Reinventing Ethnopoetics

Abstract: Ethnopoetics in its Hymesian mode has primarily been an intervention into the printed form of texts, a way of (re)arranging the transcript of an event of oral narration so as to recover “the literary form in which the native words had their being” (Hymes 1981, 384). Building on Hymes’s legacy, I seek to develop new analytic tools and transcription practices that are useful for studying contemporary transformations of narrative in multilingual speech communities undergoing language shift and obsolescence. This alternative approach, which originated in my attempts to capture an elderly narrator’s frequent switching back and forth between narration in Kiksht (Wasco-Wishram Chinookan) and English, seeks to re-orient ethnopoetics from a recuperative focus on past narrative practices to a conceptual framework that enables field researchers to take into consideration the shifting linguistic environment(s) in which narration continues to take place in the present. A commentary to this essay by Richard Bauman appears later in this special issue.

Assessing the legacy of Dell Hymes (1927–2009) in ethnopoetics should entail assessing ethnopoetics more broadly, as a ‘legacy’ in its own right within American cultural and linguistic anthropology since the 1960s. For indeed, ethnopoetics in the broad sense emerged more as a movement than as another subfield of (linguistic) anthropology, and it emerged at the same time and among the same generational cohort that produced Reinventing Anthropology (Hymes 1972), “the ‘anti-textbook’ of anthropology’s then mid-career political Left” (Silverstein 2010, 935). Like Reinventing Anthropology, ethnopoetics—the term was coined in 1968 by Jerome Rothenberg (Quasha 1976, 65)—emerged in the context of a generational struggle between practitioners working in a number of different but overlapping fields of inquiry and expressive...
practice: academic anthropology, folklore, literary criticism, poetry, and what we now call performance art. Today we are separated from this period by at least two (demographic) generations, hence the need to ask, in the conclusion below, what parts of this legacy are still usable and active for students of narrative and other discourse practices today.

As a set of activities centered on verbal genres mostly of non-Western, non-literate peoples, ethno poetics is rather unlike the other anthropological specializations whose names likewise begin with *ethno*- and which used to be grouped under the heading of ‘ethnoscience’: ethnobotany, ethnozoology, ethnoastronomy, ethnomedicine, and so forth. Most of these take as their subject matter (lexically) explicit, formal knowledge about domains of human activity and/or perceptual experience (plants, animals, celestial bodies, etc.), the nomenclature of which had already been formalized within Western, unprefixed ‘science’ when the anthropologists came a-calling.

But at least in its Hymesian mode, as verse analysis, ethno poetics has not primarily involved the ethnographic study of nonliterate peoples’ explicit ideas about narrative, as reflected, perhaps, in native terminologies. It has, rather, been an intervention into the presentational (printed) form of texts, a way of arranging the transcript of an event of oral narration so as to reflect or recuperate the true rhetorical architecture of denotational text, and in so doing to recover “the literary form in which the native words had their being” (Hymes 1981, 384; see Blommaert 2009, 271).

There are two implicit claims here: one is that it is possible to arrive at a single final arrangement of a transcript that reflects on the page the rhetorical or poetic structure of an(y) oral performance; another is the idea that in doing so, a scholar has restored or recovered a native voice. Whatever one thinks about the validity of these claims, there is no doubt that Hymes was committed to both of them. Indeed, one can observe a fundamental shift in Hymes’s own work on materials in Chinookan (and an increasing number of other languages): from a focus on the event-bound interactional dynamics of narrative as *performance* (e.g., Hymes [1975] 1981), he moved to a focus on the rhetorical architecture of denotational text. To clarify matters, it might help to identify two distinct senses of the term:

- **ethno poetics**
  - ethnographic investigation of ideas about and evaluations of individual narrative performances and/or narration in general in the community from which the
source texts emerge, including native vocabulary pertaining to parts of narratives (e.g., titles) and acts of narration (e.g., *verba dicendi*), and especially including information on (named) speech genres, their performance conditions, etc.;

ethnopoetics$_2$ “the recuperative restudy of the textual organization of originally oral literary forms of Native American and other peoples so as to make patent and to explicate their rhetorical power as verbal art.” (Silverstein 2010, 933)

Ethnopoetics$_1$, then, fits more easily into the set containing ethnobotany, ethnozoology, and similar (sub)fields; it also overlaps with another field of which Hymes was a founding figure, the ethnography of speaking (or of communication; see Hymes 1962, 1964). Ethnopoetics$_2$ is focused on texts themselves, their rhetorical architecture and presentational form.

