor in this activity, it must also be noted that historical events have a way of coming together in ways that make them easier to remember or reconstitute than details of imaginative oral narratives, even as they tend to employ similar tropes, actions and frames of the fictional tales. Further, the oral historian, as usually a paid practitioner, is particularly sensitive to shaping the material for his or her audience according to the conditions prevailing at the time of the telling or performance. This means that even historical narration is subject to selective "editing" by performers, based on the context of their recitations. Although few scholars still believe that performers of oral narrative fiction simply memorize their material, there remains a debate over whether these narrators exercise complete latitude

51 McKenzie selects four of Butler's publications from 1990 to 1993, to make his argument, but her two book-length studies contain the main themes he is focusing on.

52 It is worth looking at Okpewho's work in oral epic and oral traditions when considering the role of the oral historian. In particular, look at *The Epic in Africa* (1979) and "Rethinking Myth," (1980) where questions of fact, fancy and intent are considered in revealing ways. Vansina's seminal *Kingdoms of the Savanna* (1966) and *Oral History as Tradition* (1985) form, for many scholars, the basis for analyses of African oral historical traditions. It is significant to note that in the latter study, a reworking of his earlier *De la tradition orale* (1961), Vansina acknowledges the important role played by performance in oral history as well as admitting the virtually inevitable prevalence of imagination and performance context over historical "accuracy."

in the construction of their tales or are constrained by a fairly rigid notion of what their particular story ought to be.

Scholars taking formalist approaches to oral narrative believe that the performers have a sense of construction that allows them to alter tales as they desire, for example, selecting one ending for a tale on one occasion and another at a different time while employing the same frames.⁵³ Other scholars postulate a more rigid sense of story and plot, suggesting that narrators are more bound to repeat their narratives in the same way at each telling.⁵⁴ The question is important because it first of all effects the way we try to view the meaning of these stories. If they are simply repeated at every telling using the same details and structures we can hypothesize a more generic, complete meaning for the stories; that the teller uses an entire story in the way a proverb is used to point to a particular meaning or moral. If there is deliberate manipulation of the details between renditions of a tale by the same performers, the implication is that there is a subtlety, a shading of meaning within the workings of the stories that suggests a more intricate system of argument, or play, than is stipulated in the earlier model.⁵⁵ For over a century, folklorists simply assumed that unlettered peasants could not remember the details of what was a single or correct version of certain stories. The assumption was that an *ur-* or original version existed somewhere at the point of the tale's creation, followed thereon by a diffusion of that tale over space and time.⁵⁶

My immediate intention here is to compare two versions of the same story told by the same person six years apart. Since there was little opportunity

53 Dègh makes reference to this earlier in this chapter. Scheub 1975, with his "cueing and scanning" assertion, works at one end of this spectrum of thought. He suggests that at times some storytellers begin their tales without knowing exactly what they will include or how the adventure will end.

54 This may pertain to notions of genre in some studies. See Ben-Amos's remarks in his introduction to Lindfors's collection of articles on African folklore (1977). One sense that Ben-Amos has of the storytelling process is fairly Proppian in nature. He gives the example of a Yoruba performer who explains how he would tell the researcher's biography by following a fairly straightforward structural/plot formulation to illustrate salient personal events and development.

55 I've taken this argument to more depth in looking at how Zambian radio and media might be able to employ oral narratives and their various versions to shape nationalist, socially engaged themes and messages. (Cancel 1986)

56 Diffusion theory has been pretty much refuted by one of its former proponents, Stith Thompson. But the adjacent activity, the collection and categorization of motifs and tale types, continues. In the last twenty years, the combination of this procedure with a formal, structural model has yielded some interesting results. See Haring's Malagasy index published in 1982.

to examine the data at the time of recording, I will be proceeding by violating a central tenet of this kind of investigation; in fact, this is the case with virtually all the performances I examine in this study. I have not been able to question the storyteller regarding the differences between the two versions. Any conclusions, therefore, developed in this discussion must be seen as tentative and circumstantial. Moreover, my comments as teller will in a sense play or even prey on the silence of the other teller, living some nine thousand miles out of earshot and unable to react to my observations.⁵⁷ While his interpretations would certainly bring welcome dimensions to our consideration of the tales, we would also have to factor in the performer's memory of what he intended at the time of the recording and what he wanted me to believe or take away from those earlier efforts.

Three dimensions of investigating oral narratives, set out in an earlier study, are the verbal text, the traditional context, and the performance context (Cancel 1989). The verbal text is the record of what the storyteller actually said.⁵⁸ The traditional context is the store of images, structures and possible plots contained in the memories of the members of the society, somewhat akin to what traditional folklorists refer to as *märchenstock*. The formal underpinnings of any narrative are found in the wider traditional context. These and images, actions and relationships are all drawn from this common pool and create both familiarity and expectations from an

57 In fact, when I visited Zambia in the summer of 2003, I learned that Stanley Kalumba had passed away four years earlier. He was not the first of those who had contributed material to this study to die before I had a chance for a return visit.

58 There are more than a few choices of how to write or render an oral text on the page. The format I've chosen reflects a literary prose genre framework, representing the narratives as a string of discrete sentences organized into paragraphs. I also make several concessions to the oral nature of the narration by including false starts, repeated words, employing non-standard punctuation and including explanatory, sometimes of only inferred assertions, material in brackets. Another common approach is to write the narrative in lines of text that look more like poetry, usually reflecting pauses in the performers' speech. (See Tedlock 1977; Seitel 1980; Okpewho 1990) Since, in this particular study, I am including the video record of the actual performances, I will leave it up to the reader/viewer as to how the verbal text can best be typographically visualized. Clearly, another historical problem in this kind of rendering has more to do with editorial choices made by the collectors or scholars who bring the performances to print. Here, all manner of ideological and self-serving intentions were indulged in the way tales were collected, transcribed, translated and edited, reflecting the desires and erroneous assumptions of early explorers, colonial administrators, missionaries and scholars. Yai 1999, takes Herskovits and Herskovits to task for some of these reasons, Clifford 1983, details the intricate and, some would argue, distorting methods by which Griaule rendered the narration of Oggotemeli. Scheub 1971, treats these problems more systematically in a historical context.

audience at any performance. These expectations are often controlled, channeled by a narrator to shape the performance experience.⁵⁹

Any story-performance, therefore, will invariably be measured against the audience's memory of earlier performances and themes. By comparing the verbal text with the traditional context we can note the differences between versions of the same plot and similar or even very different tales existing in oral memory or, in my case, the body of recorded narratives. What I mean by this is that I can only judge the tradition and its context by the tales I have recorded and understood, and by examining other collections of story texts from this region. This means, as a serious limitation, that I am evaluating the tales based on knowledge gleaned by recording over 1300 performed narratives, but having selected, transcribed, translated, and/or considered only around 140 tales. The performance context comprises the non-verbal storytelling techniques⁶⁰ of the narrator as well as the various conditions of the performance occasion: characteristics of the performer, composition of audience, comments from the audience, time of day, tales that preceded the narrative in the session, storyteller's relationship to the collector, etc.

Numerous ongoing discussions between scholars persist, pertaining to how performance is to be evaluated. Barber and Farais sum up much of the debate that my own project grows out of:

On the one hand, literary critics and folklorists have taken up a stance which combines a limited contextualization (the emphasis being on 'performance' and the immediate conditions of performance) with a formalist analysis of texts (with emphasis on the incidence of wordplay, repetition and other literary devices): thus ignoring by and large what the texts actually *say*. Historians, on the other hand, seem increasingly to be regarding oral texts either as raw material which, subject to a certain amount of processing, will yield historical information; or as the unmediated voice of an alien past. (Barber and Farais 1989, p. 1)

59 The formal methodology that I will often employ in this project is more clearly set out in my earlier monograph (1989). It is the basis from which I will evaluate the verbal text/traditional context elements in the narratives that follow.

60 The numerous techniques of performance include voice, personal style, strategies of giving form to imagery and themes, and gesture. While most of what I do with these elements in this project is descriptive, there is obviously a large body of literature spawned from disciplinary approaches such as folklore and performance studies. When it comes to close study of living performance, the emerging work on gesture in African storytelling will become an important dimension in describing the links between words and physical act. See Klassen 2004, 1999, Eastman and Omar 1985, Creider 1997, 1986, and Olofson 1974.

Considering the scenario they lay out, it should be clear that my emphasis is on the combination of formal and performance/contextual analysis. In fact, this approach does consider the “historicity” of performance in its immediacy, its relationship to the event of performance itself. Ideally, as Barber and Farais suggest, “what seem[s] to be required [is] an approach that acknowledge[s] simultaneously the historicity and the textuality of oral texts, that combined a sociology with a poetics of oral literature” (1989, p. 1). As I keep emphasizing, the current study is based on incomplete knowledge and will not meet an absolute standard set by a number of disciplinary approaches. Moreover, by introducing the question of ethnographic authority and the problem of writing other cultures, I am challenging even the modest observations and conclusions that are elicited by the performances under consideration. In other words, my analytical writing looks to avoid the pitfalls of eternally reflexive Derridian spirals of meaning and doubt⁶¹ while skirting the assured and absolute terms of the well-wrought ethnographic text that supposes some kind of accurate closure in rendering performances and their meanings.

