Review article

Semiotics and textual autonomy*

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Richard Bauman is a folklorist in the forefront of the movement within folkloristics away from a conception of folklore as text to a conception of folklore as performance. In the book under review he asserts that

> We must recognize that the symbolic forms we call folklore have their primary existence in the actions of people and their roots in social and cultural life.... My concern has been to go beyond a conception of oral literature as disembodied superorganic stuff and to view it contextually and ethnographically.... (p. 2)

Bauman has not written a theoretical treatise; rather, his book is primarily descriptive in nature. He draws upon fieldwork conducted in Texas over a fifteen-year period. Each chapter in his book deals with a specific oral narrative tradition: stories of coon dogs and dog traders, local character anecdotes, stories about practical jokes, and tall tales. The subject matter of Bauman's book might appear to be of interest primarily to folklorists. However, it merits the attention of anyone interested in the possibility of a general science of discourse that would offer a framework to encompass all types of discourse — oral and written, 'simple' and 'complex', literary and nonliterary. As I have suggested elsewhere (Hendricks forthcoming), such a general science of discourse can be accommodated as a subdivision within semiotics.

Although Bauman is a past president of the Semiotic Society of America, he at no point in this book attempts to relate his approach to semiotics. However, he was one of the respondents to Sebeok's 1986 questionnaire on the goals of semiotics. In his response, Bauman begins by noting that he considers the principal strength of folkloristics to be

> its maintenance of the unified vision of language, art, society, and history that has been challenged — indeed, largely superseded — for the past century or more by

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the twin processes of intellectual compartmentalism and the quest for disciplinary autonomy with the academy. (Sebeok 1986: 369)

Bauman suggests that semiotics can serve as a 'foundational frame of reference' for reintegrating what the quest for disciplinary autonomy has fragmented.

Bauman echoes these remarks at the very beginning of the present book, where he refers specifically to the rise of academic differentiation as having fragmented 'the unified vision of literature as cultural production that was folklore's birthright (p. 11). It might appear that Bauman has in mind an interdisciplinary approach; but he explicitly rejects this interpretation of his program, one reason being that it would 'concede the legitimacy of disciplinary differentiation to begin with' (p. 114).

Since Bauman does not discuss in any detail his conception of semiotics, it is hard to grasp his intent. He would appear to hold an 'imperialist' conception of semiotics. My own preference is a conception of semiotics as an autonomous discipline, with its scope specified in fairly narrow, stringent terms. One possible formulation is as follows: semiotics concerns itself with phenomena that can be analyzed into a plane of expression and a plan of content, with the two planes connected by a relation of mutual implication. Each plane can be analyzed into units whose combinatory possibilities are then investigated. (For further discussion, see Hendricks forthcoming).

A science of discourse that is a subdivision of an autonomous semiotics must perforce have as its object the text conceived as an autonomous entity. Most approaches to text analysis have, in fact, conceived the text as autonomous. This is particularly true of the work in the structural analysis of narrative which derives, directly or indirectly, from Propp (1968). Structuralism is predicated on the assumption that structures are self-sufficient and can be apprehended without recourse to extraneous elements.

Bauman, in rejecting a conception of folklore as text in favor of a conception of folklore as performance, is in effect rejecting the notion of textual autonomy. The focus of this review article will be on Bauman's notion of performance and its implications for the notion of textual autonomy. When we closely consider Bauman's analytic–descriptive practice, we will find that he has a rather heterogeneous conception of performance, and his practice does not always follow his general theoretical position.

The essence of Bauman's conception of performance (the performance event) is that it is 'the indissoluble unity of text, narrated event, and narrative event' (p. 7). The 'narrated event' and the 'narrative event' are

'the twin social anchor points of narrative discourse' (p. 112). The narrated event is the event recounted in the work; it is the external referent of the narrative considered as sign (p. 5). The narrative event is the act of storytelling in a particular communicative situation, with the author–creator as sender and the listeners/readers as receivers. The receivers are regarded as active participants in the performance, so the text is seen as emergent from the specific circumstances at hand (pp. 4, 113).

The narrated event and the narrative event are clearly distinct from each other — they occur in different times and are of different durations. Also, they typically occur in different places. These two events, in effect, constitute two dimensions of textual autonomy. When a text is asserted to be autonomous, it is assumed to be analyzable as a self-sufficient entity, with no appeal to either the narrated event or the narrative event. However, a text can (theoretically at least) be autonomous on one dimension and not the other. We will discuss each dimension separately, beginning with a consideration of the narrated event, the 'referent' of the narrative text.

Structuralist studies' lack of concern for the referential relation follows the examples of linguistics. Most linguists deal with meaning in terms of synonymy, antonymy, paraphrase, etc. — all a matter of relations among linguistic entities. In this respect, modern linguistics reflects the influence of Saussure.

Saussure asserts that 'The linguistic sign unites, not a thing and a name, but a concept and a sound image' (1959: 66). For example, in French the concept 'to judge' is linked to the sound image *juger*. He further notes that

> initially the concept is nothing ... only a value determined by its relations with other similar values.... The conceptual side of value is made up solely of relations and differences with respect to the other terms of language, and the same can be said of its material side. (Saussure 1959: 117–118)

Saussure recognizes two major types of language-internal relations, syntagmatic and associative. (The term *paradigmatic* is usually used now instead of *associative*.) These same two relations, though defined somewhat differently, have played a prominent role in many studies of narrative structure. Plot is analyzed in terms of syntagmatic relations among narrative propositions. Character is analyzed in terms of paradigmatic relations among the characters. (For discussion, see Hendricks 1973).

Baumann offers no discussion of narrative studies that consider the text in isolation from the narrated event; nor does he offer any sustained

discussion of what is entailed by a concern for the narrated event. The aspect of the relation between narrative text and narrated event that most concerns Bauman is the question of truthfulness, or as he phrases it, the 'nature and role of expressive lying' (p. 6).

Truth is most often a topic of discussion in philosophy. Philosophers point out that a single word (e.g., *snow*) has no truth value; only propositions have a truth value. A proposition is formed by predicating something of a topic; e.g., 'Snow is white'. This proposition is true only if snow is in fact white.

We have seen that Bauman refers in passing to the narrative text as a sign, with the narrated event its referent. But if a sign is taken in the usual sense of a minimal unit of signification — with the word as one type of sign — then signs per se would not have a truth value. A narrative text consists not just of a single sentence or proposition, but of a sequence of sentences or propositions. However, the referent of the narrative is said to be an event, in the singular. If the truth of a narrative is somehow a matter of the truth of the individual narrative propositions, then there is the problem of analyzing the event into subunits and correlating these with the narrative propositions.

Some of the difficulties with this conception of the truth of a narrative can be gained by briefly considering the work of Labov and Waletzky (1967) on narrative analysis. They themselves never address the issue of truth, but the issue lurks in the background of their discussion. This is an inevitable consequence of the fact that, in contrast to the mainstream of structural studies of narrative, their approach makes explicit appeal to the referential function of narrative. They define narrative 'as one verbal technique for recapitulating experience, in particular a technique of constructing narrative units which match the temporal sequence of that experience' (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 13).

Consider this very simple 'narrative' in Labov and Waletzky's corpus: 'Well, this person had a little too much to drink, and he attacked me, and the friend came in, and she stopped it'. Labov and Waletzky first analyze this into a sequence of four independent clauses, which are said to 'refer to four successive events or situations' (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 20):

a) Well, this person had a little too much to drink
b) and he attacked me
c) and the friend came in
d) and she stopped it.

We have here four separate propositions, each of which has a truth value which could be established. In the context of formal logic, a compound statement is false if only one of the constituent statements is false. Should the same be true of a narrative?

Even if this issue is resolved satisfactorily, there remains a major problem in determining the truth of such a narrative. As Labov and Waletzky emphasize, 'The temporal sequence of the narrative is an important defining property, which proceeds from its *referential* function' (1967: 20). What they are claiming is that if the order of the clauses is changed, then the semantic interpretation of the sequence of events changes; e.g., the referent of 'This person attacked me, and the friend came in' is not the same as the referent of 'The friend came in, and this person attacked me.' Consequently, the truth of the narrative, in their view, ultimately depends not just on the individual propositions, but on their order.

