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Performance

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Performance

PERFORMANCES ARE aesthetic practices¹—patterns of behavior, ways of speaking, manners of bodily comportment—whose repetitions situate actors in time and space, structuring individual and group identities. Insofar as performances are based upon repetitions, whether lines learned, gestures imitated, or discourses reiterated, they are the generic means of tradition making. Indeed, performance genres play an essential (and often essentializing) role in the mediation and creation of social communities, whether organized around bonds of nationalism, ethnicity, class status, or gender.² Yet performances provide an intricate counterpoint to the unconscious practices of everyday life insofar as they are stylistically marked expressions of otherness, lifting the level of habitual behavior and entering an alternate, often ritualized or ludic, interpretive “frame” wherein different rules apply (Goffman 1974). Performances, as such, are characterized by a higher than usual degree of reflexivity, whether calling attention to the rules of their own enactment (metapragmatics) or talking about the performance event (metadiscourse). It has been the task of performance studies to understand what constitutes the differences between habitual practices and heightened performances, and how and why these differences function in society.

To perform is to carry something into effect—whether it be a story, an identity, an artistic artifact, a historical memory, or an ethnography. The notion of agency is implicit in performance. To study the performative dimensions of experience, then, is to interrogate the processes whereby different phenomena are enacted (Abrahams 1977). This, in turn, entails close attention to what is reproduced, or imitated, and what is created and emergent—concerns that have long been within the purview of folkloristics.³

Performance and Hybrid Genealogies

The study of performance in folklore gained prominence among ethnographers of speaking in the 1970s, as they sought to give fuller life to verbal and written genres that had traditionally been studied as static texts, severed from their ground of enunciation (Hufford, this issue). Increased emphasis on the relevance of context for interpretation (Ben-Amos 1972) encouraged scholars of verbal art to reconceive their subjects of study, moving from an item-centered perspective to one that emphasized cultural “enactments” (Abrahams 1977)

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and “events” (Bauman 1977). Dell Hymes, in particular, took issue with the systematic abstraction of language from its context of utterance, demonstrating how language was embedded in a web of intersubjective relations that determined as well as responded to linguistic structure (Hymes 1964, 1974). Not only did this provide an alternative to linguistic models that focused on abstract structures and rules, but it also took into account the pragmatics of discourse in the interpretation of a speech event.⁴ John Gumperz, for example, recognized that amidst a plethora of possible interpretive worlds, there exist indices that connect an utterance to a specific field of discourse; these indices, which he called “contextualization cues,” are embedded within the discourse itself (Gumperz 1982; cf. Goodwin and Duranti 1992). Richard Bauman approached the problematics of interpretation from a similar perspective, noting that performance events are “keyed” in various ways; that is, the tenor of performance and its social force and function are coded in the formal properties of the speech event (1977).⁵ Attention to language *play* became a central concern in such analyses insofar as the ludic contains a high level of metadiscourse and social critique (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1976; Sherzer 1993; cf. Bateson 1972).

Synonymous with the ethnography of spoken performance in folklore studies was the development of a more symbolic view of performance, one that examined multisemiotic modes of cultural expression.⁶ Drawing on Arnold van Gennep’s study of rites of passage (1960), Victor Turner attended to Ndembu initiation ceremonies and later to large-scale cultural display events like carnival, finding that all such socially dramatic performances bear within them a metacommunicative and explanatory function that attempts to make social sense of schism, ambiguity and division through “public reflexivity” (V. Turner 1969, 1987; 1990:11; cf. Babcock 1980). Performance, that is, not only fabricates meanings in highly condensed symbols (Douglas 1982) but comments on those meanings, interpreting them for the larger community and often critiquing and subverting them as well.⁷ The emphasis on ritual in this paradigm makes its proponents especially sensitive to the processes whereby performance transforms the social, psychological, and emotional being while, at the same time, it experientially enfold the individual into the group. As Dorothy Noyes has noted in a recent examination of the Patum festival of Berga, for example,

Communal action creates a shared reality, and over time, a fund of common experience: it makes mutual understanding at some level possible. Consensus, as James Fernandez has noted, is etymologically con-sensus, feeling together (1988:1–2). The Patum’s intensity of performance brings the individual’s senses into concert to receive strong impressions. Near-universal Patum participation in Berga guides the senses of the entire community in the same direction, obliges them to feel together in a way that their divided everyday experience can never foster. [1993:138]

Turner called this feeling of consensus “*communitas*” and noted that it was most often experienced in liminal states, in transition from one symbolic domain

to another, such as first marriage rites, when everyday rules give way to other, sometimes dramatically different, norms, or “antistructures” (V. Turner 1969; cf. Babcock 1978).

Roger Abrahams’s theories of folkloristics have combined the insights of ritual studies with those that focus on language. Investigating verbal art (1969, 1983) and large-scale cultural display events (1987), Abrahams has brought attention to the phenomenology of performance linking both aspects of expressive culture. “In all genres there is a strategic articulation of conflict,” he asserts, “intended to move the audience sympathetically with the movement of the item. . . . In fact, as one moves along the continuum from the pole of interpersonal involvement to that of complete removal, the *embodiment* of movement becomes progressively formal and performer-oriented, more reliant upon symbol, imagination, and vicarious involvement of audience” (Abrahams 1976:207, emphasis added; cf. Fernandez 1986). Recognizing degrees of embodiment, Abrahams provides a foundation for an experience-based ethnography of performance (1986).

Because of their interest in complex and multivocal events, students of ritual have looked to theorists of theatre for inspiration. Following Antonin Artaud, for example, theater has developed its own “concrete language” of gesture and posture, a language of anarchy which pushes the actor and the audience toward a questioning of “object relationships” (usually taken for granted) and thus toward chaos (Artaud 1970:27). Such performances denaturalize the world, splicing signs from their referents, and contain an implicit metaphysics in their assumption of art and ritual as active. Like Turner’s liminal stage in the ritual process, Artaudian performance is evocative, reaching for the viscera before the brain.⁸

For scholars of verbal art, the theatrical definition of performance is problematic for two reasons: (1) it implies that performance cannot be rendered as text: as a spontaneity that never repeats the same gesture/meaning twice, Artaudian performance resists mimesis, refusing to be captured and fixed (cf. Fabian 1990 and Taussig 1993); (2) it privileges gesture as a “speech prior to words” and makes nonverbal or affective communication a prerequisite for what Artaud calls an “active metaphysics”—art that does something (1970:42, 33). Both these assumptions challenge the ethnographer to reformulate methodologies and writing practices that illuminate the many semiotic systems at work in the construction of performative reality. Although Turner and those influenced by him have been criticized for reducing the social drama to a formula and losing the particular and local meanings (Geertz 1983),⁹ the work of the symbolic school poses vital questions about the social behavior exhibited in performance: What are the relations between the discourses and material practices that compose everyday life and the more stylized and self-reflexive enactments that comment on and transform the same? And how do the various semiotic aspects of performance, especially those that resist textualization, elucidate these tensions?¹⁰

Revoicing and Re-embodiment in Performance Genres

It is impossible to talk about performance without talking about genre, as the two are interdependent and mutually defining. As framed events (with a beginning, middle, and end), performances materialize and are recognized within generic bounds. Thus political oratory is distinguishable from a sales spiel if only because each references a different genealogy, employing the rhetorical strategies, formulae, citations, and symbols conventionally appropriate to one form or the other. History, its categories and valuations, is embedded in the web of sign relations that compose genre. As an institution (think of the State of the Union address), genre is always informed by an ideology, or several, that invokes the words of others in order to establish generic, as well as genealogical, authority.