It should be emphasized at this early point that among the Tabwa of Zambia, and all the groups recorded for this study, storytelling events vary in their occasions and locations. Most instances take place in the well-known domestic space of the household verandah or around an evening fire outdoors. Usually family members and sometimes friends pass the time after the evening meal with ordinary talk and gossip which often evolves into more formal storytelling endeavors. In many cases, stories are told by elders to children as a form of entertainment and instruction; something to wind down their day and lull them to sleep. It is not unusual for the stories to take on a more mature bent of theme and complexity when the children have gone off to sleep and the remaining adults shape their performances for an older audience. The themes and allusions of these tales can be drawn from broad social and cultural concerns, but these can also hone in on local relationships between people and be used allusively for direct commentary on events and situations well known to the audience.⁶² Men often defer

61 One of the best discussions of writing and scholarly authority is Derrida’s 1978 “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences.”

62 See Cancel 1989, pp. 55–84, for a more thorough discussion of performance contexts and quotidian instances of storytelling. Cosentino 1982 spends a good amount of time on considering local allusions in themes and images of stories told by the Mende of Sierra Leone. Jackson 1982, 2006, focuses on the interactions of various performers and their stories in single performance sessions.

to women when it comes to performing narratives in intimate, familial settings, since storytelling is often seen as something for children. There are, however, some men who relish the opportunities storytelling offers and enjoy showcasing their considerable skills in performance. Gender particularly comes to the fore when narratives, for whatever reasons, are performed in a more public space or occasion, where men tend to dominate. These occasions can be common rites such as weddings, funerals, church services, or rites associated with the beginning of planting, hunting or fishing seasons or the harvesting of crops. It is not unusual for storytelling, both fictional and anecdotal, to break out during labor, such as fishing or farming, and these narratives are most obviously marked by the distinctive verbal rhythms of performance and devices of speech to induce and prolong audience interaction.⁶³ From a practical scholarly perspective, my efforts to gather and record this material, especially in areas where I was not well known, were framed by gender concerns that mostly limited my pool of possible performers to men. Socially, it was almost impossible for a man, particularly a stranger, to engage only women performers in a recording session. As I describe the various conditions of performance in this study, these frames and contexts should be kept in mind.

Kaputa⁶⁴

In June of 1989, at Kaputa, the rural capital of Zambia's northernmost district, I was escorted towards the place where I was staying by Mr. Stanley Kalumba. It was around 5:30 PM, and the sun was low on the horizon, elongating our shadows as we walked the red dusty road past the police station and government staff houses. We had been discussing a proverb in the story he had just told me when Mr. Kalumba suddenly stopped and said something to the effect of "Have I told you this one before?" In fact he had, six years earlier, and I said as much. He seemed apologetic but

63 Unlike other African societies who at least claimed prohibitions against telling stories during daylight hours or while performing labor, I was not able to ascertain similar strictures among the Bemba-speaking peoples with whom I worked. I have, recently found evidence of these sayings/strictures among the Bemba.

64 My 1989 monograph on Tabwa storytelling contains some information on this ethnic group, their physical environment and history. A more systematic and detailed account of Zambian Tabwa culture and history can be found in my doctoral dissertation (1981). Since the Tabwa also stretch across the border into the Democratic Republic of the Congo, a lot of scholarship exists by Belgians, missionaries, Congolese scholars and, in particular, Allen F. Roberts (1980, 1984, 1996, 2000).

I assured him I enjoyed the tale very much, both times. Of course, even at the time I'd heard the story earlier in the afternoon, my mind turned to the possibilities of a comparative study of the two versions.⁶⁵

So we will deal with at least two tales and two tellers. Mr. Kalumba is the first teller, a Tabwa man who had over a period of six years been kind enough to perform a number of stories for me to record on video and audiocassette. The second teller is me, who, due to the particular circumstances of my work, will provide not only my story—my analysis—but also Mr. Kalumba's, through transcription, translation and commentary. That I feel this is a less than ideal situation is hopefully apparent in the words and framing employed to situate this discussion. Theoretical discourses running side by side in this analysis treat the question of oral narrative composition and performer control of this performance, as well as the choices made in representing and writing it. While the former is the focus of my discussion, the latter is critically—in several senses of the term—linked to how we come to understand the storytelling process, the shaping of identity and the world in speech. Whose speech? Whose identity? are questions I put forth now to qualify most of what will follow.

In 1983, when we first met at his home in the village of Nsama, Stanley Kalumba was fifty-eight years old. He was a slim, soft-spoken man, with a shaved head. His performance style was direct and low-key, with fluid hand and arm-movements as he gestured to places where action took place or imitated the various characters in his narratives. When I recorded him again in 1989, he looked very much the same, if a bit grayer, and was living at Kaputa. It is helpful to consider both versions of the story, back-to-back, beginning with the 1983 performance at Nsama.

65 There have been few instances where I was able to record storytellers performing the same story more than once. One notable example was a long narrative by Tabwa performer Chola Chilengwe at Mukupa Katandula village in 1976, whereby I recorded the first version then days later a friend coincidentally recorded a second rendering by Mr. Chilengwe at a beer drink. Among the Wolof of the Gambia, Emil Magel (1984) recorded two versions of a story he titled "Hyena Wrestles a Konderong," by the same performer (pp. 138–143).

Tabwa Storytelling 1 by Stanley Kalumba*



Stanley

Kalumba: I am Stanley Kalumba.

Robert

Cancel: Stanley Kalumba?

SK: Yes.

RC: Yes. Begin.

SK: It was said, there was a little thing. A lion lived with how many wives? [Holds up two fingers] Two. And his children. Then this Kalulu [the Tabwa trickster hare] had no clothes at all, because he had no cloth. He was naked. Now he told his wife, "My wife, we will surely be wealthy soon." She said, "No, I doubt that." He said, "Oh? Fine. Just wait and see." So Kalulu set out and walked into the bush. He found the lion and his children there. The father had gone to prepare the fields for planting [*citemene*]. Kalulu said, "You children, are you there?" They said "Mukwai?" "When your father returns, tell him 'Your un...uncle said he wants you to make him a bark cloth by tomorrow. If you don't make him a bark cloth, you will be like the bush buck with one year to live.'" He then went away. When the lion returned there, the children told him, "Father!" "Mukwai?" "A person came and said, 'My nephew must make me a bark cloth by tomorrow. If he does not make the bark cloth, he will be like the bushbuck with one year to live.'" "So who is this 'uncle' of mine? In this land I've defeated all the animals. I'm a lion. I'm strong and devour animals. You...you see, no...none can surpass my power in the land." They said, "Fine." He did not worry. Another morning, he cut down a tree and began to pound bark cloth. Ka-Ka-Ka-Ka-Ka-Ka-Kka-Ka. He pounded, he finished. He draped it over a tree stump. He went off to garden. So Kalulu returned again in the morning. "You children! Has he finished the cloth today?" "No *mukwai*, it's done." "Fine when he arrives tell him his uncle thanks him very much." The bark cloth, he carried off. So when the lion returned from the task, he found the bark cloth was not there. He questioned his children. They said, "Yes, he's already taken it. He told us to tell his 'nephew' that it was he who took it." "Agh. What kind of 'uncle' is this?" So the lion made a proclamation throughout the entire country. He said, "All animals must gather so that I can come see that 'uncle' of mine who had me make the bark cloth."

* All the teller's photos in this book are taken from videos shot by the author. To watch the video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.02/Tabwa1>

Then Kalulu who had fooled him heard this news on Saturday. "As of today, we will go there to gather to find the one who ordered the lion to make the bark cloth." Then all the animals set out: hartebeest, the duiker, and the...the...what-do-you-call-it...the elephant, and the buffalo. All of them went there to the lion. Now as they walked on the path, truly, Kalulu appeared, saying to himself, "Truly we are called because this bark cloth, it's the problem." Then he called the bushbuck over, he said, "My friend, Bushbuck." He said, "*Mukwai?*" "Come closer here." He said, "Boi, I'm giving you this bark cloth. Go and wear it, because you can't go to the palace naked. If you arrive naked, they'll drive you away. Wear this cloth to the palace." So *mukwai*, the bushbuck said, "*Mukwai*, I thank you *mukwai*." [Claps his hands to show his gratitude] He donned the cloth and went on.

They all arrived and sat down. The lion rose and roared. "Truly *mukwai*, I've called you all here because I want to know this 'uncle' who sent me to make bark cloth. In this land there is no animal that surpasses me in strength. I have the strongest teeth, the strongest claws. All these things I have. Now here I want to see that 'uncle' who had me pound bark cloth. So I want, right here, him to be shown to me." So they said, "Very well my lord. We thank you, your majesty. 'We draw your firewood and water!'" [Claps hands as he speaks words of lion's subjects to emphasize their obeisance] So *mukwai*, they gathered right there. Little Kalulu rose, "My uncle, truly, I think we should waste no more time, no. The...the one who wears the bark cloth, your majesty, that you made, is this one!" [Points in front of him to indicate the bushbuck] They pointed at the bushbuck next to Kalulu. So *mukwai*, he tried to rise and speak in their midst. They all said, "Shh! You! Quiet! 'A slave dies with words in his mouth' you." So *mukwai*, right there, the lion said, "Cut this one up. So it's this one who said to me 'you...you are my nephew!' Am I your nephew, you, bushbuck?? You are a very stupid person!" So here, th... they...rose and grabbed the bushbuck. So *mukwai*, they rose up, and took the bushbuck. He said, "No! The one who gave me this bark cloth was Kalulu!" "Tch! Shut up, you! 'A slave dies with words in his mouth.'" So *mukwai*, what became of the bushbuck? They whipped the bushbuck. He just died. So, then the bushbuck died from Kalulu's tricks. Then, Kalulu, he survived. But Bushbuck, they killed him.

RC: Yes.

SK: Yes. They killed him. This is why they killed the bushbuck, because he could not speak cleverly. Kalulu fooled him by giving him the bark cloth, while he remained free. That's it *mukwai*.