The question of the truth of the narratives analyzed by Labov and Waletzky is a legitimate one since they are all instances of what they term *oral narratives of personal experience*; that is, they are purportedly factual accounts of things that actually happened to the narrators. The narratives that have served as the objects of analysis in the structuralist mainstream, in contrast, have been fictional — fairy tales, short stories, etc. (Myths may be considered as true in native cultures, but analysts in effect treat them as fictional discourse on a par with fairy tales.) While there is no absolute consensus, many people accept the position that the truth criterion is inapplicable to works of fiction — they are regarded as neither true nor false. Note too that the term *fiction* usually applies to narratives and not to lyric poetry. Lyric poetry is seen as an expression of emotions internal to the poet, whereas narrative fiction is seen as representational — it appears to refer to events in the external world. (Music is regarded as nonrepresentational in that it does not suggest events in the external world, 'program music' being the exception.) In the everyday conception, a narrative tells a story, and a story describes actions and the persons who perform the actions.

If a work is presented as fictional, exactly what claims are being made (or not being made)? Normally the conventions of fiction remain tacit, but occasionally an author will assert them. For example, Kurt Vonnegut, in an Author's Note to his novel *Bluebeard* (1987), states that 'This is a novel, and a hoax autobiography at that.... Rabo Karabekian never lived, and neither did Terry Kitchen ... or any of the other major characters in this book'.

An assertion that a narrative is fictional is an assertion that the characters do not exist. Consider a statement such as 'Tom Jones is a thief'. Normally, this would be evaluated as a true or false statement only if there is such an individual named Tom Jones. The proposition 'Tom Jones is a thief' presupposes that Tom Jones exists. Truth and existence are interrelated.

If the author makes a blanket assertion that the individuals named in a narrative do not exist, then there is no need to evaluate, one by one, the individual propositions that constitute the narrative. However, it is a matter of shorthand to assert that there is no such individual as, say, Tom Jones. There are probably a great number of individuals now living with that name. If an author asserts that Tom Jones does not exist, he is referring to the character traits that come to be associated with this name in the course of the narrative. (The author may further assert that any resemblance to persons living or dead is coincidental.)

There is indirect confirmation that it is not the name itself that is either real or fictional. In factual narratives, it is not unusual for the writer to use pseudonyms for the protagonists. In his book, Bauman uses pseudonyms in order to protect the privacy of his storytellers. For example, in his chapter on anecdotes, Bauman states that 'The stories under study were all recorded from a single individual, a West Texas rancher, now in his eighties. I will call him Caswell Rogers' (p. 55). Thus, 'Caswell Rogers' is a name that denotes a person who actually exists, but it is not his 'real' name.

The fictionality of a narrative is not solely a matter of whether or not the characters exist. A narrative involves persons doing actions. While most novelists disclaim that their characters are real people, some also disclaim any reality to the events represented in the narrative. Actually, the term *event* is too broad in this context. It generally is used to refer to nonstates (e.g., *It rained*, *The sun shone*, etc.) where no human (or anthropomorphic) agent is involved. 'Actions', properly speaking, involve human agency; e.g., *John ran*, *John kissed Mary*, etc. Plot 'events' are specifically plot actions. Such actions are not free-floating — i.e., they cannot occur separately from the characters who are the agents or patients of the actions. If the characters do not exist, then it follows that the actions likewise have no existence, and the criterion of truth does not apply.

Let us turn now to a consideration of how Bauman deals with the criterion of truth. We have already indicated that this is the only aspect of the referential relation that he appeals to. In his introduction he states that 'The nature and role of expressive lying — from dog stories, to tall tales, to practical jokes — represents a ... common thread that runs throughout these pages' (pp. 6–7). However, since Bauman labels the narratives in his corpus instances of oral literature, it would seem that the question of truth is inapplicable. Bauman gives no real attention to this issue, but repeatedly refers to tall tales as 'lies' or 'outright lies'. The usual sense of the term *lie* is 'a deliberate misrepresenting of fact with intent to deceive'. However, a tall tale is a type of fictional narrative told in order to

entertain. It is the case that the Aarne-Thompson typology of folktales has as one category 'Tales of Lying', types 1875–1999, which includes tall tales; but this is a typology of fictional oral tales, not a typology of all types of discourse.

Bauman notes that 'Tall tales start out as apparently true narratives of personal experience, offered to be believed'; but their ultimate effect on listeners is 'traditionally derived by gradually bending the account out of shape — stretching the bounds of credibility bit by bit — until it finally reveals itself as a lie' (p. 103). A liar does not mould his lie so that it reveals itself to be a lie. A tall tale, however, eventually becomes so exaggerated that its fictional status is apparent. Despite calling tall tales outright lies, Bauman also, at least once, refers to them as 'humorous fictions' (p. 23).

As we have seen in the case of the narratives studied by Labov and Waletzky, fiction and narrative are not one and the same thing — there can be factual narratives, such as oral narratives of personal experience, written histories, etc. Bauman himself presents a few examples in his discussion of storytelling occurring during the dog trading fair in Canton, Texas. While traditional tall tales are told there, they are rather infrequent; much more prevalent are 'narratives of personal experience about the special qualities and hunting prowess of particular dogs' (p. 19). Bauman claims that 'The obvious exaggeration of the tall tale creates an aura of lying that colors the "true" stories as well' (p. 20).

However, if anything tinges the personal experience narratives, it is the fact of their occurring in the context of the activity of dog trading. As Bauman notes, 'parties on both sides of a dog trade ... enter the transaction anticipating that the opposite party might lie about a dog and expect to be lied to in return' (p. 27). In this context, a narrative is not simply a narrative of personal experience, but 'a sales pitch in narrative form' (p. 29). In Bauman's view, the lying that is involved in such sales pitches is not the outright lying of tall tales, but a matter of 'stretching the truth'. However, he never does even consider the possibility of trying to determine the truth of any of these narratives.

The issues of the truthfulness of narrative and the relation between narrative text and narrated event do not emerge in all their ramifications from a juxtaposition of the tall tale with the personal experience narratives told in the context of dog trading. A better understanding of some of the issues will emerge from a consideration of two incidents reported in the December 10, 1987 edition of the *Los Angeles Times*.

We will first consider the newspaper account that appeared under the headline 'Rape group accused of "smear" list'. The story concerned a young man whose name appeared on a list issued by Santa Cruz Women

Against Rape. A description of the man, including his address and his place of employment, appeared under the heading 'Assault/Attempted Rape'. The man then filed suit against both the organization and the woman who accused him of attempted rape.

The newspaper article includes a narrative of 'the incident that triggered the court action'. This narrative is based on depositions from both sides and the reporter's interview with the man. A deposition, in effect, is a transcription of an oral narrative of personal experience that will be used in a court of law. The truth of differing accounts will be decided within the judicial system.

One interesting point in the newspaper account (the significance of which we will examine later) concerns the response of Jan Shirchild, a spokeswoman for Women Against Rape, concerning the organization's publication of the information about the plaintiff. The article reports that 'Shirchild said her group printed descriptions of alleged assailants only after establishing an ongoing relationship with the woman who called the hotline. She said they made sure that the caller's story was consistent'. Shirchild is also quoted as saying, 'We still have a good faith belief in the information we printed. The lists were never printed lightly'.

The second account in the December 10, 1987 issue of the *Los Angeles Times* appeared under the headline 'Zealot's tale'. This story concerned a man awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to telephoning bomb threats to abortion clinics. The twist to the story is that the man, Frank Mendiola, is a pro-choice activist who made false bomb threats in order to stir sympathy for the cause.

Mendiola is fairly well known in the pro-choice movement, having made numerous appearances at rallies in California and Washington, DC. Jo Ellen Pasman, executive director of the California Abortion Rights Action League, is quoted as saying that Mendiola had a reputation as a good speaker who was available 'when we were looking for someone to tell a personal story'.

The story Mendiola told concerned his twin sister, Rose Elizabeth, who had been gang-raped and impregnated at the age of fourteen. She was told that she would die if she carried the fetus to term. In November, 1971 she bled to death as the result of an illegal abortion.

Mendiola had told this story many times, always with effective results — people were very moved by it. However, a detective for the Los Angeles Police Department who was investigating the bomb threats, which Mendiola had made even against himself, is quoted as saying that he 'just had trouble with that twin-sister story'. Exactly what bothered the detective is not indicated; but by tracing county records, he learned that Rose Elizabeth did not exist — Mendiola had no twin sister.

The newspaper reporter states that Mendiola now claims that what befell the fictitious Rose Elizabeth actually happened to the sister of a friend, who was afraid to tell the story. The reporter says of Mendiola's story that 'It was a true story; it just wasn't his true story'. These remarks throw some interesting light on the notion of 'personal experience' narrative. The story was undoubtedly more effective by being presented by Mendiola as having happened to his sister — he suffered a direct loss when his sister died. Thus, the story is a 'personal' story, although Mendiola himself is not a protagonist in the major events of the narrative, and presumably did not himself directly witness them.