The empirical reality of genre imposes itself in the world, as does its tendency to spin out from itself, aetioloating its own boundaries, feeding on its own excesses, and metamorphosizing into other forms. Nonetheless, a genre is a social contract on the level of both form and content. It is in this spirit that Bauman defined performance as "responsibility to an audience for a display of communicative competence" (1977:11). This display, however, need not always bow to the law; indeed, performance genres may be in deliberate and flagrant breach of generic convention, mixing frames and blurring boundaries so that tradition and authority are put into question and redefined (Geertz 1983; cf. Clifford and Marcus 1986; Hanks 1987; Perloff 1992).

Performance genres are intertextual fields where the politics of identity are negotiated.¹¹ In situations where territory and its appropriation are contested, live and mediated performance genres becomes charged with political import as polyphonic symbols of identity and power (Horowitz 1994). This is not to celebrate performance as a mode of liberation, however. As Johannes Fabian notes in his study of Zairean theater, "The kind of performances we find in popular culture have become for the people involved more than ever ways to preserve some self-respect in the face of constant humiliation, and to set the wealth of artistic creativity against an environment of utter poverty" (1990:19). In such contexts, performance is resistance. Conversely, however, performance genres such as anthems, national dances, or state and religious rituals may invoke metanarratives that idealize unity, purity, and freedom, but in the service of monologic discourses of oppression (Lyotard 1992).

Genres are permeated with the "sediment" of the past (Jameson 1981:140–141) and as such are always locked in a dialogue with what Mikhail Bakhtin refers to as "prior discourse" (1981:342; cf. S. Stewart 1978:124). Making plain the relation of genre and human consciousness (genre's "internal orientation"), Bakhtin problematizes the notion of a closed category by emphasizing the time/space orientations that inform every generic gesture or utterance.¹² The study of genre is thus not one of fixity but rather one that explores different historical "ways of seeing" (Dorst 1983:415, following Berger 1973). In the performance of verbal art, these temporal traces are found in all aspects of

mimeticism, whether in reported speech, adopted formulas, or conventions such as parallelism, repetition, or other formal patterning (Sherzer 1990). Attention to the intertextual relations in a performed genre reveal its relation to history and authority—whether alliance or difference is asserted from tradition, and to what degree and by what means (Briggs and Bauman 1992). In his 1987 essay “Discourse Genres in a Theory of Practice,” for example, William Hanks describes how Mayan speech genres infiltrated the more official written genres of their colonizers, thus revoicing a hegemonic discourse at both the formal and the semantic levels and creating a new and “hybrid genre.”¹³ Yet in performance, the reporting context is not only linguistic. Richard Schechner uses the concept of “restored behavior” to describe the mimetic and metacommunicative role of the body in performance (1985:35), while Deirdre Sklar advocates “kinesthetic empathy,” a technique that involves the ethnographer in the experiential “interplay of corporeality and abstraction” (1994:13). Because performance is more than a “mode of language use” or a “way of speaking,” it is necessary to take account of the space of performance and the role of the senses in connecting performers to a somatic experience of place.

“The senses,” Yi-Fu Tuan notes, “under the aegis and direction of the mind, give us a world. . . . The proximate senses yield the world closest to us, including our own bodies. The position and movements of our bodies produce proprioception or kinesthesia, somatic awareness of the basic dimensions of space” (Tuan 1993:35; cf. Csordas 1993; Stoller 1989). The spatial dimensions of performance are charged with import through indexical and iconic relations that connect them to historical meanings and affective states (Peirce 1965:143; cf. Feld 1990). These relations, as Tuan notes, are often mediated through the body, as one of the primary media in which sociopolitical relations of power are inculcated and reproduced (Foucault 1979). Tracing the semiotic relations between body, discourse, and history reveals “nets” of indexicality—verbal, gestural, and affective—while elucidating the permeability or resistance of these nets to permutation (Schechner 1988). Intersensuality thus joins intertextuality in the interrogation of mimesis and emergence in performative genres.

Time, Emergence, and the Performance of Ethnography

As defined above, performance has much in common with the enterprise of ethnography (Fabian 1990; Rose 1993; Stoller 1994; E. Turner 1993; V. Turner 1982a). Both are framed activities concerned with giving meaning to experience. Both may use strategies of mimetic reproduction to effect a “natural” context that makes the audience forget the staging of artifice. Both may also break this facade in order to jar the audience into reflexive awareness. Performance, like ethnography, is palpable, arising in worlds of sense and symbol. Ethnography, like performance, is intersubjective, depending on an audience, a community or group to which it is responsible, however heterogeneous the participants may be. In its concern with a self-critical methodology that takes account of its effects

in the world, ethnography is first and foremost performative—aware of itself as a living script in which meaning is emergent.

Bauman noted the importance of the emergent in verbal art in 1977, stating that “completely novel and completely fixed texts represent the poles of an ideal continuum, and that between the poles lies the range of emergent text structures to be found in empirical performance” (1977:40). As an indicator of social change, the emergent is rooted and grows up in the soil of history and convention.

The “emergent” has recently been reinscribed in another empirical domain as well. George Marcus, for example, defines emergence as a “temporal dimension” of indeterminacy necessary for cultural analysis. Invoking Bakhtinian concepts of genre and historicity, emergence becomes an imagined ethnographic space of hybridity:

The time-space or chronotope in terms of which this imaginary is constructed in ethnography rests on evoking a temporal dimension of emergence in terms of which global-local processes, as objects of study, are unfolding as they are studied. Such a temporality guarantees a felicitous and liberating indeterminacy. Studying something emergent does not place the onus of prediction upon the scholar, nor does it imply futurism associated with strong utopic or dystopic visions, nor does it embed perspective in an historical metanarrative in which the terms of description are largely given. In effect, emergence is precisely the temporal dimension that “hedges bets,” so to speak, that guarantees the qualified, contingent hopefulness that, as noted, the cautious, critical moralism of work in cultural studies seeks. [Marcus 1994:426]

The concept of emergence may be an ethnographic safety net of sorts, but it need not erase history or its contingencies. Fabian (1983) has already noted the necessity of coevality in the joint production of ethnographic knowledge. For him, ethnographies are coproduced performances, which emerge “as a result of a multitude of actors working together to give form to experiences, ideas, feelings, projects” (Fabian 1990:13). In this way, performances combine several sociocultural trajectories, weaving together differences to create new designs out of old materials. In ethnography the ramifications of such performative fabrication become salient.

In order to elucidate the many aspects of the performative event and what they teach the analyst of culture, I trace the tensions between history, the body, genre, and emergence through a single performance of oratory in the open-air Moroccan marketplace. Beginning with the most self-consciously artistic performance—theater—my analysis ultimately returns to examine the form of expression that some Moroccan theorists and practitioners (Berrechid 1985, 1993) have identified as its paradigmatic and essential symbol—festive enactments in the *halqa*, the traditional open-air space of performance in Morocco, in which the body provides a primary symbol of change and exchange.