Here is the 1989 version of the narrative Mr. Kalumba performed at Kaputa:

Tabwa Storytelling 2 by Stanley Kalumba, 1989*



Robert Give me your name, then begin. [Mr. Kalumba takes time to
Cancel: adjust his chair and get into a comfortable position amidst a group
 of children and adults.]

Audience

Member: Sit down. [Spoken, I think, to someone in the audience.]

RC: Your name? Bring (us) your name.

SK: I am Stanley Kalumba.

RC: Begin *mukwai*.

SK: Yes. There was a little thing. The lion lived with his wife in a hut⁶⁶...the lion. So then over there, as they lived, little Kalulu appeared. He went and found the lion's children at the hut. In the village...the owner [the lion] had already gone...to cut brush (before planting time).⁶⁷ At that time when he returned, he came and found this message from his children, "Truly father, right here there came a person. That one said, 'When your father comes he must try to pound bark cloth. If he doesn't make bark cloth he will be like the male bushbuck who had only one year (to live).'"⁶⁸ So the lion wondered, "Ah! Truly, in this country...I have the strongest claws and teeth. But this person who came here, what sort is he?" They said, "Truly *mukwai*, we don't know him at all from the village, father." He said, "O.K., fine." He went.

66 I use the word "hut" to translate "*mutanda*" which is a rough shelter, often used as a temporary lodging when hunting or farming far from home. I use the word house or home to gloss the word *ng'anda*, which is a permanent structure, one's main residence.

67 The principle form of agriculture in Northern Province is still the system of "slash and burn," whereby dried brush and trees are cut down and burned just prior to the rainy season. The ashes, washed into the ground act as fertilizer for the crops. The Bemba/Tabwa word for this type of agriculture is *citemene*, and used as a specific verb it means to cut the brush and or trees.

68 The phrase is a proverb that is usually employed as a threat. The speaker warns the listener that if he or she does not do as he or she is told, there will be painful physical consequences, a beating or something unpleasant. The proverb is spoken here as: *Nga taasalile cilundu, ninshi ni nkulungwe aali umwaka umo*. [Literally, "If he does not pound bark cloth it is like the male bushbuck with one year."] The word for a male bushbuck is *nkulungwe*, while the generic term for a bushbuck is *cisongo*. It is the latter word that is used to refer to the character in the story; though it seems less than coincidental that the core proverbial saying is about a bushbuck.

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.02/Tabwa2>

Another morning, early, the lion went to cut brush. Again, he (Kalulu) returned. "Odi, over here!" "Enter *mukwai*." "So, have you told your father, that is, have you seen him about making the cloth? Tell him that it's your uncle who wants this very nice bark cloth, so that he makes it." He said, "Yes, that's truly what we told him but he didn't understand. He said, 'No, I don't know this person.'" He said, "Go tell him, say, 'It's your uncle who directs you to make the bark cloth. You must make it.'" The children said, "Yes *mukwai*." So their father returned in the evening from cutting brush. "Father." "Yes?" "Right here, there came a person who brought these words, as he did yesterday." He said, "Fine, my children, let me make the cloth." So that lion got a...a...what-do-you-call-it...the material to make bark cloth. He pounded. He pounded. Nko, nko, nko, nko, nko, nko, nko. He praised himself. He said, "Let's make it, so that you can wear it..."

Arriving Speaker: "How are you *mukwai*?" [A man has just arrived at the site of the performance and, obviously intoxicated, is trying, I think, to get my (the most obvious stranger) attention. Mr. Kalumba continues with his story while an audience member tries to quiet or chase the newcomer off.]

SK: "Let me make it for the chief's wife..."

Audience

Member: "Go away. He's telling a story."

SK: "The chief's wife is none other than the buttocks..."⁶⁹

AS: "How is your work going?"

Audience Member: [Same audience member who had earlier admonished the man said something inaudible on my tape but which was obviously intended to make the speaker be quiet.]

SK: "Our buttocks." He said, "I'm tired, like a bark cloth maker pounding in an ant's stomach. A stomach is filled with mysteries."⁷⁰ So that lion finished the cloth. He put it down. He said, "This person who wants the cloth will come and get it."

That morning the lion went to cut brush. So he (Kalulu) arrived soon after. Kalulu said, "Bark cloth?!" They said, "Yes *mukwai*, it's over there on the tree stump." So, the children went. They went and got it. They gave it to him. Upon the lion's return, in the evening, he came

69 Here Mr. Kalumba is probably using a euphemism for nakedness. The cloth is meant to clothe the buttocks of the chief's wife, referring, I think, to the grandeur of the cloth he is making, which is fit for even a queen.

70 Here it seems the lion is praising his own skills for their delicacy, since pounding the stomach of an ant from within, without injuring the ant, suggests a high degree of competence with the pounding mallet.

and asked, "What about the bark cloth?" "So *mukwai*, he's already come and taken it, your uncle. He said, 'Fine, since if he'd refused to make a nice cloth he would have been like the male bushbuck with one year to live. But now this is fine.'" So that lion thought, "Well, here in this country there is no one as strong as I, stronger than all the big animals, including elephants, and all the rest. I've defeated them by my strength, my strong teeth and claws. So let me call all the animals so that we see this uncle who made me make the bark cloth." So, then he made a decree, he said, "So my friends, in a week every animal must gather here at my place. I will come and see the uncle who had me pound bark cloth."

So then the day that followed, all the animals just gathered, all of them: Kalulu, the duiker, just all of them, and the bushbuck (as well). Kalulu was one who was very clever, he set out during that week. When that time came near, he knew...he said, "Truly, if I arrive at the lion's place wearing this cloth, I Kalulu, they will kill me." So then he saw the bushbuck and said, "Grandfather, come here." So he called him, "What is it *mukwai*?" "You...you see, listen well grandfather, you will shame us if you go there naked. Put on this cloth. I myself can go just like this because it is at my uncle's place. I can go without problems. You put on this bark cloth father to conceal your nakedness." "Yes *mukwai*, thank you *mukwai*." So that bushbuck had the bark cloth, he wore it.

Then when they arrived there, they gathered at the lion's place. They gathered in a group. Right there, all of them: the elephant, all the animals...the buffalo, roan antelope, hartebeest, they all gathered. So, the lion came out from his home. He said, "Truly, this summons was for all my friends, all you animals. I want to know who set me up, saying 'if he doesn't make the bark cloth, he will be like the bushbuck with a year to live.'" So, there the bushbuck had wrapped the bark cloth all around himself. So Kalulu sat far away. Then all the animals said, "Your highness, we gather your firewood and water." So then, "We will see him *mukwai*, the one wearing the bark cloth sent our chief to make cloth." So they came, they saw the bushbuck, they said, "You! Stand up!" So he stood up, he was sitting there, nearby. So that lion then said, "So really, you are in this gathering. This person, so it's this one who sent me to pound bark cloth, who threatened me by saying, 'If he doesn't make the cloth he will be like the bushbuck with a year to live.'" One said, "Yes *mukwai*, it's this very one."

So the bushbuck said (to himself), "Truly, that's how people die. What can I do? Perhaps I can be clever. (then aloud) Though it is true *mukwai*, your majesty, that they say a slave dies with his words in his mouth, let me explain the situation..." Kalulu stood up over

there...and said, "You, shut up! Stop it. It's you who...who sent the chief to pound cloth. So the one who you point at is whom? Who pounded the cloth? It's you who wanted the bark cloth. It's you who wanted the bark cloth!" So then, right there, the lion said, "Fine. You, my people, this person must die because I have the greatest strength of all the animals in the bush. I have..."

Audience

Member: "Mmm hmmm." [Assenting sound.]

SK: "I have strong teeth and claws. So this one who threatened me, the bushbuck who said, 'If he doesn't make the bark cloth he will be like the bushbuck with a year to live,' kill him!" He said, "No *mukwai*! It's Kalulu who gave it to me..." "You, stop it! I didn't give it to him. He's just lying." They grabbed the bushbuck and killed him.

So *mukwai*, that's my *mulumbe* about the lion.

Several elements of the 1983 version bear mention. The story begins with a near destitute Kalulu declaring he will find wealth, while his wife refuses to believe him. Kalulu visits the lion's home once before and once after the bark cloth is made. The first time he uses a threat and a self-inflating title, as the lion's maternal uncle—which is a father-like kinship position—in order to get the bark cloth. The lion simply makes the cloth and soon thereafter the hare claims it. The hare explains to the bushbuck that he must wear a cloth as proper protocol for visiting the lion's place. Kalulu is the first to point to the bushbuck wearing the cloth, and the antelope is not given a chance to speak, silenced by a proverb. The story's end is focused on the bushbuck's lack of clever speech, as opposed to the hare's ingenious ploy.

Thematically, the tale is on one level a typical trickster story, in which the diminutive hare is able to dupe the lion into making him a garment. Similarly, Kalulu escapes punishment by fooling the dim-witted bushbuck. The pattern is a familiar one in trickster tales from all over Africa and, in particular, the lion and bushbuck as dupes for Kalulu are featured in numerous Tabwa stories as well as those of other Bemba-speaking peoples.⁷¹ Cleverness and clever speech are the traits that are revered in this tale, a reflection of the position speech and discourse hold in society. Further, speech is able to overcome both physical and social limitations, as the hare not only deceives

71 Kalulu is found in stories beyond the Bemba-speaking area. Among the Nyanja/Cewa-speaking groups of Zambia and Malawi, Kalulu is also a central, trickster figure. Moving east and north, Swahili and neighboring groups feature a trickster hare in their narratives called Sungura.

a powerful animal but also a chief, creating for himself the identity of that leader's "uncle." Looking a bit closer but again staying within the obvious realm of the trickster tale, we can see a commentary about power and equity. The lion as king is shown to be an improper leader, not able to catch the hare early on in his activities, then believing the trumped up evidence against the bushbuck. Since Tabwa chiefs are more likely skilled mediators than divinely empowered rulers, this kind of commentary relates to the fallibility of the leaders and their susceptibility to flattery and superficial evidence.⁷² Not hearing the bushbuck's side of the story was another error of judgment that "speaks" badly for the lion's leadership skills.