The possibility of Mendiola's story being a true story, but not his true story, can be correlated with some observations Bauman makes about types of lying. In addition to the two types (outright lies and stretching the truth), Bauman also recognizes what he terms a *fabrication* — a tall tale told in the first person, where the first-person narrator either is directly involved ('I had an old coon dog ...') or serves as a link to the third-person protagonist ('I knew an old boy, he had a coon dog ...') (p. 20). Bauman says that a tall tale told in the first person is a double lie. We have rejected Bauman's labeling of tall tales as lies, but his vague notion of a double lie could perhaps be clarified to capture the sense in which a personal narrative can be said to be a true story, but not the first-person narrator's true story.

When we compare personal experience narratives of the type mentioned in the two newspaper accounts with tall tales, we readily see that the issue of truthfulness is quite serious with respect to the former. To be concerned with the truthfulness of a tall tale, however, is to trivialize the issue of truthfulness.

Tall tales are told for entertainment, in socializing situations. But the personal experiences reported in the two newspaper accounts involve victimization; and as Robinson has suggested, such experiences

> have an ambivalent status as candidates for narration. ... Characteristically, such experiences produce shame, anger, often guilt in the victim, and are regarded as secrets rather than as stories to tell. (1981: 63)

The two incidents reported in the newspaper also dramatize how elusive truth can be. The truth of a narrative is not easily established; determining it is a major endeavor with an uncertain outcome. Our response to purportedly factual narratives in daily life is in terms of believability or credibility rather than in terms of objective truth. We might characterize the type of truth we operate with in our response to such narratives as a matter of 'narrative truth'.

The term *narrative truth* has been used by the psychoanalyst Donald P. Spence in contrast to what he terms *historical truth*. According to Spence

> Narrative truth can be defined as the criteria we use to decide when a certain experience has been captured to our satisfaction; it depends on continuity and closure and the extent to which the fit of the pieces takes on an aesthetic finality. (Spence 1982:31)

Historical truth, in contrast, 'is not satisfied with coherence for its own sake; we must have some assurance that the pieces being fitted into the puzzle also belong to a certain time and place and that this belonging can be corroborated in some systematic manner' (Spence 1982: 32). Narrative truth satisfies criteria of adequacy, which include self-consistency, coherence, and comprehensiveness; historical truth satisfies criteria of accuracy, which 'cover the truth value of the individual assertions' (Spence 1982: 180). Yet another formulation of the distinction is that historical truth pertains to facts which only discovery will bring to the surface; and narrative truth pertains to 'the emergent, the construction of something that makes sense' (Spence 1982: 164).

Spence's discussion is totally oriented toward psychoanalysis, and he does not evince any significant understanding of modern narrative theory or philosophy of language. However, his distinction between historical truth and narrative truth seems to correspond more or less with the distinction drawn in philosophy between the correspondence theory of truth and the coherence theory of truth (see for example Joad 1936: 438ff).

As for his notion of narrative truth as internal consistency, Spence could have been more explicit and analytical if he had had a better knowledge of narrative theory. For example, the critic Kenneth Burke, whose writings offer parallels to structuralist approaches, has noted that satisfaction of internal consistency embodies three principles of form: progressive, repetitive, and conventional (Burke 1966: 485–486). Progressive form — what I have sometimes referred to as *syntagmatic structure* — is defined by Burke as 'the kind of inevitable development from complications to denouement which Aristotle discusses at length in his *Poetics*' (Burke 1966: 486). Repetitive form — what I have sometimes called *paradigmatic structure* — can be manifested in the recurrence throughout a narrative of opposing sets of characters. Conventional form is a matter of categorical expectancy; e.g., in a murder mystery the sleuth is expected to discover the murderer by the end of the book.

All of our prior discussions of truth have tacitly been in terms of

historical truth, or truth as correspondence with an external state of affairs. Bauman's appeal to the notion of 'expressive lying' is in terms of statements that do not correspond with external events. Narrative truth does seem to play a role in our response to everyday narratives of personal experience. Recall in this connection the newspaper account of the man whose name appeared on a list of attempted rapists. A spokeswoman for the group that published the list of alleged assailants said that before adding someone to the list, the group made sure that the accuser's story was consistent. Consistency is a criterion of narrative truth, not historical truth. In this circumstance, however, it could be said that the members of Women Against Rape used narrative truth as a shortcut toward historical truth. That is, they interpreted the internal consistency of the accuser's narrative of personal experience as an indicator of historical truth.

It is interesting to note, however, that internal coherence is a double-edged sword. Recall that in the case of the 'Zealot's tale' a police detective had trouble with the twin sister story. The detective may have been responding negatively to the 'narrative truth'. This is explicitly the case for a contributor (who is anonymous) to the 'Talk of the town' section of *The New Yorker* issue for January 18, 1988. The person writes about the Stones, his father's maternal grandparents. The writer's father, as a boy, would go each New Year's Eve with his parents to celebrate the holiday with the Stones, who lived in Staten Island. At midnight they would all go upstairs, open the attic window which commanded a view of Manhattan, and stand in silence. They could then hear the revelers in Manhattan. The writer states that 'I heard this story often when I was a kid, and I believed it until I grew up. Then I began to think that it was a little too symmetrical for history — better suited to fiction'. In the second half of his piece, the writer tells how he went out to Staten Island on New Year's Eve to determine if the sound of Manhattan revelers really carried to Staten Island. He found that it did not.

We may at this point appear to have wandered far from Bauman's book; but the point is that the issue of the truthfulness of narratives involves a number of important issues, none of which Bauman himself raises. He appears to hold the correspondence theory of truth, but he is really not concerned with establishing the truth of, say, any of the personal narratives about hunting dogs. A real concern for historical truth would take one far afield from discourse itself. As we have seen, police detectives, the judicial system, and so on are all centrally concerned with the issue of truth. Historical truth, however, would seem to be far removed from the concerns of a science of discourse, especially if it is defined in terms of the feasible.

Bauman begins his chapter on dog trading stories by noting that there is increasing unease among folklorists about the empirical basis and reliablility of truth-value criteria (p. 11), and he concludes the chapter by asserting that 'The narratives that are the instruments of these [dog trading] negotiations do not fall into clear-cut categories of factual and fictional, truthful and lying, believable and incredible' (p. 32).

The status of a text, whether factual or fictional, is usually not self-evident. (For an interesting, but ultimately unsatisfying, discussion of this issue, see Lodge 1977: 9–17). Determination of the status of a text would take one far afield from the usual concerns of discourse analysis. Also, it would seem inevitably to lead to a bifurcation of a science of texts — one for factual texts and one for fictional. I prefer having a single unified science of texts, one in which the only type of truth of concern would be narrative truth, which is equivalent to a concern for the internal structure of the text. In such an approach, as Burke has indicated, 'The work would be judged not by tests of "truth", "scientific" or "factual" accuracy, but on the basis of "verisimilitude"' (1966: 498).

Nothing in Bauman's discussions of narratives challenges the vision of a unified theory of discourse predicated on narrative truth, not historical truth. The 'narrated event' really plays no role in any of his analyses.

From the perspective of the correspondence theory of truth ('historical truth'), the narrated event is something that exists independent of and prior to the narrative text. However, an alternative view that Bauman mentions in passing is that

> events are not the external raw materials out of which narratives are constructed, but rather the reverse: Events are abstractions from narratives. It is the structures of signification in narrative that give coherence to events in our understanding, that enable us to construct in the interdependent process of narration and interpretation a coherent set of interrelationships that we call an 'event'. (p. 5)

This view seems essentially congruent with Saussure's conception of the relation between words and ideas: there are no preexistent ideas that words signify; rather, language is the means whereby distinct ideas become articulated.

In the context of narrative texts, we can say that the 'narrated event' has the status of an outward projection from the text. Whether the event has an objective existence is a question beyond the scope of a science of discourse.

Let us continue our exploration of Bauman's conception of performance by examining the narrative event — the act of storytelling in a particular communicative situation. As with other issues, Bauman does

not provide much of a theoretical discussion. We will try to provide some background, supplementing Bauman's few remarks with other sources.