Hymes made signal contributions to ethnopoetics$_1$ in his work from the 1950s into the 1970s (e.g., Hymes 1959, 1966, [1975] 1981), but concentrated almost exclusively on ethnopoetics$_2$ after his discovery in the mid- to late 1970s of the principles of what he called “verse analysis.” More succinctly:

ethnopoetics$_1$ “study of the oral poetics of indigenous peoples and ethnopoetics$_2$ their literary monuments.” (Silverstein 2010, 936n3)

As will become clear, I think this dichotomy is a false one; it is nevertheless helpful in organizing the discussion, partly because it was, as I also hope to suggest, never adequately resolved in Hymes’s own work.

My purpose in this paper is to build upon Hymes’s contributions to ethnopoetics, and to propose a set of transcription and text-formatting practices for capturing on the page dimensions of the poetic structure of oral narration that are not reflected adequately or systematically in Hymesian verse analysis. My broader aim is to contribute to the development of an analytic framework that can enable field researchers to take into consideration the shifting linguistic environment in which narration takes place. The material comes from my own fieldwork with speakers of Kiksht (Wasco-Wishram Chinookan), the language and the textual tradition that absorbed so much of Hymes’s prodigious scholarly and creative energies. In the conclusion I take a brief look at ethnopoetics conceived in broadly cultural terms and try to place Hymes’s work within it.
Contra puntal Coyote Stories

During the 1980s, over several summers of fieldwork at Warm Springs Reservation in central Oregon, I became acquainted with Mrs. Lucinda Smith (née Scott), a fluent Wasco speaker then in her eighties; the circumstances of our first meeting are described elsewhere (Moore 1993, 213ff). With her late husband Alfred Smith, she had raised a large family and helped to run a cattle-ranching operation of considerable size located on an allotment of high sagebrush prairie about twenty miles to the west of “the Agency,” as the reservation’s main population center is known.

In 1983 I found her living with a recently divorced grown son in a small, detached house on “the Senior Citizens’ loop,” a cul-de-sac of 1970s-era federal housing built atop a small hill a stone’s throw from the Agency. Attached to the house was a carport beneath whose roof sat a large, gleaming late-model Buick sedan, which she had recently bought at a dealership in the nearby off-reservation town of Madras, Oregon, paying for it with wads of cash retrieved from a beaded bag. She didn’t drive; the Buick was there so that one or another of her adult children could drive her, in regal fashion, to Portland or Yakima to visit relatives or go shopping. Her son worked for a tribally owned timber company and was away (“in the woods,” as she put it) from before dawn until late afternoon each day. I would come to her house once or twice each week in the early afternoon, usually bearing some small gift of fresh fruit or other edibles. We would sit at her kitchen table or side by side on her sofa; she knew I was interested in her language, and sometimes we engaged in the standard kind of linguistic elicitation or related activities.

Since she had spontaneously narrated (in English) an episode about Coyote the first time we met, I knew that she was not only conversant in the mythology, but also willing and able to assume responsibility for narrating it (Bauman 1977; Hymes [1975] 1981), and so between 1983 and the time of her death in 1986 I recorded her narrating the Wasco Coyote cycle in full on four separate occasions. Later, I discovered that Michael Silverstein had recorded another complete (and quite long) version of her Coyote cycle in 1972, when she still lived “up the ranch.”

Coyote cycles—loosely connected series of episodes centering on the trickster-transformer figure Coyote and “telling how [he] traveled all the way up the Columbia river, transforming monsters and instruc-
ing the people in the various arts of life” (Sapir 1907, 542)—will be familiar to students of American Indian mythologies of the region (cognate episodes are attested for nearby Sahaptin- and Salishan-speaking groups), and familiar as well to readers of Hymes’s many studies of Chinookan narrative traditions (e.g., Hymes [1975] 1981). Though not cosmogonic in the strict sense, Coyote cycles recount how the world as we know it took its current shape. The setting of the episodes is

a time antedating the present one when animals walked about as men, though having approximately the same mental and, to a large extent, physical characteristics as now. At that time, when there were no Indians, properly speaking, in the country, but only anthropomorphic animals, many things were not as they should be, and, in order to make the country fit for habitation by the Indians destined to hold it, it was necessary for a culture-hero or transformer to rectify the weak points in creation. (Sapir 1907, 542)

If Coyote in the guise of culture-hero or transformer “is distinctly the benefactor of mankind,” Coyote in trickster mode is “often . . . conceived of as cunning, deceitful, and gluttonous,” an “insufferable marplot” who is “at the same time . . . indescribably obscene” (543).