Three sayings play a role in both versions. The first is the not so veiled threat "*Ninshi ninkulungwe yali umwaka umo,*" [(He will be) like the bushbuck with only a year to live]. Kalulu uses it and the lion cubs repeat it to their father. Another saying refers to the fate of slaves "*Umusha afwana fyebo mu kanwa,*" [A slave dies with (his words) in his mouth]. This is twice addressed to the bushbuck to squelch his attempts to defend himself. Finally, the people address a saying to the lion that is a praise for chiefs, "*Mwansabamba, twatasha, kanabesa, kalungu wewe nkuni na menshi,*" [Chief, we thank you, your highness, we gather your firewood and water]. The saying places the chief above his subjects and reiterates their respect by emphasizing the common tasks they perform out of a sense of duty.

The sayings are obviously used outside of the narrative context, with everyday references, but here they form a kind of model for their appropriate application. Mr. Kalumba used them judiciously in a story that focused more on the events than the meanings of the proverbs, though clearly they are woven into the fabric of the tale's connotations. What happens to Kalulu and bushbuck are the important elements of the narrative as it is presented here. In the second version of this tale, the function of the proverbs is altered slightly.

In the 1989 version, Stanley Kalumba changed the narrative in a few significant ways. He does not mention wives, for either the lion or Kalulu. The lion is mentioned at the tale's start then Kalulu simply shows up while he is at his farm. Where Kalulu interacts with the cubs only twice in the first version, here he visits them three times. The dialogue is repeated to the lion by the cubs more often here than in the first version. In fact, the cubs describe Kalulu's first visit to the homestead after the fact, instead of Mr. Kalumba, as

72 See Cancel 1989, pp. 156–158, 172–174, 200–201.

narrator, directly detailing the actual visit. At almost every repetition or visit the saying that contains a threat, about the bushbuck with one year to live, is uttered. It is this saying, more than the claim that his “uncle” demanded a bark cloth, that most annoys the lion. In this version we have a more detailed scene in which the lion makes the bark cloth while he praises himself, using a euphemism for clothing that refers to its function as covering the buttocks of the chief’s wife, and says the skills needed to pound the cloth are as subtle as pounding the inside of an ant’s stomach. The hare lets the animals discover the bark cloth-clad bushbuck rather than pointing him out himself, though he does speak out when the antelope tries to explain himself, reiterating the evidence and urging swift action. At one point, Mr. Kalumba voices the bushbuck’s thoughts, as he sees the danger of his situation and tries to find a way out of it, “*Kwena ifyo baafwa na naafwa pano pantu. Bushe, kwena, ndecita shani? Kana na ine kancite amano.*” [“Truly, this is how people get killed, I’ll get killed right here. What will I do? Let me try a trick.”] Here the acuity of the hare is highlighted against the bushbuck’s ill-fated effort at cleverness. But, as in the first version, his efforts are shouted down and he is killed. A final difference between versions is that in this latter rendering there is no explanation at the end of the narrative.

While the plot of this tale is essentially identical to the earlier version, the differences in detail are important. The lack of wives for the characters reduces the competitive, domestic exchange that initially motivated the hare to engage the lion. Further, without stating that Kalulu is impoverished, Mr. Kalumba keeps this condition from contributing to the motivation. If these details are assumed to exist in the traditional context, the memories of audience members, then Mr. Kalumba is possibly depending on the situation as being understood in the second version, part of what an audience brings to a performance. He might also be intentionally blunting those details to give the Hare’s actions a more aggressive, self-serving tone. The focus on the bushbuck proverb is much stronger here, and seems to be a major source of the lion’s anger. The proverbial emphasis becomes, because of its repetition, an important constituent of the tale’s theme. Here, more than in the earlier version, the fit between saying and bushbuck as dupe of the hare becomes stronger. The saying is therefore emphasized because of the predicament of the antelope and the fact that it specifically refers to this species of animal.⁷³

73 The tie between story and proverb is not uncommon in Tabwa tales. There are two proverbs associated with the tale of the monitor lizard in the tree: one about the lizard’s talkativeness and the other about the necessity to be near someone when explaining

Moreover, the proverbial core of the tale seems to be reflected in the differences between the original and second performance contexts. The first telling, in 1983, was in the late afternoon outside of Mr. Kalumba's house at Nsama. The audience was small, made up of three adults and around ten children. It was the first tale I collected from him and the first time I ever used a video camera to record a performance. He did not use proverbs in a repetitive way and was also careful to explain the tale's meaning at the end. In part, the presence of children would explain his strategy of obviously highlighting meaning, a strategy termed "external" by Labov (1972), and in equal or greater part my own presence would stimulate this approach. Mr. Kalumba did not know me and wanted to make his meaning clear to a stranger who most likely had a poor command of the language and who may not have heard similar tales. He could not, in short, assume knowledge of the traditional context on my part. That he cared about teaching me with his tales became evident on other occasions, where he would tell stories with dilemma endings and try to elicit explanations from me—mostly, I'm embarrassed to say, to mixed results.⁷⁴

This observation underscores the different strategy in the second version, performed in 1989 at Kaputa. Mr. Kalumba had moved to a much larger village, in his capacity as a Rural Council mailman. When he told this story again, again in later afternoon, he lived in closer proximity to neighbors, and a sizeable audience of adults and children quickly gathered when I arrived with my equipment. While I did not take a specific count, there were at least fifteen to twenty adults and as many children. Mr. Kalumba clearly was aware of the large group, and even pushed on at one point in the performance when a drunken man joined the throng and tried to hold a conversation with me while the other audience members urged the latecomer to be quiet or leave. At this juncture, Mr. Kalumba was describing the scene where the lion was pounding bark cloth and praising himself. The new arrival interrupted the lines about the chief's wife's

something. (Cancel 1989) In an initial translation of the first bushbuck version, one that I used on a subtitled videotape, I was unaware of the proverb being used and instead misread the phrase by improperly breaking up the noun *nkulungwe* [a male bushbuck] into a verbal construct having to do with being hunted. Therefore, though my translation "I will hunt you down" was semantically incorrect, the sense of a threat against the lion conveyed essentially the same idea. In a recent translation of the second version, also subtitled on videotape, I used the literal proverb without explanation so that, as in the performance, the context of the situation points to the saying's meaning.

74 Mr. Kalumba's approach to stories and, in particular, my presence as researcher is detailed in my Tabwa monograph. (1989, pp. 80–81)

buttocks which, it seemed to me, caused him to cut the reference short and move on to the allusion to the fine craftsmanship involved in pounding an ant's stomach. Overall, the video record of this performance confirms that he was speaking in a faster, louder, more intense manner to the larger audience than he had in the 1983 session, where he had been more relaxed in his style of presentation.

This later version was more rooted in metaphorical or allusive depth of language than the earlier one. It was aimed at the large adult audience and, I'd like to think, at the ostensibly more experienced and knowledgeable researcher. The "internal" (Labov 1972) strategy of not explaining the tale at the end also supports this interpretation of the performance context.

At this point, I want to continue my tale in a slightly different vein. Using a literary appropriation as a starting point, we can see the tale as a compact model of the ethnographic, interpretive "mission."⁷⁵ In the tale I am telling, the scholar plays the role of trickster, the one who controls not only events but language in his account. The actual storyteller becomes a character in the wider academic epic, someone whose real power is akin to that of the bushbuck in the Tabwa tale. Whether I act responsibly or not, Mr. Kalumba's words are here represented through a cultural filter, broader than a linguistic translation. The lion or chief can be seen as the audience of my scholarly efforts, susceptible to the information and shadings of meaning that I provide. As reliable as I intend to be, we will have this problem in perpetuity. The reader accepts or finds fault with the story, but the bushbuck will often be silenced or have his words misconstrued because Kalulu remains the orchestrator of the event, the manipulator of data and situation.

The Tabwa audience rarely feels pity for the bushbuck, since he has little to recommend him. Wit and the ability to manipulate language are traits of both the storyteller and the trickster. In many ways, they are parallel beings, for each seeks to better his or her position within the context of action and discourse. This is an understandably ambiguous position, since at times craft and craftiness will win out over "truth" and

75 See Kapchan's comparison of performance with the "enterprise" of ethnography. (Kapchan 2003, p. 136) A more provocative evocation of the ethnographic process is detailed by West 2007, where he compares the ethnographer and his or her writing with forms of sorcery. Toon van Meijl suggests that in order for an ethnographer to successfully work between the demands of the scholarly process and the real political and social goals/needs of the people being studied, the social scientist would do well to take on the mantle of the "divine trickster." (2005) This also goes back to the question that opened this study about whether or not a researcher allows him or herself to be "captured" by the people with whom he or she works.

innocence. I as interpreter must acknowledge this ambiguous role and continue to pursue the tale because its telling is important to me and my intentions. What I can do is to make this clear and try to keep the dialectics of interpretation, ignorance, and mystery at least at the edges, if not at the forefront, of my writing.