The conception of folklore as performance entails attention to the situational context, but in a way that goes beyond earlier practices. As Bauman has stated elsewhere, 'Attention to situational context requires us to ask of a given tale or song or proverb, what does it mean in this particular situation, as used for these immediate purposes, in the interaction of these particular people?' (Bauman 1983: 366). The text is viewed as emergent from the performative event (and not as a fixed entity that exists prior to performance). Thus, according to Bauman, 'Every performance will have a unique and emergent aspect, depending on the distinctive circumstances at play within it' (p. 4). With specific reference to texts, he states that

> The models provided by generic conventions and prior renditions of 'traditional' items stand available to participants as a set of conventional expectations and manipulations, shaping the emergent text to the unique circumstances at hand. (p. 4)

Prior to the development of the conception of performance, folklorists' attention to context was primarily restricted to generalized descriptions of broad contexts and text types; e.g., observations such as Malinowski's (1954: 102) that folktales of a special type called *kukwanebu* are told during the rainy season in the Trobriand Islands. The lack of interest in particularities, according to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, can be attributed to two factors:

> First, in contrast to ordinary speech, folktales are preformulated.... Second, folklorists have concentrated on specialized storytelling events, that is, on speech events in which the focus is upon telling tales. (1975: 106–107)

These two factors led folklorists to regard narratives as autonomous entities and to stress 'their invariant feaures rather than the performer's creativity in selecting the appropriate tale and in adjusting his rendition of it to each new situation' (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1975: 107).

The 'traditional' conception of folklore is not only that it is a collection of autonomous texts, but that, in the words of Bauman, it 'appears to have a life of its own, subject only to impersonal, superorganic processes and laws' (p. 2). This view is summed up in Bogatyrev and Jakobson's (1929) notion of folklore as a 'special kind of creation'; that is, it is distinct from written literature, which is the product of creative acts of individuals.

Bauman (1982) has argued against the division Bogatyrev and Jakobson erect between oral and written literature. He argues that 'the folklorist, no less than the scholar of written literature, confronts individual folk poets and unique works of literary creation' (Bauman 1982: 15).

In some earlier work of mine (Hendricks 1973), I likewise challenged Bogatyrev and Jakobson's erection of a border between oral and written literature. However, I argued for approaching written literature from the supraindividual perspective brought to bear on oral literature. My motivation was to put literary analysis on a more objective, systematic basis. Literary critics' emphasis on individual creativity blinds them to the persistence across individuals of certain fundamental laws of narrative composition. Formulation of such laws is central to the development of a science of discourse. This is an issue that Bauman never addresses.

So far we have very briefly considered the notion of the narrative event from a theoretical perspective. Let us now consider Bauman's analytic practice, as reported in the book under review.

The study of the narrative event imposes crucial requirements on data collection. Elsewhere, Bauman (1983: 362), noting that 'The texts we are accustomed to viewing as the raw materials of folklore are merely the thin and partial record of deeply situated human behavior', goes on to state that 'If we are to understand what folklore is, we must ... view it contextually.... This reorientation in turn requires us to broaden the scope of our fieldwork'. He concludes by stating that

> The field study of folklore in context is a multiplex undertaking. To be done effectively, the contextual dimension must be attended to directly, built into the field investigation as a central focus from the beginning. (Bauman 1983: 366)

One requirement this entails is that storytelling events be observed and recorded in the 'natural' situations in which they spontaneously occur. When tales are regarded as autonomous, they are most often recorded in 'artificial' interview contexts (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1975: 106).

An examination of Bauman's own data collection practices reveals that in fact he often relies on elicitation in 'artificial' interview situations. Consider for example the chapter devoted to a discussion of four anecdotes Bauman collected, each in two versions, from an informant he calls Caswell Rogers.

According to Bauman, these anecdotes are

> conventionally told in a variety of small-group sociable settings, such as intervals between collective work tasks, gatherings at the barber shop or cotton gin or

drugstore, and so on.... In recent years, they have figured most prominently during visits by the narrator to members of his family who have moved away from home or on occasions when those relatives have come back on visits of their own. (p. 76).

However, Bauman did not record the anecdotes during any of these 'natural' performance events; instead, he elicited them in formal interview situations. Representative in this regard is the text of the first version of the anecdote Bauman titles 'Drunk man' (pp. 55–56):

Int: Oh, the other one I wanted to ask you about was, um ... what's his name, the man that you bought Bill [a horse] from? Uh ... I never ...
Caswell Rogers: Johnny Fredericks?
Int: Yeah! Right, Johnny Fredericks, yeah.... I wanted you to tell about him because he was such a good character.

There then follows the text of Rogers's anecdote about Johnny.

The interviewer ('Int') is Bauman, but he is silent on the exact circumstances of this telling of the anecdote. At two points in the transcription Rogers's wife is indicated as having interjected a single comment (e.g., 'And a good drinker'). Presumably, Rogers's 'audience' consisted only of his wife and Bauman.

In his transcriptions of the other anecdotes Bauman does not always provide his eliciting remark. For instance, in the case of the first version of the anecdote 'Not that young', the text begins with Rogers saying, 'Jack was a *good* worker and a good cowboy too' (p. 56).

It should be noted that one folklorist has referred to the formal elicitation of narrative texts by such means as asking the teller to recall stories told in the past, as 'out-of-context collecting', one advantage of this being that

when the story is thus regarded as a 'text' rather than part of an interactional event only, it can be studied comparatively, either as it varies over time or as it may contrast with a story based on the 'same' incident as told by another person. (Stahl 1983: 274)

Bauman does in fact concern himself with a comparative study of the paired versions of each anecdote and concludes that 'they remain remarkably close to each other in form. In each case we find the same overall structure, closely similar introductory matter, the same narrated event, and closely similar reported conversations' (p. 74). To make such a comparison, Bauman has had to consider these anecdotes as 'texts', and the results of his comparison reveal a commonality that transcends the individual circumstances of their tellings.

In other chapters of his book Bauman does pay more attention to the storytelling context — the most extensive discussion being in Chapter 2, which is devoted to a consideration of hunting tales and trading stories told during the monthly trading fair in Canton, Texas. However, some of the description is at a fairly high level of generalization. For instance, he devotes a couple of pages to describing the institutional context (an aspect of the cultural context). Coon dog trading is an institution in the anthropological sense: 'a functionally organized system of purposeful activity, made up of interrelated ideational, behavioral, and social elements' (Bauman 1983: 364). He then presents two long excerpts from encounters between a dog trader and a potential buyer. Each encounter is in the form of a dialogue, with two extended monologues by the trader in which he presents narratives pertaining to dogs and dog trading. But these, as Bauman notes, are primarily sales pitches in narrative form (p. 29). Furthermore, they are rather minimal as stories; e.g., Bauman says of one that 'the narrative line of the story is minimal' (p. 31).

Bauman next presents the text of a traditional tall tale, but the only specification of context is that it 'was addressed by a veteran hunter to a nineteen-year-old novice in the group' (p. 18).

Another tale (about a dog trade) that Bauman presents is embedded in a conversation; but the participants are identified only by the letters A, B, C, and D. The narrator (B) tells his story in response to A's remark, 'That's that little Trigg [a breed of hound] I's tellin' you about' (p. 24). Bauman goes on to note that this story,

> told for entertainment in sociable interaction, is connected to the discourse that precedes it solely by the fact that the dog in question was a Trigg hound, and the previous speaker had pointed out a Trigg in his own string of dogs. No more is needed for the story to be appropriate in this sociable context. (p. 31)

In other words, the story is basically autonomous with respect to its context (cf. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1975: 106–107).

Another chapter in Bauman's book is devoted to a discussion of three narratives recounting practical jokes, all told by the same individual, whom Bauman identifies by the pseudonym Merle Hannum. Bauman says that all three narratives were recorded in 'the same storytelling session' (p. 47), but no information is provided about this session, save that it occurred in 1983. Presumably Bauman elicited these in a formal interview setting.

Bauman directly addresses the issue of the effects of shifting contexts on narratives in the penultimate chapter of his book, devoted to some stories in the repertoire of Ed Bell.

Ed Bell is the only storyteller to whom Bauman refers by his real name. He has a national reputation as a storyteller, having appeared at national folk festivals and on a network television show. His storytelling skills were honed during the four decades he spent as proprietor of a fishing camp on the Texas Gulf Coast. Some of his stories were first recorded in 1967 by the folklorist Patrick Mullen, under conditions 'close to the natural context of the usual storytelling events' (p. 80). Mullen continued to record Bell's stories over a period of years, paying particular attention to the changes in his repertoire in response to new performance situations and new audiences.