Mrs. Smith’s renditions of the Coyote cycle turned out to be different in a number of ways from the texts I had encountered in the canon—for that is the proper word—of Chinookan mythology as represented in the work of Franz Boas (1891, 1901), Edward Sapir (1909), Melville Jacobs (1958), David French (1958), and others, to say nothing of the then-recent work of Hymes in ethnopoetics (e.g., 1981). In Mrs. Smith’s tellings, for instance, Coyote the culture-hero or transformer was nowhere to be found. Rather, the deceitful, gluttonous, insufferable marplot was everywhere, and many of the episodes featured deeds that might well qualify as “indescribably obscene,” were they not in fact described in fairly direct terms (and often, in two languages) by my interlocutor—an octogenarian, matriarch, and staunch Presbyterian.

In addition, Mrs. Smith did not localize the various episodes in her Coyote cycles to specific, named sites along the Columbia River. Such localizations are common in the Wishram Coyote cycle recorded by Sapir (1909) and in the closely cognate Clackamas cycle recorded by Jacobs (1958). But Mrs. Smith belonged to one of the first generations of people who were born and raised on the Warm Springs Reservation, one hundred miles south of the Columbia River; unlike many
men, who might have spent part of every year on the river (during fishing season), she remained on the reservation virtually all of her life, as she explained in response to a direct question from Michael Silverstein in 1972:

MS: Last summer you were telling me that qanúčk ['myth'] about isk’úlia kʷadau ikʷálali ['Coyote and the Dangerous Being']

LS: ikʷálali? [The Dangerous Being?]

MS: Yeah. Where wás that on the river, do you know that?

LS: Huh-uh. I don’t even know. The people that used to live ‘long the river, I guess théy know about thát. But I never live around thére, my folks, well, théy all moved out hère and we [were] raised here.

MS: Oh, so when they used to tell you a qanúčk, they didn’t tél ł you where that wás.

LS: No, they never tell me where, they just sáy it, ‘n thát’s áll. Well, wé never think nothing like that would évér be ásked, where they wére, or where.¹

The third—and most obvious—difference between these narratives and those in published collections was the fact that in all four versions of the cycle she recounted for me, Mrs. Smith alternated between narration in Kiksht and English. My facility and fluency in Kiksht improved over time, and there is much less English in the two versions from 1984—and still less in the 1985 version—than there is in the 1983 telling. However, when I brought a (non-Kiksht speaking) female friend along to visit Mrs. Smith in 1986, the story was almost entirely in English again (with many of the more risqué incidents glossed over quickly, if not eliminated). The version she recounted for Silverstein in 1972—perhaps not surprisingly, given the season (winter) and Silverstein’s obviously high level of fluency in Kiksht—was almost entirely in Kiksht, though not without a number of English-coded asides.

Close examination of the full corpus of Mrs. Smith’s Coyote cycles reveals that her narrative code-switching follows a general pattern: presentation of the direct speech of characters (including Coyote) is given in Kiksht, with or without a directly quoted English equivalent; narration of characters’ movements and non-speech behaviors may be in Kiksht or in English; metanarrative asides and other out-of-frame remarks are most often in English (see Moore 1993 for a detailed analysis).
In all—and I think the corpus of Mrs. Smith’s narrations, spanning a fourteen-year period, provides a basis for assessing her narrative style—we can see that her Coyote cycles were presented in a manner that we might call contrapuntal. The musical analogy is far from perfect, but it is meant in part to recall Karl Reisman’s discussion of “contrapuntal conversation” in the West Indies:

In a brief conversation with me, a girl called to someone on the street, made a remark to a small boy, sang a little, told a child to go buy bread, etc., all the while continuing the thread of her conversation about her sister. (Reisman 1974, 114)

Is it possible to reconcile such a contrapuntal style of narration with the requirements of Hymesian verse analysis? Verse analysis, it will be recalled, focuses on uncovering in a monologic text lineaments of verse structure whose “recurrence at all levels of organization . . . makes the pattern seemingly inescapable and convincing,” with the result that “at each level at which the pattern applies, it segments and organizes the material without discontinuity, without leftovers” (Hymes 1977, 440).

Consider the following brief episode from the first time Mrs. Smith narrated the Coyote cycle for me, on August 25, 1983. The passage is reproduced below in (1a) more or less as it appears in my field notebook (with errors corrected, of course).