If I were to include Stanley Kalumba as an active participant in this kind of writing, the text would be to an obvious degree more “accurate,” more “honest.” But the process is never completely finished, since it spirals back to my mediation and his intentions. This kind of storytelling is not unlike the Tabwa tradition, since it is always apparent in the living event that the storyteller arrives and leaves with a personality and intention that drives and frames the images, words, and gestures of the performance. We do well, as “readers” of such performances, to follow the example of the storytelling audience. In this way, we can appreciate the few instances when the trickster is duped and the bushbuck, or some other victim, gets his or her revenge.⁷⁶

Let me end my tale by suggesting several possible conclusions. On the one hand, we can see that Mr. Kalumba stayed close to the same plot and events in both versions of the story. This suggests that he did not take large scale or dramatic liberties with the narrative. On the other hand, the changes he did make seemed significant and point to some of the ways he can shift meaning and depth of language within the same plot. I assert here the importance of performance context as an influence on these different versions. A third point is that he may simply have forgotten some of the finer differences between the versions, focusing only on what he felt were the important details of the core story and adding a few new images in the latter version.⁷⁷ Whichever interpretation may or may not be accurate, they all feed into the text of my tale and conform to the discourse that I use to frame these observations.

The other teller, who has his own reasons for placing himself or rather his desires into his tale, is obviously Stanley Kalumba. Mr. Kalumba was never a passive object of my scholarly efforts. In fact, he controlled our interactions over the first six years I knew him.⁷⁸ We conducted these

76 See the narrative by Mr. Henry Chakobe, where the bushbuck eventually gets the better of Kalulu, in Chapter III, on Bemba storytelling.

77 A Lunda performer, Mr. Idon Pandwe, told another version of this tale and, assuming a culture region overlap, its details can be weighed against Mr. Kalumba’s narratives (see Chapter V).

78 Echoing Haring 1972, Bauman emphasizes the potential and real instances of performers or subjects of research controlling aspects of their encounters with

interactions in Bemba, which narrowed the range of our conversations and my ability to delve into his narratives or personal history. He did let me know that he'd spent many years working in the urban Copperbelt area of Zambia, and that he became a Rural Council postman after he retired.⁷⁹ In 1989 I was stunned to find out, sometime after the performance discussed above, that he had a more than functional command of English. He revealed this ability in a conversation we'd been having where I agreed to bring him a small radio when I next visited and, as I walked away, he called after me in English, "You won't forget, will you?" This made me remember the several occasions where I'd strained to find the proper words to ask questions or to understand his explanation of a particularly obscure story and its symbolic elements, and how a few English words might have significantly eased the laborious process.

However, Stanley Kalumba is represented here by the kind of silence some scholars, including some ethnographers, depend on to put forth their theories and interpretations.⁸⁰ Since I cannot sit down with him again and discuss my perceptions of his tales and his own recollections and motivations, this analysis remains a contingent framework of observations and propositions. Unless we can speak, write, hear, or read, both our tales in their several dimensions and interrelationships—and this will not happen—the analysis of the story of Kalulu, the lion and bushbuck remains in that unsettled realm of stories about stories, tales told by one teller about another one, based on well-intentioned but none-the-less, inevitably, open-ended scholarship. At the least, and as is the case with all the performance

researchers, in part to question what he calls "poststructuralist" scholars' concerns with the power relationships in these interactions. (2004, pp. 157–162) I will return to this situation in the concluding chapter, but also note that West 2008, pp. 80–85 focuses on the same concerns.

79 Stanley Kalumba followed a common pattern of rural-urban migration at that time, which mostly entailed men moving to the copper mines and their surrounding cities for wage labor. Strong ties would be kept with their home areas and relatives in the form of regular visits and money sent back to help with local finances. After putting in enough years to draw a pension, the men would move back to the rural areas, build themselves houses, and retire to take part in the local economy in the form of farming, fishing or related activities. See Watson 1958, for a more detailed description of this practice in the wider rural social life of the Mambwe of northern Zambia. Mr. Laudon Ndalazi, a Bisa storyteller featured in Chapter IV, also followed this employment pattern of migration and retirement back to his rural home. Two other performers in this study, Mr. Henry Chakobe and Mr. Stephen Chipalo, were retired school teachers living in the village around Ilondola Mission (Chapter III).

80 Sichone states his concern in blunt terms, "Ethnographers capture by description...and to be translated is as humiliating as to be colonized." (2001, p. 371)

records in this study, I am pleased to bring Mr. Kalumba's efforts and image into the wider scholarly purview, preserving in somewhat inadequate fashion his talents and public persona.

Postscript

In October 2005, Kaputa District, where I'd recorded Mr. Kalumba, was in the midst of a slight economic upswing after a decade of dramatic decline. In the twenty-nine years since I first lived there, the district has experienced two economic booms and two downturns. Most of this had to do with the availability of fish from Lake Mweru Wantipa. The lake was a plentiful source in 1976, but the roads leading into and out of the district were in very bad condition, no more than dirt tracks running down a very steep and long escarpment as one traveled north from the town of Mporokoso towards the lake. The road coming from the west, from Mununga in Luapula Province, was not much better. The government and foreign aid agencies managed to upgrade the roads that ran into the district and around the lake by late 1984. At that point, commercial traffic, bringing goods into the area and taking fish out, had rapid and consistent access. Public transportation in the form of regularly running buses moved people to and from the district. Shops in numerous villages sprang up and there were opportunities of various types associated with fishing and related economies. By the mid nineties, however, after local fisherman consistently ignored laws providing for fallow periods where fish were supposed to spawn and have time to maintain their population, the output of the lake dropped precipitously.⁸¹ The lake was more or less fished out by the turn of the millennium. The government, as a consequence of both lack of funds to maintain infrastructure and the diminishing status of the district as an economic resource, failed to keep up the quality of roads in the area. This steady decline of infrastructure led to a paucity of public transportation. Even the fish lorries that had provided transport in the days of very bad roads rarely made the arduous trips to the lake.

In 2005, while the roads were almost as bad as pre-1976 standards, there was a slight economic recovery underway. Partly, the district government had turned toward Luapula Province to the west, instead of the more distant provincial capital at Kasama, for their links to most national and

81 For a detailed description of how nearby Lake Mweru was similarly "fished-out," see Gordon 2006.

provincial offices, due in large part to the fact that the roads in that direction were of better quality. Secondly, the presence of government offices at Kaputa spurred construction of a large electricity generating station that supplied the central village where civil servants lived and worked. In particular, the power lines fed a large police barracks and housing area that accommodated a substantial force that patrolled the nearby Congo border and dealt with smuggling and other concerns. A satellite telephone LAN link followed, providing communications for the government offices and any local residents who could afford the cost of installation. Thirdly, and perhaps most significantly, due in part to the military conflict in Congo, numerous Congolese merchants and entrepreneurs brought their skills over the border to form the backbone for a large market in Kaputa that served the civil servants and locals, spurring more traffic, despite the bad roads, for commerce in the town and surrounding areas. By 2005, when I arrived to conduct follow-up research for this project, there were more shops than ever before, and more goods available than I could have imagined. Due also to the unrest in Congo, there was a large garrison of Zambian soldiers based near the post office and just a mile or two from the border. Their presence constituted another set of consumers for goods and food in the town.

For all the material, or at least commercial, progress at Kaputa, regular transport was still at a premium. This made it very difficult to travel to Chishela, on the shore of Lake Mweru Wantipa, where Stanley Kalumba had moved before he passed away. For the years I'd know him, I knew relatively little about him. I arranged for a friend, a local Zambian Catholic priest, to ask around at Chishela when he made his next visit. Two months after I returned to the US, my friend sent a brief note with the sketchy outlines of Mr. Kalumba's life. Stanley Kalumba was born in Kashela Village in 1925 and took up a job on the Copperbelt as a Council messenger. He retired from that position and returned to Kaputa District, first living at Nsama and working as a Rural Council mailman in the early 1980s. He finished his time as a mailman in Kaputa, from 1984 to 1993, when he moved to Chishela. He died there in 1999 at seventy-four years of age.

Mukupa Katandula: A *Balumendo* Story

I recorded a very different Tabwa story-performance in 1988 at Mukupa Katandula. Because the performer was a young man, in his early twenties, I want to preface my analysis by introducing a theme of youthful assertion,

and its prevalence in African societies, that has steadily increased and come to the fore in the early Twenty-first Century.

In its cultural and political visions, the nationalist project sought to do two things: to maintain the frontier between elders and juniors that characterized traditional African values, and to put young people at the center of plans for economic development and national liberation. (Diouf 2003, pp. 3–4)

The failures of nationalist economic, cultural, and political models had particularly dreadful effects on young people. As national models of economic development proved inadequate or irrelevant, so did customary rites of socialization through work or education. Requiring extensive investments of money and time, these activities and preparatory stages no longer inspired young people, who preferred risk and immediate profit. (Diouf, p. 4)

Reflecting on this rise of youthful participation in many key activities of Zambia's rural areas reminded me of an encounter with a young man at Mukupa Katandula back in 1983. I'd been a couple of days videotaping storytelling performances and was sitting, in the early evening, outside the home of some old friends. A clearly intoxicated young man made it a point to meander over after he spotted me during his unsteady progress along the dusty village street. It is almost axiomatic, when it comes to being a visiting researcher, that the consumption of alcohol often dispels inhibitions and some people under the influence decide it is a good time to approach the foreigner in their midst. I might add that this works both ways, with researchers, after some convivial imbibing, sometimes with mixed results, crossing lines that are more rigidly maintained under ordinary circumstances. While he was addressing the three or four of us seated around a small fire, he targeted me in particular because he spoke in English. Looking back at my sketchy field notes, I guess it did not seem all that funny at the time:

In the meantime, a very drunk young man named David (Chalwe?) came over. He was extremely obnoxious, especially to me, in English even! He kept talking about Samuel Doe of Liberia being Africa's youngest head of state, taking power at age 28.⁸² It had been a long time since I'd wanted to jump up and punch someone out, but he was bringing me close. However, things cooled down, especially with dinner, and he kept inviting us over to his house. (Cancel, field notes, 1983)

82 Strictly speaking, Doe was twenty-nine or thirty when he came to power in 1980. He actually changed his birth year from 1951 to 1950, in order to meet an age minimum when he ran for the presidency in an election that took place some time after his military take-over.