Bauman's own work with Bell's storytelling focuses instead on changes over time in stories that have persisted in his repertoire. This entails Bauman's examination of 'the stylistic devices that account for the textual differences between the first recorded tellings — in 1967 and 1971 — and the most recent ones' and the attempt 'to relate those changes to the changing circumstances surrounding Ed Bell's performances' (p. 81).

For his study, Bauman examined three tellings of 'The bee tree', one of the showpiece tall tales in Bell's repertoire. The first was recorded in 1971, the second in 1979, and the third in 1982. In general, Bell's later versions are longer than the early ones, as measured by word count. Actually, there is no progressive lengthening of the variants; the 1979 version appears to be slightly longer than the 1982 one. But the 1982 version is clearly longer than the 1971 version. Thus we essentially have a dichotomy between early (1971) and late (1979, 1982) versions.

This dichotomy correlates with a dichotomy in communicative context: small face-to-face groups on the one hand, and public performances on the other, where there is a clear-cut separation of performer and audience. The small-group audiences were familiar not only with Bell himself, but with the conventions of traditional storytelling and with the rural life reflected in the tales. In fact, some of the small-group members were storytellers themselves who were anxious to tell their own stories to the group. Other members of the small group (at the fishing camp) were primarily interested in fishing. The public audiences lacked this familiarity with Bell and with the rural milieu. But these audiences did regard Bell as *the* performer — there was no competition for the floor (p. 104).

There is one major problem with the argument that performing context has been a formative influence on Bell's storytelling — a problem that Bauman himself clearly enunciates. Of the two later texts, only the 1982 version of 'The bee tree' was recorded before a public audience, in the strict sense. The 1979 version of 'The bee tree' was recorded in the intimate setting of Bell's home, with only a couple of people present. Yet, as Bauman notes, 'the style remains consistent throughout ... contrasting

markedly with what is to be heard on Mullen's early recordings [made at Bell's fishing camp]' (p. 105).

Nevertheless, Bauman maintains that his thesis that context has played a formative role in Bell's storytelling can be defended. First, he argues that it is necessary to understand context as involving more than the objective situational setting. It can have a mentalistic component — the performer's own definition of the situation. In the case of Ed Bell, he now sees himself as a public storyteller, and 'the settings that sustain his identity as a storyteller ... are all public occasions in which he is set off as a performer from his audience' (p. 105).

Secondly,

> the act of recording itself now contributes to and upholds the sense that even one-to-one sessions with a fieldworker implicate larger audiences of strangers. ... That makes any recording a public performance, no matter how intimate the recording session and even in the physical absence of the audience. (p. 105)

Bauman notes that Bell's

> view of himself has been transformed from someone who 'never used to think of myself as a storyteller' to someone who is preeminently a storyteller, always responsible for the full display of his competence whether a full audience is present or not. (p. 106)

This examination of Bell's storytelling practices serves, in my judgment, to undermine completely Bauman's concept of folklore as performance; in particular, the notion that a unique text is emergent from each particular performance event. It is not just Bell's self-image that has changed, but his objective status as an artist. Bell is no longer a folk artist — if we accept the definition of folklore as 'artistic communication in small groups' (Ben-Amos 1971: 13). Here the notion of small group is that of sociology (a number of people who are able to communicate with each other face to face), and the roles of speaker and hearer periodically rotate among the group members. Members of such a group share some trait, such as age, ethnic or religious membership, etc. Ben-Amos suggests that 'folklore is true to its own nature when it takes place within the group itself' (1971: 13).

What, then, is Bell's status as an artist? It seems to me that the situation of Bell speaking into a tape recorder is not all that different from the solitary writer composing in his room. Bauman argues that Bell has a sense of himself as a public performer, even if the audience is not physically present: 'This is why a tall tale with only myself and the tape recorder present will begin, "Well, folks ..."' (p. 105). But some writers,

particularly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, also directly address their readers on occasion; for example, Lawrence Sterne, in the opening pages of *Tristram Shandy*, writes: 'Believe me, good folks, this is not so inconsiderable a thing as many of you may think it; — you have all, I dare say, heard of the animal spirits'. But there is no sense in which writer and reader constitute a small group, where direct communication is possible, particularly during the act of composition.

Although Bell is an oral storyteller, it should be noted that the concept of story is not monolithic. Even in the realm of folklore, a distinction has been proposed between 'complex' and 'simple' tales, with folktales proper being examples of the former and short humorous anecdotes being examples of the latter (Thompson 1977: 22).

This dichotomy can be applied to the material Bauman analyzes. The tall tales of Bell are complex, the anecdotes of Rogers are simple. We will later discuss Bauman's analyses, but for the moment we can note that Bauman analyzes the different versions of 'The bee tree' into a sequence of episodes, whereas the characteristic formal features of an anecdote such as 'Drunk man' are said to 'include a focus on a single episode and a single scene, and a tendency to limit attention to two principal actors' (p. 55). It is the 'simple' narrative that can be said to emerge from performance; in particular, to be 'conversationally accomplished'. Informal conversations are not the most fitting occasion for long, detailed narratives such as 'The bee tree'.

Bauman himself presents evidence supporting this judgment. Bauman claims that one of the significant discoveries made by Albert Lord in his study of Yugoslavian oral epic songs was that

> the South Slavic *guslars* ... tended to produce their longest, most elaborate texts under the special conditions of dictating them to the fieldworker.... Lord concludes that the usual conditions of epic song performance, in which the singer had to adapt his performance to an audience ... imposed limits on the productions of the best performers, making their songs shorter and less elaborate than they were *capable* of achieving. (pp. 105–106; emphasis in the original)

If performers can produce their best work in isolation from a given situational context, then it would seem that these texts are autonomous with respect to a particular context. We have seen that Bauman stressed the notion of what singers were *capable* of achieving; and in talking about Ed Bell, Bauman said that he was 'always responsible for the full display of his *competence* whether a full audience is present or not' (p. 106; emphasis added).

Bauman's reference to competence at this point, in a book that stresses

the notion of performance, cannot help but call to mind Chomsky's notions of linguistic performance and linguistic competence. Linguistic competence is a matter of the language user's tacit knowledge of the grammatical rules of his native language — knowledge that makes it possible for him, in theory, to produce and understand an unlimited number of sentences that he has never previously encountered. Linguistic performance is a matter of 'the actual use of language in concrete situations' (Chomsky 1965: 4).

Bauman's concept of performance, however, is quite different from Chomsky's. For Bauman, performance is a positive accomplishment. Chomsky, in contrast, discusses performance in negative terms, as a falling away from ideal competence. He notes that 'A record of natural speech will show numerous false starts, deviations from rules, changes of plan in mid-course, and so on' (Chomsky 1965:4).

These negative performance aspects are sometimes collectively referred to as *hesitation phenomena*, and they occur in any spontaneous speech, regardless of social class or educational level. We subconsciously filter out such phenomena when listening to oral discourse and are largely unaware of its prevalence. However, when oral discourse is faithfully transcribed, the hesitations become quite intrusive and interfere with the reading process.

The oral texts that are the object of Bauman's analytic study are presented in his book in written transcription. In a 'Note on the texts', Bauman states that he has 'attempted to convey that this is a record of language in a spoken, not a written, mode and to preserve something of the quality ... of the oral discourse' (p. x). To this end, Bauman uses a variety of devices, including such conventional representations of oral speech as *gonna* for *going to*, etc. Hesitations are indicated either by a series of three dots or by forms such as *uh* or *um*. Consider, for example, this line from one of the anecdotes in Bauman's corpus: 'Well, Johnny was quite a drinker, you know, and uh, he and Cal Markham, uh, went somewhere one day and ... and told his wife to pick him up at this certain gate' (p. 56). False starts are also included; for instance, 'They were ... one of 'em was pretty bad to back in, run into everybody with his car' (p. 58).

Bauman unequivocally asserts that his 'entire concern is to help illuminate and celebrate oral narrative for the artful accomplishment that it is' (p. x). However, he fails to realize that his transcription practices, especially the indication of hesitation phenomena, interfere with that goal. Bauman's analyses do not make any use of the hesitation phenomena he painstakingly retains in his transcriptions. In any case, Bauman straddles the fence between a complete transcription and a readable one.

It is instructive in this regard to compare Bauman's transcription practices with those of Labov and Fanshel (1977), in their analysis of fifteen minutes of a psychotherapy session involving an anorexic woman. Both eschew any 'correction' of the language. However, unlike Labov and Fanshel, Bauman does not try to indicate tempo by occasionally running words together — for instance, 'Wellyouknow, wdy'mind takin' thedust-rag anjustdust around?' Tempo is the only paralinguistic cue Labov and Fanshel attempt to indicate in the text. Other such cues are presented in a column parallel to the text: volume, pitch, and voice qualifiers (breathiness, whine, etc.).