History: Performing Theory from the Inside

The existence of an indigenous Islamic theater is a subject of debate among scholars. Some assert that the Shi'i passion plays constitute the authentic tradition of performance in the Arabo-Islamic world (Slaoui 1983), while others trace the emergence of a national theater through translations of Greek and European plays into classical Arabic, and their eventual adaptation into dialect (Mniai 1990). Still others locate the origins of theater in regional ceremonies, such as the Berber festival of masquerade in Morocco (see Chafik 1988–89; cf. Hammoudi 1988). The definition of a uniquely Moroccan form of performance became particularly important in the 1960s, shortly after Morocco achieved its independence from France after 44 years of colonial rule.¹⁴ During the colonial period and before, theater in Morocco was largely in the French language or, less frequently, in classical Arabic, targeted toward an elite audience of literati (but see Harifi 1994).¹⁵ After independence, it was incumbent upon Moroccan artists to conceptualize a Moroccan theater, a “theater of the people” (*misrah an-nas*) as the Moroccan playwright, Taieb Saddiki later named it (see Saddiki 1979, 1980). It was not long after, that Moroccan playwright and theorist Abdelkrim Berrechid wrote his now-renowned manifesto “Festive Theater,” locating “authentic” Moroccan performance in the oral traditions of open-air comedy, poetry, storytelling and song—performances found in festivals—most notably, in the *halqa* (Berrechid 1985, 1993).¹⁶

The word *halqa* delimits both a physical and a symbolic space: literally meaning a link in a chain, the *halqa* is defined by a circular assembly of people surrounding a performer in a public setting, usually in a marketplace or at a city gate, spaces of threshold and transition. The interdependence between performer and audience is implicit in the word *halqa*; neither exists without the other, making all who are present coparticipants in the performative event (cf. Brenneis 1986; Duranti 1986). A performer may talk with clients and give private counsel, but it is only when the audience reaches a certain density that the artist begins to perform, casting his semiotic spell, captivating the encircling crowd with his verbal prowess, and drawing their bodies, their words, and their imaginations into his imaginary circle.¹⁷

The history of *halqa* performances in Morocco is long. Verbal artists, acrobats, and other itinerant entertainers populate the earliest travel accounts (Africanus [Leon L'Africain] 1980[1665]; Foucauld 1888) while renderings of epic tales in the public forum are well known in the North African historical and ethnographic record (cf. El-Shamy 1980; Reynolds 1991; Slyomovics 1987). *Halqa* performances appear frequently in the fiction of North African writers as well (see Ben Jelloun 1989; Saddiki 1991). Often associated with tellers of episodic tales, praise singers, snake charmers, and clowns, the *halqa* is also populated by clergy (*fqaha*) who write charms, by clairvoyants, and by herbalists who sell homemade remedies using an elabo-

rate oratory. Their performances are characterized by license, humor, and symbolic inversion (cf. Babcock 1978).

According to Berrechid, the spirit that infuses festive performance is liberating, presenting a challenge to conventionality and rules (cf. Bakhtin 1984b). Yet, he notes that Moroccan life may be defined by a series of festivals—birth ceremonies, circumcision, marriage, funerals—times out of time (cf. Falassi 1987). In the *halqa* the boundaries between performer and audience blur. It is precisely this notion of the publicness of festive performance that compels Berrechid to make it the paradigm of Moroccan theater. European theater is based on the individual's psychological experience, and socialist theater on politics and economics, but festive theater links the individual to the group without sacrificing either "interior" or "exterior" states of being (Berrechid 1985, 1993; cf. Artaud 1970). In its use of parody and humor, festive theater makes the quotidian strange; it is participative, spontaneous, and unfolds with the audience, thus transforming the whole. Drawing upon the social experience of the *halqa*, Berrechid not only identifies a paradigm for Moroccan theater but also delineates a methodology of performance.

Although not all Moroccan scholars define Moroccan theater in terms of *halqa* performances,¹⁸ it is fair to say that "festive theater" is a fundamental form of the Moroccan ludic spirit, intricately related to what Bakhtin has called "the carnivalesque"—cultural expression that challenges reigning hierarchies with humor, parody, and subversive symbolism that draws on the "material lower bodily strata" in order to invert social categories (Bakhtin 1984b:368). As Young describes it, the "carnavalesque move is to turn upside down or inside out, to invert or reverse, to transgress the boundaries between discourses or to switch their content. . . . To cast down a discourse . . . is not only to carnivalize it but also to materialize it, to render it [into] matter—not inert matter but fecund, teeming productive matter" (1993:117). Carnavalesque expression plays with multiple forms and meanings to ensure that neither a genre nor a subject can be circumscribed or fixed, that both are always in a state of "unfinalized transition" (Bakhtin 1984a:164).

Unlike Bakhtin, Moroccan theorists of the theater had no need to confine themselves to literary examples of the carnivalesque. At the time that Berrechid began writing, festive open-air performances were popular in both rural and metropolitan areas in Morocco. Yet at the time, the *halqa* was primarily a masculine domain, with men comprising both performers and audience. Today the scene has changed. The *halqa* has undergone profound transformation: storytellers have diminished, orators and *spiel* makers (Dargan 1992) have increased, and women have invaded a formerly male performative domain.¹⁹ The process whereby women orators have appropriated a traditional performance genre, revoicing and re-embodying it to effect a transformation of gendered practice, also reveals the way performances interact with daily life, ideology, and physical and symbolic space.

The Carnivalized Body

Performances in the contemporary halqa are notoriously bawdy, subjects often revolve around the ills, excesses, and desires of the body. For example, a woman herbalist holding forth on the benefits of her herbs and what they cure says:

#1²⁰

This little bit that I'm going to give you, what is it used for?
 By God I won't tell you what it's used for until you ask "what?"
What is it used for, alalla?
 By God, I didn't hear you!
What is it used for?
 Listen to what I'm going to tell you and remember my words.
 If you don't go in this way, you'll come out that way.
 First, give me the one that's going like this [she holds her side and puts on a pained expression]
 And the one who has destroyed his own liver.
 He complains about his back bone.
 He's screaming about these [she motions to the groin area].
 Half of this has died on him [another arm motion to the lower abdomen].
 He's sick and tired of them.
 Desire is dead.
 You're no longer a man.
 Remember what I'm saying, well, I'm talking to you!
 You get up four or five times a night.
 You can't hold your urine.
 Go ask about me in El Ksiba [a nearby mountain village]—
 lines from here to there.
 You spend the night going in and out.
 The woman with a stinking uterus.
 You're no longer a man.
 The prostitute owns you, but your face is shy.
 If I let some doctor examine your body,
 between me and you, the one who we all share is the Messenger of God.
Prayers and peace be upon him.
 You're a witness to God.
 You're a witness to God.
 You're a witness to God.
 You're a witness to God.
 You're a witness to God.