Years later, I honestly can't recall what it was that had gotten me so angry, but it was probably the intensity of his youthful insolence and my own fatigue, looking only to relax inconspicuously with some friends over a meal after a strenuous couple of days of work. In any event, that same evening, my traveling companion and old friend Rabbon Chola and I found ourselves laughing about the fervent way David Chalwe kept referring to Doe's age and implying that the time was near when the continent's elders would give way to youthful leaders who really knew what to do.⁸³ In many ways, this attitude is echoed in the posturing and assertiveness of many young men, who must claim social status at an age when it is not accorded them in the traditional scheme of things. Moreover, as the recent history of the continent illustrates, in the form of sectarian wars, fought in part by child soldiers, and dramatic demographic shifts due to forced migrations and diseases such as HIV/AIDS, the current realities of Africa, and in particular Zambia, suggest the growing prevalence and influence of youth in the economic and social future, though not necessarily the future as envisioned by leaders of the early nationalist period.⁸⁴

The 1988 performance I recorded can be seen as an example of this kind of adolescent assertion that has since, in many ways, come to fruition in contemporary Zambia. Some residents used to joke that the village of Mukupa Katandula is so far removed from any main line of transport that even the chief moved away—which, in the late 1980s, he did, for this and other reasons not germane to the current discussion. My son Michael and I had arrived in the late afternoon and sought lodging at the Mukupa Katandula Primary School. We were allowed to put our sleeping gear in one of the school offices, and were hosted by a couple of the teachers, in particular the headmaster, Mr. Kancule. The next morning, I had walked to a part of the village near the clinic to visit an old friend whom we have known since 1976. Falace Mwenya was a

83 Having seen a virulent civil war tear apart Sierra Leone, Michael Jackson, with strong research and personal links to that nation, has spent a lot of time thinking about the causes of such violence and the seemingly easy militarization of young men. Among his several conclusions is a notion of reciprocity and its denial, at least in the minds of those who feel insulted and deprived of their rightful share of social and economic benefits. (2004; 2005, p. 36)

84 In Chapter IV, focusing on performance sessions among the Bisa, I discuss game management policies that had repercussions for the older social order, essentially bringing to prominence young men over elders and traditions.

woman of singular personal strength and good-humored aggressiveness. She had six children by at least four men and to my knowledge had never formally married or lived with any of them for an extended period. She supported her family by farming, brewing an especially popular sweet beer called *susuta*, and baking and selling bread and sweet donut-like pastries called *ifitumbuwa*.

After I videotaped her at home, sending a greeting to my wife, three young men came by her house as I sat waiting for Falace to prepare a meal. They asked to tell a story. Having nothing better to do, I agreed to pay for some more of the home made distilled liquor (called *kacasu* or *kancina*) they'd been drinking, set up my camera on Falace's verandah, and proceeded to tape the efforts of a young man named Chipioka Patrick. Mr. Patrick and his friends were roughly between the ages of 18 and 24, a bit drunk, having a good time, and displaying the attitude of assertiveness and bravado that seems common among adolescents everywhere.

Mr. Patrick was dressed in a thin red nylon jacket, zipped up to his chest, with a high, "Nehru" style collar, and dark trousers. He was in his late teens or early twenties and employed a storytelling style that was humorous, detailed, and hyperbolic. He wanted to make his companions laugh at the events and thematic dimensions of the tale. Quick to focus on scenes that successfully elicited laughter, he chose to repeat phrases or descriptions that worked well for him. Possibly due to drink, he was a bit bleary-eyed and deliberate in his delivery, but was nonetheless tuned into the shaping of an entertaining tale.

Tabwa Storytelling 3 Chipioka Patrick*

Chipioka Patrick: There was a little thing. People lived in a big village, just as we are living. There was a person, his name is Biti Mupalume [Biti the Great]...

Robert Cancel: Wait, let me... [Pause while I change batteries in my audiocassette recorder] OK, OK, let's continue.

CP: That boy, that one, was a school-going child. [As for] his learning, he had reached grade seven.



* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.02/Tabwa3>

RC: Uh huhn.

CP: He was learning. He was learning. However, in his work in school, he liked to play football [soccer/"bola"].⁸⁵ He was working. He was working, just like that, playing football a lot. Wherever he was called, he was **number one** in playing football. One day they called him, to say, that he should come to play football, to come to Mporokoso. That's how he left to go to Mporokoso there. When he went there he went and played football, he was the one who was winning **numer one**...football.

One day which did not eat a thing [i.e. one day], this chief, Chitimukulu, sent people to say that "The one who will come here to Kasama, who will beat eleven people, will marry...my child. I don't want my child, the one who will say that, the one who will marry my child, just this one I have given birth to, her name is Kasuba. If he beats eleven people, then he marries my child."

Then Biti came to hear, to say "OK," there in Kaputa where he was staying. "What should I do?" Biti, when he heard that said, "There in Kasama, there is a person, how many? One. The child of the chief, the one they were saying that...they should marry her. Even me, then I [will] go there to throw myself there [i.e. participate in the competition]." Biti started off his journey to go and reach Kasama...humn...in Mporokoso." When he arrived in Mporokoso, his father had given him money amounting to six thousand kwacha. He finished, he even drank it...he finished beer, all of it, iffwmm [wipes hand across mouth as he utters ideophone to indicate totally or completely]. He squandered [the money]. He returned again to Kaputa. His father then told him, saying "My child, there where I gave you money to use to go and marry the child of Chitimukulu, the money, where have you taken it?" He said, "Father, my money, I finished it in Mporokoso." Again, they came to give him three thousand and said, "Go and use it to marry."

Again, he started off on his journey to go and reach Kasama. He went and found, certainly in Kasama, his friend, the one he used to play football with all the other players. "How is it boy, Biti?" "How is it boy, Biti?" He said, "No, I am just fine." Then *mukwai*, right there, Biti...ah...that friend of his, he found there, told him, saying, "What about the child of Chitimukulu, where does she sleep?" He said, "She sleeps there." He said, "Now boy,

85 Mr. Patrick uses several terms or phrases for soccer or playing soccer. An older form he begins with is "*ukuteya umupila*," where *-teya* is basically the verb "to play," and *umupila* is the word for ball, but also for a rubber tire. He also says "*-teya bola*," which uses the English borrowing for "ball." He uses, a few times later in the story, the more common verb for playing soccer, which drops *-teya* in favor of verbalizing the word for ball into "*ukubola*," often used to say, for example, "*nalabola*," "I'm about to play soccer."

you even want to go and see the child of Chitimukulu?" He said, "Yes, me, I want to see her." He said, "Now how can you go there on your own, to a place which is under lock and key there?" He said, "Yes, me I want to reach there in the house." He said, "No, boy, it will not work."

RC: Uhm hhn.

CP: He said, "No, me, just show me the house. If you show me, I will go and reach there." Then they showed the young man the house, and he went and reached where? There inside the house, there. He even entered using medicine [magic].

RC: Uhn huhn.

CP: He even entered the house right in there. He even began talking to that very woman, Mary, the child of Chitimukulu.

RC: Is it not Kasuba? The name...?

CP: The name?

RC: Mary?

CP: It's Mary Kasuba.

RC: Oh.

CP: Yes *mukwai*, yes.

RC: I understand.

CP: Yes *mukwai*, yes. Then he discussed with the woman in there. "You, woman, you are the one I have followed here to Kasama. You also know this news." She said, "OK, even me, you are the man I have been waiting for."

Then that woman, he did what? He made her pregnant...by...by Biti. That woman, when she became pregnant in there, then she did what? She even gave birth. Then her father, Chitimukulu, did not know anything [enough] to say that, "My child has what? A pregnancy in there?" Then she gave birth to twins, how many? [Holds up two fingers.]

RC: Two.

CP: Two, yes. One day the father said, "Oh. Who will do what, [for] my child, he who will beat [my] eleven players, a person, how many? [Holds up one finger.] One, then he'll do what? He marries my child."

Biti did what? He went to hmm...there to the palace. He went to pay a fee [for a wife]. And to do what? He [Chitimukulu] said, "No, me I don't want fees. I want someone who will play with eleven players, and even beat these people." Biti went in there inside and showed them, he said, "On Friday, it is the day of playing football." He even began to play...when they arrived there, to say, "Now, this is the day of playing."

At fourteen hours [2 PM] they started playing football, with eleven people. He himself was alone. He didn't have any goalkeeper, he himself was just alone. They even began playing football, they even began playing. Biti, when he moved with the ball, the whole ground [implying the spectators' cheers] echoed shouts, saying "Biti! Biti!" The whole ground echoed shouts, saying "Biti!" All the people who sat around the sides of the field, they began shouting, saying, "Biti!" "Mupalume!" All those who shouted said, "Biti!" "Mupalume!" The football boots [cleats] he was wearing, both were writing [leaving impressions in the dirt of the field] everywhere he was walking, they were writing, saying "Biti" "Mupalume." Everywhere [on] the jersey he was wearing it was written, "Biti Mupalume." Now the ground which was shouting praises, saying "Biti," it stopped, just saying "Mupalume." It was just shouting praises, saying "Mupalume." [The audience, Mr. Patrick's friends, are laughing hard at these images.] Now, from there, all of them, when Biti Mupalume carried the [the ball], carrying it, saying "Football." When he carried, a woman there was saying, "Biti." When he kicked the ball hard at the goal post, a woman, if she tried to catch the ball, the leg...the arms, both of them, would break." If he tells, to say, "He kicks the ball hard," a woman, if she says "Let me ward it off," her arms can break...both [of them]. Then Biti, even he, these people... these who were eleven, he himself alone beat the women...yes...goals. Then they gave Biti that woman, telling him, saying, "Now this woman, we are going to give you, she is a child of Chitimukulu."