In some of his transcriptions Bauman does occasionally give some parenthetical indications of voice quality, using labels such as *loudly*, *angrily*, *laughing*, etc. Such indicators are largely restricted to Bauman's transcriptions of dog-trading encounters (Chapter 2 of his book).

Bauman himself points out that a detailed transcription of an orally performed narrative would load down the printed text 'with so much formal furniture that it is inaccessible to the reader' (p. ix). What he therefore aims at is 'more expressive than linguistic accuracy in a strictly technical sense' (p. x). Bauman's half-way solution is not very satisfactory. A case could be made for the practice of presenting two versions of oral narratives — one with maximum readability and one with the maximum amount of information about 'performative' features in a locutionary sense.

So far we have been examining aspects of Bauman's corpus that unwittingly exemplify the Chomskyan sense of performance as a falling away from linguistic competence. Note, however, that Chomsky's discussion of language use is limited to the production of sentences, whereas Bauman's conception of folklore as performance entails the production of discourse. But there is a corresponding negative side to the performance of narrative discourse, seen as a global structure (and not just a sequence of sentences). This is most clearly evident in the transcribed texts of the four anecdotes that Bauman analyzes in Chapter 4. Bauman recorded two versions of each anecdote, with either three or ten years separating each of the two versions. What strikes Bauman about the versions is their stability over time. However, there are noticeable differences between them, and in many instances one can judge one version as 'better' in some respect than the other.

Consider the two versions of the punch line for the anecdote 'Pasture full':

1972: Lawrence said, 'Aw, that's no excuse'. Said, 'I'd have a pasture full if I stole cattle every time I got drunk'.

1982: Lawrence sittin' there and said, 'Aw, that won't work'. Says, 'if I stole cattle all the time I ... every time I got drunk I'd have a pasture full'.

It seems to me that the punch line is more effective when the main clause *I'd have a pasture full* comes last, as in the 1982 version. This judgment is supported by Bauman's choice of the phrase *pasture full* as the title of this anecdote. However, the 1982 version is marred by a false start.

The ordering of a subordinate clause vis-à-vis an independent one may seem a matter of taste or style; however, some other differences between versions clearly go beyond style and impinge on the clarity or coherence of the anecdote. Some clear-cut examples are offered by the two versions of 'Drunk man'.

The first (1979) version has a digression, involving a false start, in order to explain that 'Ms. Brandon' was the name of Johnny's wife prior to her marriage to him. This false start and digression are missing from the 1982 version. However, the narrator in that version continues to refer to Johnny's wife as 'Ms. Brandon', without her being properly identified, which can only confuse the hearer/reader. (The difference here is probably due to the way Bauman elicited the two versions. In the second, he asks the informant to tell him 'the one about Johnny Fredericks, after he married Ms. Brandon' [p. 56]. In the case of the first version, Bauman asks the informant to tell him about 'the man you bought Bill [a horse] from' [p. 55].)

The first version of 'Drunk man' is rather vague about some points. For example, the narrator says that Johnny and 'Cal Markham went somewhere one day'. Cal is not further identified. The second version provides more detail: Johnny 'went off to town with Cal Markham one day — they went to Jayton — and Cal lives back this side of Johnny's'.

However, the first version is superior to the second in another respect — it depicts in a more dramatic fashion Johnny's drunken behavior in front of his wife when he returns from his (presumed) drinking spree with Cal: 'Johnny sort of stumbled around, fell down a time or two.' In the 1982 version, the narrator simply says that 'he was so drunk he just fell down'.

Neither version of these anecdotes is satisfactory, but a more satisfactory version can be obtained by editing the existing versions into a single one. This type of editing was done by the Italian writer Italo Calvino in preparing his book *Italian Folktales*. In his Introduction Calvino says that he took as his 'raw material' the texts collected in the span of a century by folklorists and then basically followed the practices of the Brothers Grimm, which included 'integrating the variants' (Calvino 1980: xix).

The reader may have noticed that none of the three versions of Ed Bell's tall tale 'The bee tree' have been cited in this discussion of the negative side of performance. The reason is that the various hesitation phenomena are largely lacking from Bell's narratives. Of even more significance is the fact that the three versions of 'The bee tree' are not unsatisfactory manifestations of a coherent narrative that has to be reconstructed. Each variant can stand alone as a coherent telling of the story.

Bell's narratives, especially in comparison to Rogers's anecdotes, such as 'Drunk man', are akin to a writer's final version as opposed to a rough draft. This fact argues against Bauman's thesis that texts are emergent from each unique performance. We have already seen that Bell's own self-image has undergone a change, and we suggested that his objective status as an artist has changed. We could label his status as that of 'oral writer'. His medium may be spoken language, but like literary artists he achieves his best results when free of performative constraints, which can impede the full expression of underlying 'narrative competence' — a matter of supraindividual compositional laws.

Before moving on to other matters, one minor *caveat* to the characterization of Bell as an oral writer should be noted: there are a few instances where Bauman's transcriptions interpolate brief descriptions of gestures Bell makes in his storytelling. Consider this example from 'Redfishing in a fog bank': 'We used, uh, two hooks about this far apart [holds hands about eight inches apart] on a double-drop leader to tight line for redfish' (p. 107).

We have completed our discussion of two major aspects of Bauman's performance-centered conception of folklore, viz., the narrated event and the narrative event. However, we have not yet covered a significant portion of Bauman's book. Despite his argument for 'a basic reorientation from a concept of folklore as things — texts, items, mentifacts — to verbal art as a ... mode of verbal communication' (p. 2), Bauman does attend to texts in isolation from context. This is underscored by the fact that Bauman's book presents 'something in the neighborhood of thirty primary texts' (p. ix), thus making his book in part a traditional oral narrative collection.

Bauman also attempts the formal analysis of some of these texts. This aspect of his approach may seem to go against the grain of his conception of performance, but the term *performance* is equivocal, and Bauman proves not to have a monolithic conception. At one point Bauman states that 'performance may be understood as the enactment of the poetic function, the essence of spoken artistry' (p. 3). By the expression *poetic function* Bauman has in mind Jakobson's (1960: 356) conception of the

poetic function: 'This function, by promoting the palpability of signs, deepens the fundamental dichotomy of signs and objects'. In other words, the poetic function focuses on the language of the work itself, as distinct from its referential meaning and the communicative context in which it occurs. Insofar as the poetic function is dominant, the text is autonomous. Analysis of the poetic function entails attending to syntactic parallelism, patterned recurrences of sounds, etc.

Bauman attempts to describe some of the narratives in his corpus along these lines. For example, he cites the following lines from the anecdote 'Not that young' as exemplifying syntactic parallelism (p. 69):

> I said, 'Well, Mr. Trimble, Jack is young',
> I said, 'probably you was young one time'.
> He said, 'Hell, yes, but not that young!'

In the above lines Bauman points out the parallelism of the quotative frame *I said/He said*; the rhyme of *well* and *hell*, the repetition of *young*, etc.

Such analyses are not convincing, one reason being that Bauman has to settle for a rather loose specification of parallelism. The 'poetic' devices seem sporadic, and he provides no evidence of a through and through 'poetic' structure in any of his material. He cites only a few lines from a given work. In the case of the anecdotes, he does claim that the final line — the punch line — is stylistically more marked than the preceding lines; but without a thoroughgoing analysis of the entire anecdote, the claim is not convincing.

The unimpressiveness of Bauman's analysis of the poetic function may not seem surprising, given that the material is prose, not poetry. However, Jakobson himself stressed that the poetic function is not limited to poetry, and he cited some prose examples, such as the political slogan *I like Ike*. Nevertheless, the fact remains that the poetic function, as formulated by Jakobson, is really not relevant to prose narratives.

Bauman does not limit himself to a Jakobsonian analysis of texts; rather, he attempts a formal analysis of plot structure. Let us consider his analysis of the plot of the three versions of 'The bee tree'.

Bauman represents the plot structure as a sequence of episodes. The earliest version (1971) consists of six episodes. This same sequence is preserved in the later versions, but additional episodes are intercalated. The episodes are referred to by nominal phrases, such as *The discovery of the bee tree*, *The return home*, etc.

In his presentation of the texts of the three versions, Bauman indicates the division into episodes with Arabic numerals. A given episode may

consist of anywhere from a couple of sentences to several dozen. Here is a partial citation of the stretch of the 1979 version that corresponds to the first episode, 'The discovery of the bee tree'.