#1

had shwiya lli ghadi n-'ti-k lash y-liq?
 wa-llahi ma-n-gul li-kum lash y-liq ḥta t-gulu ntuma "lash."
'lash y-liq alalla?
 u ʔlahi ma sma't-kum!
'lash y-liq?
 sma' ash ghadya n-gul w 'qal 'la klam-i.
 ila ma dkhal-ti mən ḥna t-khrəj mən ḥna.

l-ləwla 'ti-ni dak lli y-təm ghadi...
 u dak lli had b-l-idd dyal-u l-klawi.
 y-t-shəka b-l-'amud l-fiqari.
 had-u y-ghawət bi-hum.
 n-nas hada mat 'li-h.
 had-u zhaf bi-hum.
 n-nafs matət.
 ma bqitish rajəl.
 'qal ash kan-gul, rani kan-tkalləm m'a-k.
 t-nud rub'a, khmsat l-marrat f-l-lilla.
 l-bul ma t-shədi-h.
 sir suwəl 'liya f-l-had dyal l-qšiba,
 rah s-sərbis hna u hna.
 t-bat, dakhəl kharəj.
 mra khanza li-ha l-walda.
 ma bqitish rajəl
 l-qahba malka-k, as-sifa mərgat.
 ila n-khali shi t-ṭbib baqi y-kshəf 'la dat-ək,
 bin-i u bin-ək, lli mshark-na kamlin, huwa rasul llah.
 ʃalla llah 'l-ih wa saləm.
 shahadat-lah.
 shahadat-lah.
 shahadat-lah.
 shahadat-lah.
 shahadat-lah.

The herbalist's gestural vocabulary activates the sensations of her audience to different areas of their bodies. She points to her own "lower bodily strata" instead of referring to body parts that are taboo. Nonetheless she manages to break most of the rules for appropriate feminine behavior. The audience not only participates verbally and vicariously in this performance, but they are made morally responsible for its later recounting, as the herbalist points to specific people and designates them "witnesses to God" (Islamic law requires 12 witnesses, or *shahid*, and their testimony to establish a legal fact). Mixing discourses of religious citation with meticulous descriptions of diseases of the entrails, her language, like most verbal art in the halqa, is replete with cursing and blessing, with discourses on sexuality, fertility, and death; in short, the liberating spirit of the carnivalesque is in full bloom.

The performance area is in the weekly market in Beni Mellal, a town on the last slope of the Middle Atlas Mountains before the rocky terrain edges into agricultural plain. Beni Mellal is a provincial capital with a regional population of about 350,000. The stretch marks of rapid urbanization are evident in its profusion of half-built or not-yet-occupied apartment buildings adjoining empty lots littered with gaping black plastic bags out of which the refuse of city dwellers overflows, providing scant nourishment to sheep, goats, and wild dogs and cats. Despite its burgeoning population, however, the weekly market is still in operation, and women vendors comprise the most rapidly growing sector,

selling small commodities such as cut cloth, pots, pans, perfume, scarves, and other personal-use items, most of them imported from the northern Spanish enclaves of Mellilia and Ceuta. The introduction of these goods into the daily lives of the people of Beni Mellal contributes to the changing landscape of this once provincial village.

On market day, cars and vans scatter across the uneven ground in what used to be the old market site, *suq al-qadim*. The main market has moved down the hill to the plain, and the *suq al-qadim* is now the place of the *halqa*. A few tents with closed flaps and yellow flags flying from their apex stand close to the wall that divides the *halqa* from the cemetery; inside these tents clairvoyants give private counsel. Half a dozen listless donkeys stand in the bright morning sun next to a pile of junk metal. The tinkers who draw upon this stock for their trade are housed in a makeshift tin shelters nearby. Down the hill, a large circle of people surrounds a young man in a light beige suit who is reading minds and giving advice, his voice magnified with a microphone. Another circle of people regard a monkey and his trainer. There are also the herbalists, including a Saharan man in a bright blue jellaba seated on a prayer rug, his herbs displayed before him. A 9-by-12-inch laminated picture of a being—half woman, half fish—lies enigmatically amidst his opaque plastic bottles of herbs, as he scoops the inside of a hard-boiled ostrich egg into a piece of newspaper, mixes it with some other spices, and explains the provenance of this monstrous egg (it is from Sudan) and its benefits (it cures almost everything). The smell of various spices, flower petals, and henna rises in the warm air, attaching itself to memory, to the site of the market, a place of curative herbs and words.

There are other herbalists in the vicinity: among them, a woman in her forties. Dressed conventionally in a jellaba and head scarf, she is seated on a small mat under an umbrella, her back against the side of an old car. A microphone is strapped to her wrist, and her voice is magnified with the movements of her hand. Her audience is comprised of about twenty men and women, some squatting down next to her in a small semicircle and others standing behind them.

#2

Come here. In the name of God.
 Healing is from God.
 Everyone pray for the Prophet.
 Your pain will leave, and colic will disappear
 And [your] wife, Mr. Muhammad . . .
 Put your hands with me like this.
 Put your hands. . . .
 For whoever doesn't put his hands like this will find his wife has fled.

#2

aji bismi-llah
 shifa' 'and llah.
 kul-kum shalliyu 'la an-nbi.

rah, l-uj'a ma y-bqa
 wa al-kulik ma y-bqa
 wa rah, al-mra' as-si muḥammad...
 wa diru idi-kum m'aya,
 diru idi-kum.
 'li ma dəyr idi-h, aṣiyb al-mra' ghabana.

The herbalist (*l-‘ashshaba*) puts her hands together, palms facing up in the position of supplication. It is the posture of prayer assumed by those receiving blessing (*da‘wa*)—which she is about to confer. The herbalist makes it clear that the men in the audience who do not put their hands in such a position will reap the consequences: upon returning home, they will find their wives have abandoned them. As the herbalist is a woman with considerable rhetorical and healing powers, this threat is not taken lightly. Indeed, one of the ailments that the herbalist treats is *tqaf*, impotence caused by the use of magic. Although the herbalist claims to be able to restore health to the victim of magic, she too is well versed in magical practices (as she says later when talking about the effects of magic, “what we *could* increase, we’ll decrease”). Everyone in the audience puts their hands together.

The herbalist’s manipulation of the body postures of her audience is significant, as until recently the presence of women in the *halqa* was anomalous. If genres index particular gendered practices, so do rules of bodily comportment and appropriateness. The herbalist is inhabiting a space formerly associated with men and male performance. She is not only adopting a discourse, but a set of corresponding bodily dispositions, or “techniques” (Mauss 1950), indexically marked as male. Yet hers is not a wholesale appropriation. The *‘ashshaba* manages to mix genres, as well as herbs, and with them, traditional notions of gender.

Genre and Gender Transformations

“Put your hands like this,” she directs her audience again:

#3

This shrif²¹ gave me 200 [riyals], and then another 200.

By God, he won’t crack or be burned or feel guilty.

On the ugly day he won’t be present.

Say Amen.

Amen.

That God not make him go blind before he dies,

that he stay protected and hidden

until he goes to his maker clean.

May God solder his bones.

Say Amen.

Amen.

May God solder his bones.

Here, sir, here are your seven.