Now the following day, it was on Saturday, saying, "Now we are about to give you that woman." Then when it was daytime in the morning, Chitimukulu said, "Go now and fetch the woman from where she stays." They went and found that woman whom they went to get, she even had given birth to twins, how many?

RC: Two.

CP: Two. Then women, these children, they were both girls. In the places they were walking, in those places, were imprints saying Biti Mupalume, Biti Mupalume, Biti Mupalume. Now Biti, he has not come alone himself. The father said, saying, "We want the person who has given this woman, Mary Kasuba, the pregnancy and begotten thereby twin girls." Then this Biti, where he remained, they had gathered the whole ground in the whole chiefdom, in there where they had gathered them to tell [them], saying "We want to tell, we wish to know the father of the child. Who is the one?" Both these children failed to point at any man as their father. They came to point at Biti when he came later on, to come and point, saying, "The father is this one." Chitimukulu gave him the chiefdom, and guess what? He should even become ruler of the chiefdom.

And the little thing, me, this is where I end. My [dear] Mr. Cancel, I am Tiko Veranda. I end here. Chipioka Patrick.

RC: Yes.

In itself, the basic plot of the story recalls several other tales found among the Tabwa, Bemba and Lamba people, according to documented examples. The Tabwa have a version where the local chief demands the capture of a troublesome monitor lizard from a very tall tree. Most fail, but one clever young man uses the trick of feeding a dog and goat improper foods, causing the intrusive lizard to keep trying to correct him and eventually coming down the tree to be better heard and eventually captured.⁸⁶ The hero is rewarded with the chief's beautiful daughter, Kasuba (Sun). Most versions of the narrative contain a proverb about education, *Mulangilishi wa muntu, aalaapalama* [To teach someone something, one must draw near], which is usually how the hero induces the lizard to come down the tree. Among the Bemba, there is a related proverb that says *Abalya imbulu baalaapalamana* [Those who eat the monitor lizard are always close together]. It suggests the importance of unity, but also the drawing together of people who do something unusual or even prohibited. One Tabwa version I recorded includes an image not found in the others, whereby the young hero sneaks a peak into the small house where the chief's daughter is secluded, in order to decide if his efforts to capture the lizard would be worth the trouble.⁸⁷ Conversely, there are a number of other similar narratives that espouse the value of elders. Usually, an arrogant chief has the younger generation kill off their parents so that he alone will rule over them. Inevitably, some disaster befalls the community and the wisdom of elders is missing. One young man has hidden his parents or father, refusing the order to kill them, and it is he who provides the answer to the problem. In one Lamba story, an ogre has eaten everyone and everything in the village, and the young man's father uses the trick of feeding a goat and dog improper foods in order to lure it from a chasm. (Doke 1976, pp. 150–153) Clearly, an ongoing tension and debate exists between these sets of stories over which age group is best suited to steer the course of the society.⁸⁸

These are only a few elements of the tale's traditional context. I want to play them against Mr. Patrick's performance. He first of all localizes and names his hero, Biti Mupalume, a praise name: "Biti the great." Interestingly, since Patrick lives in Mukupa Katandula, he locates Biti in Kaputa which, in relative terms, is a much larger, even somewhat cosmopolitan place. He also contemporizes him by using soccer as the venue for the test to

86 See, for example, Cancel 1989, pp. 35–36, 38–39.

87 Unpublished, Chongo Alison, 1983, Kaputa.

88 See related version where a snake wraps itself around the arrogant chief's neck and an elder must provide the solution to the problem. (Cancel 1989, pp. 43–44, and Lunda version of this tale told by Mr. Idon Pandwe, in Chapter IV, on Lunda storytelling.)

win the beautiful heroine. By identifying the chief as Chitimukulu, he increases the status of the contest and its prize, as well as playing upon a historical competitiveness that long ago was an actual militant adversarial relationship between the Tabwa and Bemba.⁸⁹ Mr. Patrick also complicates the basic movement to resolution, or the winning of the contest, by taking the image of looking at the chief's daughter further, actually having the hero sleep with her and produce twins.

Looking closer at the stylistic inventiveness of the narrative, the soccer imagery is not unprecedented in tales collected from this region. There is a soccer-playing scene in a tale collected from the Lamba people in the 1920s (Doke 1976, pp. 70–75). I found a similar image in a Tabwa tale told by an elderly woman, Mrs. March Mulenga, in 1976 (Cancel 1989, pp. 113–118). What Chipioka Patrick contributes to the other images, and I do not know if these are his innovations or gleaned from other performers, is a hyperbolic sense of detail and the grandeur of Biti's prowess and celebrity. For example, Biti borrows money, K6,000, [back in 1988, the Zambian kwacha was worth around sixteen to the dollar] from his father to pay for the journey to Chitimukulu's. Instead, Biti travels only as far as Mporokoso, some 70 miles away, where he proceeds to spend the entire sum on beer and partying. He returns home to borrow another K3,000 to actually complete the trip. During the football match, his football boots [soccer cleats] stamp his name on the dirt field, one word on each sole. His soccer jersey has "Biti Mupalume" written all over it, a marvelous rural version of product branding, that also replicates the practice of professional soccer teams using advertising on their jerseys. Later on in the tale, he takes this already striking image and uses it to add to Biti's renown, when the twin daughters also walk along verbally echoing the visual impressions in the dust that spell out Biti's name. When he plays against the chief's team, the spectators chant his name in call and response fashion, "Biti!" "Mupalume!" He scores his goals by kicking the ball so powerfully that he breaks the hands of several goalkeepers who, for some reason, are women. Fame, fortune, sexuality, prodigious procreation, and the arrogance that frames them all are qualities in the hero played up by the performer.

There are more stylistic innovations, but let's stop here and look again at the performance context. Chipioka Patrick is around the age of his tale's

89 David Livingstone passed through the Tabwa area of Chief Nsama during his last journey and reported on a war between the Tabwa and the Bemba (Livingstone 1874). For more details and references see A. Roberts 1973.

protagonist. Fame and fortune come to the hero despite, or because of, his aggressive self-serving behavior and his initially impoverished conditions. By drinking, bragging, carelessly spending his father's money, engaging in premarital sex, and potentially antagonizing one of the most powerful chiefs in Zambia, Biti Mupalume successfully pits his youthful bravado and skill in soccer against the forces of authority and community. The image of the teenager as trickster, in the African sense of the term, comes to mind as an apt metaphor to describe these protagonists. It was clear during the performance that Mr. Patrick and his friends thoroughly enjoyed and identified with the imagery of Biti's cockiness and triumphs. In fact, the tale falls under a type of story I earlier identified as commonly told by adolescents amongst each other. I termed the tales "*balumendo*," or young men's, stories (Cancel 1989). These tales uniformly question older authority and support the impetuosity, impatience, and brashness of young heroic characters. Their heroes regularly flaunt proper behavior to assert their desires for fame and wealth. Some tales borrow images from books and films, such as James Bond and car chases. One tale even detailed the successful robbery of the Bank of England by some daring young tunnellers. We can in many ways see these performances as wish fulfillment or the transformation of the relative social powerlessness of adolescence into the assertion of agency and desire over conventional norms of behavior and the wisdom of age.⁹⁰

In an effort to continue his dominance of the performance situation, Chipioka Patrick commenced to tell a story with a conundrum ending.

Tabwa Storytelling 4 by Chipioka Patrick*



Robert

Cancel: Let's begin.

Chipioka Me, I was a bachelor; I did not have any wife at all. Now, when

Patrick: I expected to tell, saying, "O.K. let me go and look for a woman to marry," I found her. When I married my wife, that one expected

90 There are numerous studies, mostly from social science perspectives, on adolescent creative assertion, particularly in the form of oral narrative. See, for example, Lightfoot 1997; Shuman 1986; and Wilson 1997. It is certainly not a stretch to relate these contexts of adolescent assertion to the "Hip-Hop Culture" that emerged out of the difficult socio-economic conditions of New York City's South Bronx in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and that has grown to be a world-wide economic and cultural phenomenon. See Rose 1994.

* To watch a video of this story follow this link: <http://dx.doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0033.02/Tabwa4>

that my wife will conceive. Now my wife, as we continued living together, she did not conceive at all. My mother-in-law who did not...the one we stayed with, she was the one who conceived. She had no husband; she was the one who became pregnant, my mother-in-law. And then my mother-in-law, she had the pregnancy, the pregnancy began growing, but the mother who bore me also was the one who gave birth to this child. Now what does this mean? Me, I end here.

RC: Uh hm. Can you explain to me? Explain this to me.

Audience: To explain...[laughing]

CP: I had told you to say, me, I will not explain, unless...the *mulumbe* demands money.

RC: Ooh.

CP: Yes.

Audience: Those who want it explained should pay.

RC: Me? I can buy you more beer?

CP: Yes, unless they pay me...This *mulumbe* is very difficult. This *mulumbe*, if it was explicitly stated, many of you would understand it.