> So I stepped over on the other side of Rock Water Hole Branch. Rock Water Hole Branch was about ten foot deep, and forty, fifty feet wide. And it was a dry branch [....] So, I walked over on the other side and lookin' at some trees there, and I couldn' believe my eyes! Right there was a tree that was bigger than anything that I'd ever seen or ever dreamed of [....]
>
> And I don't blame y'all if you don't believe me about this tree, because I wouldn't believe it either if I hadn'ta seen it with my own eyes [....] I looked up, and my mouth opened [....] And when I threw my head way back and looked up there, there was a roll of bees comin' out of a hole up there about ten inches, 'bout that big. And there's a solid mass of bees goin' out and in there. [....] (pp. 83–84).

Representing this long stretch of text in terms of a single episodic unit, 'The discovery of the bee tree', is not an unreasonable analysis. The possibility of 'naming' large chunks of text with a nominal phrase is one that many different narrative analysts have recognized. Note, however, that the nominal expression is usually derived from a verb and can be recast as an 'action' statement, such as 'Bell discovers the bee tree'. Note that this statement does not correspond to any sentence that actually occurs in the text.

Narrative units have the status of theoretical entities, and there is no simple, mechanical procedure for going from the constituent sentences of the text to the units of plot structure. However, the analysis involves several steps that can be spelled out, thereby clarifying the nature of the units of plot structure. An attempt to make these steps explicit was an early concern of mine (Hendricks 1973).

A convenient first step in analyzing plot structure is to strip away 'descriptive statements', leaving only 'action statements'. In simplified terms, a descriptive statement is a copular construction — for instance, *Rock Water Hole Branch was about ten foot deep*. Also, any instances of metanarration are to be stripped away; that is, any instances of comments on the narrative itself or the storytelling event. A good part of the text that correlates with the first episode of the 1979 version (partially quoted above) consists of metanarration — for example, 'And I don't blame y'all if you don't believe me about this tree'. Bauman does recognize the metanarrational component of the tale, and he discusses it as one of the means of expanding the tale. However, he does not discuss it as a candidate for deletion in order to help lay bare the plot structure.

After descriptive statements and instances of metanarration are eliminated, there remains a sequence of action statements — 'So I stepped over on the other side of Rock Water Hole Branch. So, I walked over on the other side and lookin' at some trees there', etc. A narrative generally represents action at a 'molecular' level of description, whereas the plot structure is rendered salient by having the actions represented at a 'molar' level. One basis for this shift in level of representation is that certain acts may be necessary antecedents of other, more significant acts. Thus, crossing a branch and looking up are acts making possible the discovery of the bee tree, which sets the plot into motion.

This discussion of (preliminary) plot analysis is highly schematic; it is intended only to give some idea of how Bauman could have been more explicit in his discussion of 'The bee tree'. What Bauman presents is not detailed enough to allow us to understand exactly his concept of episode. He does offer a definition of the term *episode*, but only in extrinsic terms. Episodes are characterized as 'major segments of the narrative plot constituted by time junctures'; that is, plot units are 'set off from each other by intervals of elapsed time that go unreported in the narrative' (pp. 90–91). The discontinuities between episodes allow the earliest version of 'The bee tree' to be expanded in later tellings. For example, there is said to be a temporal discontinuity between the episodes 'Preparations to cut tree' and 'The chopping of the tree' in the 1971 version. This gap is filled in by the episode 'Trip out to tree' in the 1979 and 1982 versions. Bauman asserts that the added episodes are not 'mere filler' but contribute to the formal structure (p. 92).

However, there are some major problems with Bauman's characterization of episodes in terms of temporal discontinuities. Note first that if there are discontinuities between episodes, this implies that there is continuity within a given episode, and Bauman explicitly makes this claim: 'Within each episode, the flow of narrative time is uninterrupted, although not necessarily constant in rate' (p. 91). This statement is rather vague; but according to one reasonable interpretation, it is demonstrably false.

Consider in this regard the work of Labov and Waletzky (1967), who also point to 'temporal junctures' separating plot units. They call their basic units *narrative clauses* — independent clauses that are temporally ordered with respect to each other. A somewhat simplified version of one of their examples is:

and I crossed the street
and I tripped, man

It should be pointed out that these narrative clauses are identical with

actual clauses that constitute the narrative text. Unlike other analysts, Labov and Waletzky do not posit abstract plot units that are only indirectly related to the constituent sentences of the text. Labov and Waletzky take as evidence of temporal ordering the fact that a reversal of the clauses will change the semantic interpretation; thus, the ordering pertains to the referents of the clauses. The temporal juncture is seen as equivalent to the temporal conjuction *then* (Labov and Waletzky 1967: 30). To say 'I crossed the street and (then) I tripped' is not the same as saying 'I tripped and (then) I crossed the street'.

Note that the chunk of text of the 1979 version of 'The bee tree' that correlates with the episode 'The discovery of the bee tree' contains a number of clauses separated by temporal junctures in the sense recognized by Labov and Waletzky. For instance, the narrator first crossed the Rock Water Hole Branch and then saw the bee tree; likewise, he looked up at the bee tree and then saw the bees coming out of a hole in the tree. Thus, if episodes are 'constituted by time junctures', then it would appear that what Bauman regards as one episode should be analyzed as a sequence of episodes.

Bauman does not interpret his time junctures in this way; rather, he emphasizes that there are temporal discontinuities between episodes and that events can be reported to fill the time gap. But this very interpretation can be given to Labov and Waletzky's notion of temporal juncture. Consider the example we cited earlier: 'I crossed the street, and I tripped, man'. Various acts could have occurred between the act of crossing the street and the act of tripping; e.g., 'I ran down an alley' or 'I stepped into a hole in the sidewalk', etc. Likewise, acts can be inserted between Bell's reported act of stepping over on the other side of Rock Water Hole Branch and the act of seeing the bee tree.

The difficulty with delineating the episode in terms of the criterion of temporal discontinuity serves to foreground a further lack of clarity in what Bauman has to say about the episode as a unit of plot structure. At one point he refers to episodes as 'macrounits of narrative plot' (p. 94). A reference to macrounits would seem to imply the existence of 'microunits' — i.e., smaller parts that are the constituents of the larger unit. Note that it is not appropriate to refer to the sentences of the narrative text as constituents of the episode as macrounit.

Bauman refers to the episode as a macrounit in the context of a discussion of narrative motifs, which he characterizes as 'traditional elements of narrative content' (p. 94). One example he cites is the branding of the bee tree to indicate ownership. This incident is within that part of the text that Bauman correlates with the episode 'The discovery of the bee tree'. However, it is clear from Bauman's discussion that he does

not regard motifs as the constituent microunits of the episode as macrounit. He notes that 'We do not find this [i.e., the incorporation of motifs] often in Bell's tales because ... they ... have the capacity to "change up the complex" of the tale more than Bell is inclined to allow' (p. 94).

Even if we overlook problems with defining and delineating the episode, there still remain major shortcomings with Bauman's analysis of the plot structure of the story. Bauman in effect sees the structure of a narrative as consisting of a string of episodes. This implies a rather loose structure; in particular, this conception fails to account for plot closure. The only counterbalance to this loose conception is Bauman's recognition of what he terms *thematic parallelism* (p. 97). For example, the episode recounting the trip out to the bee tree is balanced by the final episode recounting the trip home. Such symmetries do constitute a structural organization of the episodes beyond their simple linear ordering.

However, most contemporary studies of narrative structure see an asymmetry as fundamental to plot structure; for instance, plot is seen as progressing from an initial disequilibrium to a final state of equilibrium. This can take different forms, one possibility being a progression from a lack to the liquidation of that lack.

Even Labov and Waletzky come close to recognizing this aspect of plot structure — though their conception of overall structure is formulated in rather vague traditional terms. They specify the major plot components as Orientation, Complication, Evaluation, Resolution, and Coda. Bauman, in fact, also recognizes the plot of 'The bee tree' as consisting of an orientation and a coda; but he does not recognize the plot as containing a complication and resolution, which is a matter of a sub-sequence of episodes.

In my own approach to narrative analysis, I posit a unit termed the *episode*, which is an intermediate-sized unit of plot structure. The episode is composed of minimal units termed *narrative propositions* (Hendricks 1977a). The narrative proposition is not identical to any given sentence of the narrative text, but it has the same syntactic form as an independent clause with a transitive verb. There is typically a one–many relation between the narrative proposition as a unit of plot structure and the constituent sentences of the text. Note that the unit 'The discovery of the bee tree', which Bauman calls an episode, corresponds more to what I would term a narrative proposition.