Here, whoever wants to drink.
 I'm going to work with you.
 Drink, sir, here.
 Here you are. In the name of God.
 Before you have dinner, sir.
 Did I give you yours?
Wait, woman, wait.
 Here's six, here's the seventh from me, here it is.
 Listen to what people say.
 Here's seven.
 By God, whoever wants to try some, welcome.
 Here you are, you hear what people say.
 I've sworn by God.
 If your self-importance is lacking,
 and your health is beaten.
 Here, sir, here it is.
 A package every night.
 A package every night.
 A package every night.
 Just before you go to sleep.
 Here you are. In the name of God.
 Here are three and three more, six. Here are seven.
 Wait and I'll show you the conditions of the "salt."
 Here. In the name of God. Here are seven more.
 And whoever wants to try,
 have faith in God with me.
 Sowing is with faith
 and marriage is with faith
 and summer [harvest] is with faith.
 And whoever doesn't have faith, even if he goes to the Prophet, will bring a "closed smell"
 [will not achieve his goal].

#3

diru iddi-kum.
 had ash-shrif, rah, 'ta miyatəyn l-luwla wa 'ta miyatəyn at-taniya.
 ya rabbi, bghit-u ma y-tshaq, ma y-tharq ma y-ndəm.
 nhar al-khaib ma y-hdarsh fi-h.
 gulu amin.
amin.
 bghit allah y-gad l-ih l-basr m' l-'mur,
 y-bqa mafudh u matmum.
 hta y-mshi 'and mul-ana nqi.
 gulu amin.
amin.
 ya rabbi tjbbər l-ih al-'dam.
 hak asidi ha sb'a dyol-ik.
 haku lli bgha y-shrab.
 ana ghadi n-khadəm m'-kum.
 shrab, asid-na, hak.

hani, bismi-llah.
 ḥta t-‘sha asidi,
 ‘ti-tik dyol-lak?
blati, alalla, blati.
 ha sta, ha ssab’a dyal-i, ha hiya.
 sm’u an-nas ash y-gulu.
 ha ssab’a.
 ya rabbi lli bgha y-jrrab marḥaba.
 ha antuma kat-sm’u an-nas.
 ‘l-īya b-limin,
 ila kant ‘and-ak l-həmma nuqsa
 u ssaḥa mdugdga,
 hak asidi, ha hiya,
 bəkiya f-llila.
 bəkiya f-llila.
 bəkiya f-llila.
 ḥta t-bghi t-n’as.
 hani bismi-llah.
 ha tlata, u tlata, satta, ha ssəb’a.
 blati ḥta n-war-ak shrut al-malḥa.
 hani bismi-llah.
 ha sb’a khurəyn.
 u lli bgha y-jarrəb y-dir m’aya ‘tiqadu f-llah.
 rah, al-hart b-nniya
 u zwaḥ b-nniya
 u ṣṣaif b-nniya
 u lli ma fi-h nniya wa law y-mshi ‘and n-nbi y-jib shəmma matwiya.

The herbalist leads the audience in a call-and-response, engaging them in what Volosinov (1973) refers to as “inner speech,” a dialogue that is sometimes vocalized, sometimes silent, but that connects the audience to a shared social ethic—in this example, that of religious blessing, or *da’wa*. *Da’wa* is a genre of formal blessing, though it can also be used to curse another. Some common *da’wat* (pl.) are: may God bring ease (*aḷlah y-jib tisir*), may God help you (*aḷlah y-‘awn-ək*), and may God bring healing (*aḷlah y-jib shifa*). *Da’wat* may be personalized to fit any context. The only governing rule in the construction of *da’wat* is that they begin with the word “God.” People often respond with “amen” (*amin*) when receiving the blessing of another.

People bless each other frequently in Morocco—women and men. It is not the publicness of blessing that is unusual for a woman, but the public *performance* of blessing. In this performance, the herbalist gives is the first part of an “adjacency pair” (Schegloff and Sacks 1973); that is, it requires a response, whether spoken aloud or silently. Perhaps more important than her orchestration of verbal repetition, however, is her manipulation of the bodies of her audience. She continues to call them closer, instructing them to sit on the ground and assume a position of supplication. “Give me your hands, my Uncle the Hajj,” she says to an old man with a white beard who is squatting closeby.

“Give me your hands. Take your hands off your cheek!” Such directives given by a woman to an older man are uncommon in public discourse in Morocco. They index an “affective disposition” (Ochs 1992:341) associated with male/male behavior, as does the performance of public blessing.²² Not only does the herbalist speak disrespectfully to an elder, but she orders him to change his body posture, and he complies. The gesture that she requires is one of openness and humility, in deference to God, but also to herself—even though men have rarely exhibited submissive behaviors to women in public before.

When those nearest to her have squatted down and offered up their open palms as she has directed, the herbalist continues her performance by delivering into their hands samples of her herbs, which resemble small black pellets. She then pours a single glass of tea that is passed from person to person. The audience eats together, washing down the remedy with a shared cup. Here again is a bodily index that calls upon social meanings; for the common ingestion of food is a symbol of sociability and friendship in Morocco. *Sharq-nah t’am* (“we shared food”) is a way of acknowledging bonds of loyalty and obligation. It is also a behavior that is indexically associated with women, as the designated gender responsible for nourishment. Although male herbalists sometimes use strategies of ingestion to effect their sales, women herbalists reappropriate this sign, making it a central aspect of their performance. Indeed, this herbalist capitalizes on the association of women and food preparation, invoking the expertise of a (very) old woman to further author-ize her remedy:

#4

Whoever wants to take some for his sons or for his daughters
or for his house, or for his workplace,
well, I prepared them,
but I didn’t work on them myself.

I gathered them.

I have a mother, my mother’s grandmother,
we call her our grandmother—*al-walida*.

I’m begging of you.

She is 103 years old.

She’s the one who cooked them.

And she cooked them in the water of the well,
and the water of the ironsmith,
and the water of zimzim,
and the water of goldsellers,
and the water of the sea.

She kneaded them.

God guard her children. Say Amen.

Amen.

#4

wa lli bgha y-ddi l-uwlad-u u y-ddi l-bnat-u
y-ddi l-dar-u y-ddi l-mahal-u,
rani, khdamt, u ma khdamt-humsh ana.

ana jm't-hum u 'and-i l-walida jddat mmui, jddat mmui, tan gulu jddat-na l-walida.
 ana mzaawga.
 mulat miyat 'am u tlatat s-səṇawat.
 hiyya lli təybat-hum.
 wa təybat-hum f-l-ma' ta' l-bir
 u l-ma' ta'l-ḥaddad.
 u l-ma' ta' zamzam
 u f-l-ma' dyaḷ dhaybiyya
 u l'ma' dyaḷ l-bhar fəsh 'ajnat-hum.
 ana llaḥ ya-hfud-ha l-ulidat-ha.
 gulu amin.
 amin.

Here gender is indexed referentially in the person of the grandmother (Silverstein 1976), the competent female elder, a symbol of feminine authority. Establishing personal credibility by invoking genealogies of authority is a common rhetorical strategy in oratory of this kind. Yet such lineages are conventionally traced through male ancestors by both men and women orators, as in the following assertions, both spoken by women herbalists in Beni Mellal:

#5

I have ten sons,
 praise God and thank him.
 I have men that are lions.
 I can't show them to you where they are [now],
 but if you [really] want me to show them to you, I will.