RC: I am saying, I could buy you [more] beer.

CP: Yes, unless you follow me to our place, that's when I would explain a lot.

Audience: To explain this, unless you are how many people? Even just two. Because as things are now, there are [too] many people [around]. He cannot explain.

RC: Ohh.

Audience: It does not need to be known to many people.

RC: Oh. Now...ah...what can I do?

CP: Yes.

RC: What can I do?

CP: You just come to our place there, tomorrow.

RC: Ohh. Tomorrow?

CP: Yes, in the morning.

RC: Yes, I will come there. O.K. It's alright.

CP: O.K. I am happy.

The answer to this kind of conundrum may have been obvious to the audience members, but I hadn't heard this particular set up before. Chipioka Patrick refused to provide the answer, despite my offer of buying another bottle of *kancina*, because he wanted me to return the next day in order to "buy" the answer. Here the sense of manipulation and control was extended from simply holding the stage in performance and carefully coloring the story's images to influencing my own presence, movement, and resources of time and money. The notion that the tale could not be explained in mixed company might have had something to do with Falace's presence, nearby if not at the session. The answer might have had something to do with a male view of marriage or even of in-law prohibitions, but nothing was specified. After the performance, we adjourned to Falace's home for a meal she'd prepared, no longer touching on the narratives at all. My discussion of the conundrum, similarly, ends here, since circumstances did not allow me to visit Mr. Patrick the next day. In fact, looking back at my field notes, I saw that I was not as interested in the performance as I would later come to be, dedicating only a few lines to the occasion, while focusing more on my time with Falace:

A drunken young man had me buy him some *kancina* then told a wonderfully cock-eyed story of a chief giving his daughter to the best soccer player. I got tired of his trying to extort everything I owned out of me, but then we went inside and had some good fresh fish and *mukaiwa bwali* [maize inshima or "pap"] at Falace's. She told me she had ulcers and had been at Mporokoso hospital last year. They recommended she eat things like milk and rice. But both are pretty much in short supply. (Cancel, field notes, 16 January, 1989)

Over the years, however, the performance and performer took on much more significance for the reasons I've been propounding above.

In a historical and cultural context, these *balumendo* [young men's] tales seem a common phenomenon in the life of the society. Several older men have commented to me in conversation that they too, when younger, would create and/or repeat these kinds of tales. When they became adults and responsible men in the culture, they grew interested in preserving the older, more "important" stories they'd learned or heard when growing up. Seen in this way, the *balumendo* performances were a natural part of coming of age within the traditional society, challenging the limiting of youthful status and influence. Seen, however, as a harbinger of the consequences of globalization in the economic and cultural spheres, the tales also mark a point of transition to a new world of youthful assertion in a fading

nationalist project. Chipioka Patrick told his story in an era of a failing socialist government. It seemed clear, especially for young people living in a seemingly backwater place like Mukupa Katandula, that progress in a modernist sense was not easily attainable, if at all. He is willing and able to create his own venue or space for success through narrative and interaction with a videocamera-wielding visitor who can provide a modest form of money, fame and/or immortality in the electronically captured performance. If Chipioka Patrick's generation was suspicious of the tiresome nationalist rhetoric and practice of the Kaunda government in 1989, it is logical to conjecture an even higher level of disenchantment and creative assertion in the globalized realities of the Twenty-first Century. Young men tend not to be seen, or see themselves, as biding time before entering into a successful adult stage of life. Being an adult no longer assures economic or social success or security. As Diouf points out,

In many ways, young Africans can be seen as searching for a narrative that provides a territory for the free play of their imagination. As J.D.Y. Peel observes, "Narrative empowers because it enables its possessor to integrate his memories, experiences and aspirations in a schema" (1995: 587). Looking beyond national borders, young people appropriate new technologies (digital and audiovisual) in such a way as to recreate the dynamics of the oral and the spectacular, along with the literary and iconographic imagination. (Diouf 2003, p. 6)

In retrospect, we can see that the performers Stanley Kalumba and Chipioka Patrick comprise generational counterpoints in their subject matter and approaches to their narratives. Mr. Kalumba focused on the older elements of his tale, adding few if any contemporary touches. His dependence on proverbs and the essential nature of the trickster hare forms the core of his performance. Humor and message were borne by the audience's experience of other trickster stories and of versions of the same tale he told. Kalulu and the other animals followed their age-old script in a way that entertained and underscored the hare's cleverness and the deeper notion of eloquence, in both its positive and negative manifestations. Chipioka Patrick's performance was steeped in a contemporary version of modernity and fame, linking the desires and talents of youth to older plot structures of tasks being set by chiefs or fathers for suitors to win their daughters. The story had elements of quick fortune, quick sex, and physical prowess leading to fame. In the end, Biti Mupalume, perhaps Mr. Patrick's aesthetic doppelgänger, is less the clever trickster of the oral tradition than the youthful pícaro of Spanish Golden Age literature, someone responding to

real world conditions and hardships. Both performers embody the opposite ends of a spectrum that captures the possibilities and functions of their oral narrative system.

I want to end my own story by returning to the question of method. For reasons of space and focus, I have not exhausted all the information from the traditional and performance contexts that was available. However, even what was presented here suggests that we can highlight the personality and individual content and stylistic characteristics of the performers while using our own knowledge and experiences to flesh out description and push it in the direction of analysis. I must, in all honesty, continually cast doubt on my own observations by pointing to the insufficient facts and the unavoidable over-prevalence of personal impressions I read into these performance events. As much depth and dimension as I can add to situate the performance and its components will always balance against the inadequacy of scholarly methods of representation and the question of ethnographic authority, a question, ultimately, of power. Language is power and social power is augmented by discourse, personal and systemic. As Stanley Kalumba noted in the epigraph to this chapter, the powerless are rarely accorded a stage on which to speak.

Postscript

I learned little about Chipioka Patrick when I visited Mukupa Katandula for only a day and a half in 2005, accompanying my Catholic priest friend on some church business. For all the pessimism I'd felt over the last two decades, Mukupa Katandula had become a more vibrant village, with a refurbished and well-staffed primary school and a new health clinic. A major change was that hand-powered pumps now dotted the village in various neighborhoods and provided clean water for the residents. For many years, contractors, local and foreign, had failed at digging bore holes into usable water strata in most of Kaputa District. The area is geologically undergirded by volcanic fissures containing sulfuric water that bubbles up in places in the form of hot springs. This is the basic resource for the arduous but relatively lucrative practice of processing salt out of the briny water that flows out of the springs in the rainy season and inundates the surrounding grounds or pans. The sulfuric liquid is undrinkable and water had to be obtained from Lake Mweru Wantipa, its tributaries or shallow water holes. In the case of Mukupa Katandula, people had to walk up to two miles to draw water that was not particularly potable but was nonetheless

used for drinking, washing, cooking, etc. The water pumps had definitely changed life for the better, improving health and reducing labor, as was affirmed by some of the old friends I saw during our brief visit.

I heard first that Falace Mwenya had died a few years earlier. My friends who gave me this news seemed less than empathetic regarding Falace's passing. I think she was considered by many of the village's "proper" women to be a little too loose and independent. Then when I asked about him, I was told Mr. Patrick was alive and still in Mukupa Katandula. Later on, I realized there'd been a misunderstanding, since his father had the same name. When I met briefly with Mr. Patrick's sister, she confirmed that the young man I recorded had died six years earlier. He was born around 1963 and lived most of his life at Mukupa Katandula. At the time we met and I recorded him, Chipioka Patrick was nearly twenty-five years old. He later married, had a child and moved away. It was unclear when or where, but it sounded like he lived somewhere in the eastern part of Northern Province, since his sister told me he'd been going to the hospital there, at Chinsali, after he became ill. The nature of the illness was not clear to me from her explanation, only that it left his legs paralyzed at a late stage in the disease. He died at age thirty-six, in 1999, coincidentally, the same year that Mr. Kalumba passed away. His wife and daughter now live in the city of Kabwe, just north of Zambia's capital, Lusaka.

Mr. Patrick led rather a short life—though, sadly, not far off from the thirty-seven year average life-span of Zambians [reckoned in 2005 by several world health organizations]—and if the main character of his story *Biti Mupalume* is an actual reflection of how he felt about that life, we could use the old sixties maxim of "live hard, die young and leave a good looking corpse" to encapsulate his youthful fatalism and view of grabbing some wealth and fame wherever the opportunity presented itself. In any event, this example of identity-creation reflects the wider trend by adolescent storytellers, especially young men, who I've seen in many performance sessions. Suspended in the liminal areas between adult achievement and adolescent dependency and powerlessness, these performers use the occasion of holding the stage at storytelling sessions and fashioning images of themselves within and without the narratives that stress personal power and prowess as well as social status.

In fact, in a wider sense, these possibilities have been more and more realized in the new liberalized Zambian, and world, economy. Even upcountry, it was clear that many young men were involved in the transport,

fishing and agricultural economies. The ones I'd met were different from earlier entrepreneurs. They were focused, sober and often religious—usually fundamentalist Christian—in their outlooks. They saved money, grew their enterprises, and kept relatives who might conceivably drain their resources, at arm's length. Clearly, as it always does, and for better or worse, "tradition" as it pertained to kinship and generational status was in a phase of change and evolution.⁹¹ So in some ways, Chipioka Patrick has the last word here as he did in our encounter. He still owns the answer to the conundrum I was unable to buy.

91 Stuart Marks's latest research on the Bisa of the Luwangwa Valley has noted a similar shift in the relative influence of elders and young men in recent times, due in large part to game management schemes and the rise of evangelical Christian practices. See Chapter IV on Bisa storytelling.