(1a) As “prose”

aːɡ[a]+aštúy[a]’aštúya, they’d come to—what was it first? Oh! They come to [Now the-two would be going along, going along . . . ]
some tróut, físh, swimmin’ ‘round, swimmin’ ‘round.  aːɡa dauda anuɡʷigáya! [Now I’ll grab these!]
akádaqi dau[a]‘anaglgáya, alma naim[a]’anxilmùxmà Coyote says. [I’ll grab this trout, then I alone will eat it!]
Raccóon knows hów to catch ’em, him! Hé just catch ’em éasy!
He’d láugh at him. kinwáː: he tried to sneak úp.  au, kínwa alik’iłxiyáːː; [Vainly . . . ]
[Yes, vainly he’d crawl, ]
akádaqi ačaglgáya. āːnɡad aksùbnáya, alaɣldáɬqá.
[he’d grab (at) a trout. She’d already jump, she’d leave him.]
ağa p’áː:l[a]+ isk’úlia kʷaba. His güts ráttlin’. Hungry!
[Now Coyote stopped there.]

Right away one notices much elision of adjacent identical vowel segments across word boundaries (marked here with square brackets and a plus-sign in superscript); one also notes the rapidity and apparent seamlessness of Mrs. Smith’s alternation between languages.

Now consider the same passage, presented in the style of Dennis Tedlock (e.g., 1983). In (1b) below, line breaks are determined solely on the basis of pauses and/or breath groups. I have employed capitalization to indicate relatively louder utterances (or syllables) in English, and a larger font size for relatively louder syllables in Kiksht; markedly quieter utterances are given in a smaller font, and one fleeting bit of allegro narration in near-falsetto is presented in superscript; to signal rhetorically lengthened (i.e., non-phonemic) vowels here I use multiple alphabetic symbols rather than a mark for length. All the lines are positioned flush left, in part to emphasize the relentless linearity of this mode of ethno poetic presentation. In (1b), then, I try to represent what Mrs. Smith sounded like as she narrated the passage.

(1b) As Tedlockian oral poetry

aaq+ aštúy[a]+ aštúya they’d come to—
[Now the two would be going along, going along . . .]

What was it first?

Oh!

They come to some TROUT, FISH, swimmin’ ‘round swimmin’ ‘round

áːɡa dauda-ktənə-
[Now these whatchacallem]

anugʷigáya!
[I’m gonna grab ’em!]

akádaqi dau[a]+ anaglgáy[a]+ alma naim[a]+ anxlmuxmà!
[I’ll grab this trout, then I alone will eat it!]

Coyote says.

RacCOON knows HOW to catch ’em, HIM!

HE just catch ’em EASY!

He’d láugh at him.
kinwaaa *he tried to*

[Vainly ...]

*sneak up.*

au, kínw[a]+ alik’ilxiyaa -ktyëna- akádaqı ačąglgáya.

[Yes, vainly he’d crawl, whatchacallit, he’d grab a trout.]

āāāngad+ aksūbnáya, alaiğldáqlqa.

[She’d already have long since jumped (away), she’d leave him.]

aɣa p’áaal[a]+ isk’úlia k*aba.

[Now Coyote was all alone there, he quit.]

*His guts rāttlin’.*

*Hungry!*

Several features leap out from this presentation: first, many of the poetic ‘lines’ here—determined on the basis of prosody alone—feature more than one verb. The discourse particle *aغا* ‘now’ appears in line-initial position (as one would expect on the basis of Hymesian principles), but in one case (in the fifth line) it bears a marked stress on its first syllable. Finally, what should be done about the discourse particle *au* ‘yes’ that begins the fifteenth line?

In (1c) below I present the same passage, now as the output of Hymesian verse analysis. The reader will notice first that all of Mrs. Smith’s English has been quietly excised (and one line of Kiksht has been supplied, inside square brackets). Rhetorical vowel length is marked (now with a colon), but Mrs. Smith’s frequent elisions of adjacent identical vowels across word boundaries are not, creating the appearance of a text carefully enunciated at dictation speed. In keeping with the methods of Hymesian verse analysis, lines are divided according to the principle of one verb (or predicate) per line, despite the fact that a majority of Mrs. Smith’s prosodic lines in this section contain more than one verb.

(1c) *As Hymesian measured verse*

a:ɱa aštíya,  

aštíya,  

[aštíqʷaqʷam itkádaqı].  

“a:ɱa dauda anugʷigáya!  

“akádaqı daua anagłgáya,  

“alma naima anxlµuxmà.”  