#5

'shra dyaḷ wlad 'nd-i.
 n-ḥmad rabbi wa n-shkru.
 wa 'and-i rjāl s-sbu'a,
 ma-n-qdarsh n-wərri-hum-lak fin kaynin
 ḥtta ila bghiti n-wərri-hum-lak, n-wərri-hum-lak.

"There are men behind me" (*moraia r-rijal*), yet another orator asserted to a client, "Do you think I'm just following this profession? Why my grandfather's grandfather followed it. . . . I'm a daughter of veins, not a daughter of diapers" (*t-shab-lak had l-mihna tab'a-ha ghir ana? tab'u-ha jddud jddud-i. ana bant l-'ruq, mashi bant l-khruq*). Here the quotation of authoritative language is complemented by an explicit identification with professional male herbalists using a rhetorical strategy that establishes intertextual proximity with the same (Briggs and Bauman 1992).²³ Yet the possibility clearly exists for asserting independence from tradition, appropriating its inherent authority in order to better contest it. V. N. Volosinov refers to this process as one of infiltration: "Language devises means for infiltrating reported speech with authorial retort and commentary in deft and subtle ways. The reporting context strives to break down the self-contained compactness of the reported speech, to resolve it, to obliterate its

boundaries” (Volosinov 1973:120–121). The herbalist appropriates male strategies for constructing authority via genealogical claim but switches the gender of the authority figure, acknowledging and even reifying feminine wisdom. Yet it is not coveted; the herbalist delineates the ingredients in her remedy, giving away her knowledge without fear of its appropriation by others (cf. Diouri 1984):

#6

Don't drink this sir,
 This isn't for drinking.
 This has might and acceptance and solicitude.
 If you want something to drink,
 here, I'll give you something to drink.
 Here you are.
 Here.
 If you want it now, put it in your pocket.
 Today I'm here. Tomorrow I'm in Fqih ben Salah.
 You're going to mix it with henna and the dirt of your footprint
 and a little bit of sugar.
 And carry it with you on your right side.
 If it doesn't illuminate things for you as the Prophet was illuminated,
 the Prophet will abandon me on the day of intercession.
 Your sons are fighting.
 Your son's wives are fighting.
 You're going to pound this in a mortar and put it in raw milk.
 Everyone should drink a little bit.
 Put it in a glass of water and everyone drink a bit.
 If your children keep fighting and don't listen to your words,
 if they don't obey you like a lamb who's following its mother,
 it will be my responsibility.
 If you want it for screaming and noise,
 if you want it for herding and agriculture,
 you're going to put it in a brazier
 and mix it with a little henna and 'ar'ar.
 If God doesn't fix things, you'll know that I'm an atheist,
 I'm not your sister.
 Well, compensate me with “God have mercy on the parents.”
God have mercy on the parents.
 You can gather them.
 Here you are.
 This is what's in it:
 It has well water,
 it has the water of the ironsmith,
 it has the blood of 'Id al-Kabir.
 It has the dirt of ants,
 it has hakma,
 the wise man's amber,
 the 'milk of care,'
 it has the 'seed of esteem,'

it has the 'taker of reason,'
 it has the 'mother of people.'
 It has masculine amber and 'gaping nails.'
 Whoever wants to gather them, I'll add my goodness to them.
 This is protection for *tqaf*.
 And whoever can't gather them,
 if you ask me, I'll give you some.
 Well, compensate me.
God have mercy on the parents.
 I didn't hear you at all!
God have mercy on the parents.

#6

ma t-shrabu-sh asidi
 hadi mashi t-shrib.
 hadi 'az u qubul u 'inaya.
 ila bghitu shi haja t-shrib.
 hana n-'ti-kum t-shurbu.
 ha ntuma hah.
 bghiti-ha daba, ddir-ha f-jib-ak.
 ha lyum, ha ghdda f-l-fqih bən salah.
 ghadi ddir m'a-ha l-hənnə u lga u l-'afta ta't rəjl-ak
 u shwiya ta' sukar
 u h̄məl-ha m'ak f-jiha limniyya.
 ila ma tfajat 'l-ik ki ma tfajat 'la sidina muḥammad,
 y-ghdab 'liyya n-nbi yum sh-shfa'a.
 'and-ak ulad-ak y-darbu
 'ayalat ulad-ak y-darbu.
 ghadi ddug-ha f-l-maḥraz u ddir-ha f-l-hlib khdar.
 kul wahəd y-shrab jghima.
 dir-ha f-kas ta' l-ma' u kul wahəd y-shrab jghima.
 ila bqaw y-darbu ulad-ak u ma y-sma'u klam-ak
 ma y-taw'u-k bhal l-khruf lli tab' m-muh.
 y bqa 'liyya taqlid.
 bghiti-ha l-ghut u sda'
 bghiti-ha l-ksiba u l-flaha
 ghadi ddir-ha f-l-majmr
 u ddir m'a-ha shwiya dyal l-hənnə u l-'ar'ar.
 ila ma qda llah l'gharad, 'raf-ni zindiyya.
 ana mashi kht-ak.
 wa khalsu-ni b-llah y-rḥam l-walidin.
llah y-rḥam l-walidin.
 t-qdar t-jma'-ha.
 ha nta ha ash fi-ha.
 fi-ha l-ma' ta' l-bir
 fi-ha l-ma' ta' l-ḥaddad
 fi-ha d-dam l-'id l-kabir
 fi-ha trab dyal n-nmal
 fi-ha l-hakma

luban l-hukama
 ḥlib l-hanana
 fi-ha ḥabbət l-‘az
 fi-ha ṣalb l-‘quwl
 fi-ha umm n-nas
 fi-ha luban dkar
 u mashduq dfar.
 lli bgha y-jm‘a-hum ma n-zid-hum ghir l-khir.
 hadi himaya l-tqaf.
 u lli ma qdarsh y-jəm‘a-hum,
 ila tlbtu-ni n-‘ti-kum shwiya.
 wa khlasu-ni.
llah y-rḥam l-walidin.
 ma sma‘t-kum walu.
llah y-rḥam l-walidin.

Elsewhere I have elaborated how the feminine “revoicing” of male rhetorical structures invokes the authority inherent in this traditional genre of speech, while also critiquing and challenging this authority (Kapchan 1993, 1996). By re-citing the formulaic “words of others” (in the genre of da‘wa, religious quotation, and the poetic parallelism characteristic of marketplace oratory), the woman herbalist gains access to public authority: she possesses “the word” (*and-ha l-kalma*), the art of speech, and the power such performed artistry brings. But such performances are not simple imitations or ventriloquizations. Indeed, women appropriate the genre of marketplace oratory, while infusing it with feminine difference; this process of revoicing is glimpsed in subtle intimations of parody and in the folds of discourse where one utterance or phrase may be read in two or more competing interpretive domains. Bakhtin refers to this phenomena as a “hybrid construction,” an utterance that has one syntactic form but that indexes two (or more) axiological belief systems (1981:304). Such constructions are the basis of parody. When one herbalist quotes the misogynistic verses of Sidi Abderahman al-Majdub, for example, a Sufi leader of the 16th century well known for his poetic sayings (see Scelles-Millie and Khelifa 1966), she is both aligning herself with a traditional genre and worldview and putting its mentality on hyperbolic display. “We women are hard” (*hna la‘yalat s‘ab*), she says to her audience and then cites:

#7
 If they love you, they’ll feed you
 and if they have you, they’ll ensorcel you.
 He who enters the woman’s market, beware!
 They’ll show you a ton of profit.
 and walk away with your salary.