In my conception of it as a macrounit, the episode's internal structure depends on the type of narrative structure. I recognize two major types — dramatic structure and instrumental structure (Hendricks 1975):

	Instrumental Structure	*Dramatic Structure*
Initial State (Disequilibrium)	Task to be performed	Conflict
Mid-state	Actualization of means	Confrontation
Final State (Equilibrium)	Completion (success/failure)	Domination

Each of the three phases (initial state, etc.) is represented by a single narrative proposition. These three propositions as a group constitute an episode. A minimal plot can consist of a single episode; more complex plots will consist of a sequence of episodes. This sequence itself is structured into three main sections of (global) initial state, (global) mid-state, and (global) final state.

Ed Bell's story 'The bee tree' clearly exemplifies instrumental structure. The global initial state is a matter of the task (or goal) of obtaining honey from the bee tree. The global final state is the successful completion of the task — the return home with the load of honey. In between is the actualization of the means of performing the task.

Let us compare this analysis of the global plot structure (the structure at the highest level of abstraction) with Bauman's analysis of the plot structure of the 1971 version of 'The bee tree'. Bauman analyzes it as consisting of an Orientation and the following six episodes (p. 90).

1. The discovery of the bee tree.
2. The organization of the expedition to chop it down and gather the honey.
3. The chopping of the tree.
4. The encounter with the other party of choppers.
5. The felling of the tree and the gathering of the honey.
6. The return home.

The first episode, as posited by Bauman, approximately corresponds to what we would term the global initial state. The global final state basically corresponds to the gathering of the honey and the return home. Everything else corresponds to the global mid-state. Bauman's linear string of episodes fails to capture this tripartite organization. Note too that Bauman coalesces the felling of the tree (part of the means) and the gathering of the honey (the final state) into one 'episode'.

The expansion of a narrative is possible because each global state may itself consist of a sequence of episodes. In the case of 'The bee tree', it is

the mid-state that is expanded. What Bauman labels as episode 2, 'The organization of the expedition to chop the bee tree down and gather the honey', does not constitute an episode in our sense. The task to be performed is organization of the expedition. The means involve rounding up friends, loading a wagon with containers, etc. The final state is successful completion of the organizing efforts. This episode is not very well worked out in the 1971 version, but it is elaborated upon in the two later versions, particularly the 1979 version. Bauman errs in regarding this elaboration of the organizing episode as a matter of intercalating two separate 'episodes' — 'Asking father's permission to cut tree' and 'Trip out to tree'. Note that in the 1982 version this latter 'episode' contains an explicit reference to the organizing efforts — the food Bell's mother had prepared for them.

It has not been my intent to offer a full-fledged analysis of the plot structure of 'The bee tree'. Rather, I want to give some indication of how Bauman's discussion falls far short of what the current state of narrative analysis makes possible. Before turning to other matters, let me point out one additional inadequacy in Bauman's analysis. Bauman totally ignores one important aspect of plot structure — the narrative roles which the various characters play (Hendricks 1977b).

Two different sets of roles exist — one for dramatic structure and one for instrumental structure. In the case of dramatic structure, there are two roles — protagonist and antagonist. Each role can have various 'satellites' associated with it; that is, in a narrative with dramatic structure, the protagonist can have various characters allied with him, as can the antagonist. In the case of instrumental structure, there is one central role — that of the hero. Optional roles subordinate to the hero are those of helper and opponent.

As already pointed out, 'The bee tree' exemplifies instrumental structure. The role of hero is played by the first-person narrator, Ed Bell. There are no real opponents; the other choppers are potential opponents, but they prove to be helpers.

The later (1979, 1982) versions of 'The bee tree' are more elaborate not only in plot events per se, but in characterization. The same roles — hero and helper — occur in all three versions, but in the two later ones, there are more characters serving in the helper role, or they are characterized more fully. For instance, in the earliest version the friends who accompany Bell on the chopping expedition are nameless, whereas in the later versions they have names (Alec Moore and Parm Williams). Bell's mother and father do not appear in the earliest version. As for the other group of choppers, they are named only in the 1982 version ('Three o' those ol' Harwood boys').

To round out our discussion of Bauman's attempts at the formal analysis of narrative structure, let us briefly consider his analysis of the anecdotes told by Caswell Rogers, which include 'Drunk man', 'Not that young', etc. Bauman discusses the anecdotes both in general terms and in terms of specific texts. The general discussion in effect aims at characterizing the genre of the anecdote. According to Bauman,

> The characteristic formal features of the genre include a focus on a single episode and a single scene, and a tendency to limit attention to two principal actors. As a corollary, perhaps, of this last feature, anecdotes also tend to be heavily dialogic in construction, often culminating in a kind of punch line ... in direct discourse. (p. 55)

Some of Bauman's remarks mix formal organization with theme or content. For instance, he notes that

> these are stories about morality — proper and improper behavior, responsible and irresponsible action, and attitudes toward them. The moral tenor of the stories is introduced from the beginning; the first piece of narrative business that is performed in these texts is the introduction of the central actors by reference to the problematic, morally loaded attributes that will make for the focal conflict of the story. (pp. 59–60)

The focus on moral conflict is not a generic characteristic of the anecdote. In fact, a central conflict involving two principal actors — regardless of the subject of the conflict — is not an organizational feature specific to the anecdote; rather, it is characteristic of one of the major types of narrative structure, the type I term *dramatic structure*. Rather than refer to two principal actors, it would be more exact to refer to the two narrative roles of protagonist and antagonist. The minimal episode in dramatic structure consists of three narrative propositions, representing conflict, confrontation, and domination (of one side over the other).

Let us briefly consider the anecdote 'Drunk man' in terms of the model of dramatic structure. It is indeed the case that the anecdote consists of a single episode, in our sense of the term. The two main roles of protagonist and antagonist are played by Johnny and his wife, respectively. The central conflict is not very explicitly set forth by the narrator — he takes certain facts for granted, particularly about the mores of the region. In this region, as Bauman indicates, 'drinking is the focus of considerable tension and conflict. Public drunkenness especially carries an exaggerated potential for a clash of values and for social disruption' (p. 60).

Johnny and his wife thus represent conflicting values. Johnny is a drinker, and his wife (by implication) is a respectable woman who shares

the community's disapproval of drunkenness. The narrator explicitly states that Johnny and his wife have not been married long, thus implying that the new wife does not yet know about Johnny's habit of going on drinking sprees.

The stage is thus set for a direct confrontation when Johnny goes off with a neighbor and arranges for his wife to meet him later at the gate. The actual confrontation between protagonist and antagonist is signaled by the wife's remark, when she meets her husband after his spree, 'Why Johnny, you're drunk!', spoken in such a way as to constitute a challenge, in the sense of Labov and Fanshel (1977; cf. also Labov 1982).

Johnny replies to his wife, 'Yes, ma'am. You the best judge of a drunk man I ever saw'. According to Bauman (following the example of Labov and Fanshel), Johnny, with this reply, deflects the challenge by turning the situation into one in which it is the wife who is being judged: 'What is at issue now is not his condition but her competence as a judge of it' (p. 71). The anecdote ends with Johnny's remark. In terms of the model of dramatic structure, Johnny's remark represents his domination over his wife in the verbal struggle, which itself resulted from the conflict over drinking.

We have now completed our examination of the major topics of Bauman's book. Any overall evaluation of the book should be based on Bauman's overall intent, which he articulates in the concluding chapter:

> In light of all these concurrent and potentially complementary inquiries into the form, function, and conduct of oral narration, the need appears all the more compelling for a fusion of the various separate lines of investigation that have engaged the interest of the respect disciplines and that I have drawn together in the studies that make up this book. In a word, we need it all: a formal poetics of performance, an ethnographic understanding of events and social interaction in terms of the constitutive role of discourse, and a sense of form–function interrelationships. (p. 114)

I would question whether Bauman in fact has been able to effect a fusion of diverse approaches to narrative. In particular, Bauman's analytic practice fails to do justice to his notion of the performance event as 'the indissoluble unity of text, narrated event, and narrative event' (p. 7). This may be due in part to the organization of his book, where each chapter deals with a different oral narrative tradition and analytical problem. A couple of the chapters, in fact, are revisions of articles previously published separately. In the final analysis, nothing Bauman presents in this book seriously challenges the viability of the notion of textual autonomy.

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