Now the two would go,  

they’d go,  

[they’d come to some trout].  

“Now I’ll grab these!  

“I’ll grab this trout,  

“then I alone shall eat it.”
kínwa alik’iłšiyá::,  
akádaqí ačąglgáya.  
á::ngad aksùbnáya,  
alaigldáqlqa.  
nga p’á::la isk’úlia kwaba.  

Vainly he’d crawl,  
he’d grab (at) a trout.  
She’d have already jumped,  
she’d leave him.  
Now Coyote stopped there.

Notice how perfectly the textual arrangement exemplifies the three- 
and five-line verse patterns discovered by Hymes in his work on Chi-
nookan narratives: two verses of three lines each, both with ağa in 
line- and verse-initial position, and a final verse of five lines, with the 
pivotal middle line serving both as ‘outcome’ of the first triad and 
‘onset’ of the second.

Finally, below in (1d) is the same passage one more time, now in 
the format I eventually devised to cope with Mrs. Smith’s contrapun-
tal style of narration. The transcription format used below (and in 
other publications, e.g., Moore 1993, 2009) arranges the discourse 
into three tiers or columns of indented type in an attempt to render 
visually patent the fact that there seem to be (minimally) three dis-
tinct speech-event modalities constantly in play in the transcript: (1) 
a bilingual conversation between Mrs. Smith and me about linguistic 
and other details of the story at hand; (2) Mrs. Smith’s narration of 
the plot events of “Raccoon and Coyote” in the third person; and (3) 
her use of directly quoted speech to present the utterances of the 
characters in the story.

The leftmost column or tier of transcription represents interlocu-
tory speech deictically grounded in the immediate event of speaking 
(E₁ in the notation of Jakobson [1957] 1990); included here are my 
own responses and reactions, along with the audience-like reactions 
provided by the narrator herself and various asides, excurses, and 
metanarrative comments directed to me as Mrs. Smith’s interlocutor 
and co-conversationalist. The second column represents narrative 
discourse given in the third person (and usually in the past tense): 
description of characters’ movements, actions, and behaviors, and so 
on, including verba dicendi and other methods used by the narrator 
to frame the directly quoted utterances of the story’s characters (E²/ 
E”). The third column from the left contains only the directly quoted 
speech of characters (E‘/Eⁿ/E“). Line breaks roughly represent pauses 
in speech, though no systematic attempt has been made to capture 
subtle differences in pause length.
In Goffman’s (1981) terms, Mrs. Smith is the Animator, Author, and Principal of all interlocutory speech given in the first (leftmost) column; she is the Animator and Principal of (non-quoted narrative) speech given in the second (middle) column; but in the third (rightmost) column of directly quoted character speech, Mrs. Smith functions only as the Animator—the character whose speech is presented is the Author and Principal.

(1d) As narration across multiple speech-event modalities

[Interlocutory (E*)]
[narrative (E'/E*)]
[Quotational (E'/E'/E'ⁿ)]

LS: aːɡʷ aʃtúy[ɑː] aʃtúya they’d come to—
[Now the two would be going along, going along . . .]

What was it first?  
Oh!  
They come to some trout, fish, swimmin’ ‘round swimmin’ ‘round.

“áːgə dauda -ktyena-
[“Now these, whatchacallem,]
“anug“igáya!
[“I’m gonna grab ’em!]

RM: mm  

anxlµxtµ!”
[“I’ll grab a trout, then I alone will eat it!”]

Coyote says.  

RM: uh-huh, uh-huh.  

LS: Raccón knows how to catch ’em, him!
He just catch ’em easy!
He’d laugh at him.

kinwáː:: he tried to
[Vainly . . . ]
sneak up.

au,
[Yes,]
kínw[a]+ alik’ítxiyá::, -ktyena-,
[Vainly he’d crawl, whatchacallit,]
RM: ā::
[Ye::s]
LS: akádaqí ačąglgáya.
[He’d grab a trout.]
ā::ngad+ aksúbnáya,
[She’d already have long since jumped (away).]
alaígldáqlqá.
[she’d leave him.]
aga p’á::l[a]+ isk’úlia k=aba.
[Now Coyote stopped there, he gave up.]

*His güts ráttlin’.*

RM: mm
LS: *Hungry!*

The format adopted here allows one to observe Mrs. Smith tacking back and forth between her footing in the here-and-now (E+) of the bilingual conversation with me, and her role as the primary producer of the there-and-then (E+/En) of the story, within which is located a second here-and-now, that of the characters as co-conversationalists (E+/En/Ens). These three footings or speech-event modalities are kept formally distinct at some points, and formally merge with one another at other points, but in an orderly way.