#7
 ila ḥabbu-k y-wakklu-k
 wa ila karhu-k, y-saḥru-k.

ya ad-dakhəl suq an-nsa rədd bal-ək,
 y-biynu-lək mən ar-rbəḥ qanṭar
 wa y-khəsru-k fi ras mal-ək.

When these verses were supposedly first uttered centuries ago, the women's market was a metaphor for the feminine world. Now it has become a literal reality. The herbalist warns her (mostly male) audience against the ruses and power of women in the public domain, invoking the very discourses that historically have served to write women out of this domain. Embodying this metaphor, she also mocks it, putting it into comic and hybrid relief.

Emerging into the Public Domain

Such performative reorientations are effected in more than one semiotic venue, especially when it is necessary to couch implicit critiques of tradition in ephemeral expressions that, like incense, turn to smoke and make us unsure of what forms "really" took shape. Thus does the herbalist quoted above (example #1) act out afflictions related to sexuality, using deictic markers that anchor the discourse in her body and in the sensations of her audience, but that escape textualization. Her performance inscribes a new genre of feminine behavior into the repertoire of social practice. James Scott calls this the "hidden transcript" in cultural expression (1985), while other theorists refer to it as the non-dit, the unsaid (Becker 1984; cf. Mills 1991). Although textual metaphors predominate here, the body also effects such subversions; indeed, because textual lip service is often required in the acquisition of symbolic capital, it often "falls" to the body to mock what the tongue mimics. Such recorporealizations, or carnivalizations, have an impact on the political economy of performance (Gal 1989; Sherzer 1987a)—who is allowed to communicate what, to whom, and where. But unless the embodiment of this performance genre is taken into account, its relation to gendered practice is partly obscured, for it is in assuming the physical and affective dispositions of a historically male performative genre that the herbalist instantiates change and creativity on a *somatic* level, the level of affect (Csordas 1993).²⁴

Revoicing the verbal discourse of men, women orators also exaggerate the bodily dimensions of this discourse (some already indexically marked as feminine), thereby effecting a new affective body of public feminine authority. Such performances are then naturalized, becoming available for recontextualization (Bauman and Briggs 1990); that is, they form the "first-level" performative practices from which metaperformances are constructed. It is precisely at such junctures that the dialogic relations between performance and practice become salient. Focusing on the performed body elucidates the dialogic relation between performances and the habitual indexical relations of a social field (what Bourdieu, following Mauss, calls the *habitus*). Women's increasing visibility in the public domain in Beni Mellal (in positions in schools, post offices, banks, and elsewhere) affects people's attitudes toward women performers in the halqa,

facilitating their presence and naturalizing it. Yet despite the fact that the halqa is a place of verbal license, women's performances in the halqa are considered transgressive by most, shameful by some. This is because they are setting precedent in (re)voicing a discourse of the body to a mixed-gender audience. This is a class phenomenon, for market women comprise part of the *ṭabaqa sh'abiya*, the popular class, and their behaviors are more vulnerable to censure by the middle classes, who aspire to a more "classical" and less "grotesque" body (Bakhtin 1984b; cf. Stallybrass and White 1986). Yet such carnivalesque performances when enacted by men have been designated as paradigmatic of Moroccan cultural expression by (male) native artists and theorists. Even if market women's performances do not enter the symbolic repertoire from which cultural constructions of authenticity are created (many forces conspire against this), their performance of new dispositions of feminine authority (as well as men's changing responses to them) has a decided, if subtle, impact on intersubjective practices in both the local and translocal marketplace. In administering cures to men, the herbalist not only performs a new authoritative role for women but challenges the physical and psychological attitudes that circumscribe them in particular domains of discourse and not in others. As one other herbalist says: *kan-tkallam m'a-k b-l-f'al wa l-qul* (I'm talking to you with doing and saying). Her words, her herbs, and her embodiment of physical dispositions of power and authority work together to change the relation of gender to genre and history.

Practicing Performance

Performance is the center of a chain of relationships linking genre, gender, history, ethnography, and social (embodied) practice. In the performance above, women's appropriation of a traditionally male genre works to inscribe their communication in a symbolic domain so replete with sounds, smells, tastes, and words that it has become paradigmatic of Moroccan theatrical performance generally.²⁵ The metacarnival that characterizes Moroccan "festive theater," like the halqa performances that provide their inspiration, are two dimensions of an "economy of performance" that has expanded to include television and radio programs, as well as published play scripts (Saddiki 1991; see Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994). The women in the Beni Mellal halqa utilize all the resources available in the oral genre (poetry, humor, parody, religious authority, social critique) while adding a new function—the construction of feminine public authority—to their repertoire. Revoicing the words of men, they also inhabit them bodily, giving different shape to traditional conceptions of artistry and power. While this is accomplished in a specific performative context, its repercussions nonetheless seep through the borders of the halqa to take on symbolic life in the minds of spectator-participants and their kin. That my recordings of women orators were a popular item among the community of women I knew is only one small example of this.

Through the experience of heightened aesthetic expression, artists, actors, ethnographers, and analysts enter into dialogue with the past, performing their parts in cultural scripts wherein emergence tracks the future. This is as true of ethnographic performance as any other: the poetic transcription of ephemeral expressions of verbal art leaves traces for future (Moroccan and other) students of culture that outlive any single interpretation (Hammoudi 1988).²⁶ Interrogating the way meaning and feeling is embodied in performance, however, grounds analysis in a particular configuration of signs, that unfolds into a thick descriptive phenomenology of performances (Merleau-Ponty 1962; cf. Geertz 1973).²⁷ Such performative ethnography incorporates indigenous theory while indexing history as embodied in social practice. To understand history is also to perceive emergence and creativity as they are performed.

Notes

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¹See Bourdieu 1977 on practice; cf. Bauman 1986b; Flores 1994:277.

²See Anderson 1983 on the notion of the "imagined community." Recent explorations into the subject of genre include Abrahams 1985; Abu-Lughod 1986, 1993; Appadurai 1991; Bauman 1992; Besnier 1989; Briggs 1992; Briggs and Bauman 1992; Caraveli 1986; Caton 1990; Derrida 1980; Dorst 1983; Feld 1990, 1995; Gal 1990; Hanks 1987; Haring 1992a, 1992b; Haviland 1986; Herzfeld 1985; Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1989; Malti-Douglas 1991; McDowell 1985; Perloff 1992; Sherzer 1987a; S. Stewart 1991a, 1991b; Stoeltje 1988; Todorov 1990; Trawick 1986.

³See Bauman and Briggs 1990; and chapter 1 of Briggs 1988 for a review of the scholarly literature on performance.

⁴Scholars interested in texts and their variants had already developed a rich tradition of studying artists and their repertoires (Dégh 1969). On context, see Malinowski 1954[1926], Ben-Amos 1993, and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1975.

⁵Both of these scholars were exploring the intimate relation between the "narrated event," the form and content of discourse, and the "narrative event," the pragmatic context of its utterance (Bauman 1986a; Jakobson 1960). The links between these two discursive domains may be grasped in what C. S. Peirce has called relations of indexicality, that is, causal and associative relations between sign and object in the performative event (Peirce 1965:143; cf. Kratz 1994; Silverstein 1976). The other terms in this particular trichotomy of the sign are "icon" and "symbol." Iconicity is a relation between sign and meaning based on *resemblance*. Peirce uses "symbol" conventionally to mean "a sign which refers to the object that it denotes by virtue of a law, usually an association of general ideas" (Peirce 1965:143). These three aspects of the sign imply each other.

⁶See V. Turner 1967, 1988; cf. Abrahams 1987; MacAloon 1984; Schechner 1977, 1985.

⁷Here Turner distinguished between liminal performances that made sense of social structure by providing an example of antistructure, and liminoid performances, which, he said, were characteristic of late capitalist societies and which actually contained the possibility not only for social critique but for social subversion (V. Turner 1974).

⁸There are several examples in contemporary ethnography of how highly codified ritual is used to instantiate, maintain, or challenge existing power structures. See Comaroff 1985; Combs-Schilling 1989.

⁹Ricoeur defines structuralism as a necessary *stage* mediating between explanation and understanding in what he terms the “hermeneutical arc” (1979:97).

¹⁰The linguistic and ritual branches of performance are not mutually exclusive; indeed, each contains the seeds of the other. The first, nurtured in the ethnography of speaking (Bauman and Sherzer 1989[1975]) and literary criticism (Abrahams 1976; Babcock 1977), has led to the elaboration of what Sherzer (1987b), Urban (1991) and others have referred to as a discourse-centered approach to culture—an approach that begins from the premise that culture is “located” in discrete utterances. The second branch of performance studies is less logocentric; admitting that speech is a form of social action, it explores dimensions of expression such as affect (Besnier 1990; Brenneis 1990; Irvine 1982) aesthetics (Brenneis 1987; Briggs 1992; Dorst 1989, 1990; Feld 1988; S. Stewart 1984), and the body (Babcock 1994; Noyes 1993, Young 1993, 1994; see also Desjarlais 1992; Jackson 1989; Kratz 1994; Ness 1992; Sklar 1994; Stoller 1989; cf. Birdwhistell 1970; Goffman 1974). It is in the rapprochement of these two directions—performance as utterance (or discourse) and performance as embodied process—that a revitalized notion of performance comes into focus.

¹¹For example, see Caton 1990; Feld 1995; Gross et al. 1994; Limón 1989; and Tsing 1993, 1994.

¹²What Bakhtin (1981) refers to as the ideological or “chronotopic” dimensions.

¹³Bourdieu accounts for the process of change in the expressive economy this way: he says that “whenever the adjustment between structures and dispositions is broken, the transformation of the generative schemes is doubtless reinforced and accelerated by the dialectic between the schemes immanent in practice and the norms produced by a reflection on practices, which impose *new meanings* on them by reference to *alien structures*” (1977:20; emphasis mine).

¹⁴The subject of what constitutes national, religious, or ethnic theater asserts itself most strongly in conditions such as colonialism and postcolonialism, when different forms of essentialism (Spivak 1993) are used to rally popular sentiment around sociopolitical issues of identity. The delineation of Moroccan theater as rooted in halqa performances is not accepted by everyone. The manifesto written by Berrechid is, however, widely known and respected, if debated.

¹⁵The first production of Molière’s *L’Avare* took place in 1848, a production put on by the Lebanese-born Marun El Naqqash (Chafik 1988–89).

¹⁶Saddiki, as well, incorporated traditional forms of celebration into his theater, such as the yearly festival of Sultan at-Tolba in which students at the religious university in Fes, the Qarawiyyin, would recite oral poetry that mocked the authority of elders and institutions. His was a theater enacted in the street, a theater that blurred the boundaries between performers and audience.

¹⁷My use of the masculine here is deliberate; historically performers in the halqa have been men. It is only recently that women have begun to appear on the scene.

¹⁸It is important to note the assertion of the respected Moroccan historian, Abdallah al-‘Arawi, that the comparison of Moroccan national theater with what he calls a theater of farce (*théâtre de farce*, by which he means festive theater) is erroneous (1982:197–198). He finds festive theater an example of “folklore,” destined to disappear. His use of folklore is pejorative, recalling Marxian notions of *méconnaissance* (see also Webber 1991).

¹⁹This is a regional phenomenon. Women orators are found in the Middle Atlas region of Morocco in open-air marketplaces. They are also found in outlying metropolitan areas such as Temara, outside the capital of Rabat. In Marrekech, the city most renowned for its halqa, there were no women orators in 1994–95, but there were women clairvoyants (not a new phenomenon) and women performers (shikhat) dancing and singing in the halqa. This latter event is unprecedented in Morocco (cf. Kapchan 1994).

²⁰In this and the following transcriptions, audience responses are rendered in italics. Each performance first appears in translation and then is followed by the Arabic version. All performances were recorded during fieldwork in Morocco in 1991 and 1994–95.

²¹This title literally denotes a descendant of the Prophet. It is used as a term of honor.

²²See Grima 1992 on the subtle distinctions between private and public in women's expressive performances in Paxtun.

²³Briggs and Bauman assert that, since all notions of genre rely on an implicit or explicit relationship to some prior discourse, genres may be considered in light of a measured "gap" between genre and text (1992:149).

²⁴Studies of affect in recent scholarship have emphasized the discourse of emotions over actual somatic experience (but see Csordas 1993). Although "discourse" is not limited to verbal practice (see Lutz and Abu-Lughod 1990, who follow Foucault), the ethereality of the emotions prompts the analyst to approach them as a language, a text to be read and interpreted rather than a body to be felt and imagined. The error here is one of objectification. The experiencing of the emotional crescendos and diminuendos of a performance engages the analyst in a self-reflexive ethnography, where sweat, heart-rate, fear, or bliss implicate her in the performance itself (Sklar 1994).

²⁵Many Moroccan men remember spending so much time in the halqa as children that it takes on gargantuan proportion in their imaginations. Because traditionally no women were present in the halqa, it also represents a young boy's entry into the world of men.

²⁶See Sherzer (1983) and Tedlock (1983) on the poetic transcription of verbal texts.

²⁷Merleau-Ponty locates the meeting of subjectivity and objectivity in *perception*, which is at once individual and social (unlike Sartre, who condemns the subject to existential solipsism). Because of his belief in the continuity of subjectivity and objectivity, Merleau-Ponty recommends a descriptive phenomenology, that is, one that begins with an elaborate and close description of lived experience (*lebenswelt*, the lived world). This experience of intersubjectivity, he asserts, begins with the body but does not stop there; it includes language, interpretations, meanings, and ambiguities (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Only when perception has been described from a bodily perspective, however, is it possible to enter the field of hermeneutics.

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