Rather than offering a final and definitive representation of the true rhetorical architecture of textual form, the format adopted here is designed explicitly to foreground those points in a narrative performance where its own categories break down, bringing our attention to those places where the boundary between a narrating voice and the voice of a character becomes hard to draw (Bakhtin [1934–1935] 1981). In line 98 above, for example, the framing line *Coyote says* is given in English, suggesting that it could belong to interlocutory speech addressed to me in the event. I have, however, assigned it here to the narrative speech column. In a similar way, we notice that in line 105 Mrs. Smith seems to preface a passage of narrative description with *au*, ‘yes’. Here, the availability of multiple versions of the same story by the same narrator provides clarification: every time she narrated this incident, Mrs. Smith had trouble retrieving the Kiksht verb meaning
‘crawl’ ([]₃-√k‘iłḵi); here she slows down noticeably in line 103, after *kinwa* (‘in vain’), pausing for an instant, then inserting the English *he tried to / sneak up*. After a second very brief pause she has retrieved the word, says (to herself) *au* (‘yes!’), and proceeds.

Even more important, this format allows us to see how speech in each of the three modalities can serve as a metadiscourse with respect to speech in the others. It is possible, for example, to step out of the narrative modality (*E*'/*E⁵*) and back into the conversation (*E*) to comment on the story and/or the characters, perhaps in a language like English that one shares with one’s interlocutor—indeed, this practice is common and ever-present in many if not all storytelling traditions, and it is centrally involved in on-the-spot translations, glossing of particular words, and so on; it also figures when narrators are filling in ‘background information’ and doing speech repair (see Başgöz 1986 for a Turkish case). Mrs. Smith’s metanarrative coda to the passage presented above, for example—*his guts rattlin’ / Hungry!*—provides a nuanced gloss of the complexly interrelated senses of the Kiksht particle *p’ala* in the immediately preceding narrative discourse, which can mean ‘he stopped, came to rest; relented; gave up; quit’.

The next example (2), taken from the second episode of Mrs. Smith’s 1983 Coyote cycle, shows that it is also possible to ‘translate’ a directly quoted passage and simultaneously to comment on it in a way that makes clear that the narrator qua co-conversationalist (in *E*) is merely the Goffmanian Animator of character speech (in *E*'/*E⁵*/*E⁶*). In this episode of the Coyote cycle (as Mrs. Smith told it), Raccoon and Coyote come upon five girls—five sisters—jumping in and out of the water on the opposite bank of the Columbia River. The girls are scantily clad in buckskin:

(2) *From Lucinda Smith, “Coyote and the Five Sisters,” August 25, 1983*

[INTERLOCUTORY (*E*)]

[NARRATIVE (*E*'/*E⁵*)]

[QUOTATIONAL (*E*'/*E⁵*/*E⁶*)]

“ank’ilxiyá:: alma kʷaba anl-ktyena- 195
[“I’ll crawl over there, and I’ll whatchacall]

“ƛ’mànƛ’mán anluxʷa ɨłnəmšḵə ɬaxiaič!” 196
[“I’ll finger the genitals of those women!”]
Mrs. Smith’s translation in lines 198–199 here—glossing a particle-verb construction (ƛ’mànƛ’mán [λ2-λ3-λ6-ƛx7 ‘λ2 finger the genitals of [λ3])—achieves by a kind of inversion of indirect free style (style indirect libre) a perfect insulation of the two speech-event roles: when Coyote is being directly quoted, it is he, not Mrs. Smith, who is speaking (and ‘meaning’) various indescribably (almost) obscene things.

It is also possible to comment on the conversational matrix (E*) of the storytelling event from within the world inhabited by the characters, treating that event and its participant alignments as an object-language to be regimented, as it were, by the characters as co-conversationalists. A clear example of this emerged the following summer (1984), when I persuaded Mrs. Smith to narrate the Coyote cycle again for me, starting from the beginning. This time the opening episode, “Raccoon and Coyote,” contained a new element:

(3) From Lucinda Smith, “Raccoon and Coyote,” July 10, 1984

[interlocutory (E*)]
[narrative (E*/E*)]
[quotational (E*/E*/E*)]

LS:  galiӦčuíx.
[He (Coyote) came down (river).]

RM:  á:
[Ye:s.]

LS:  a:::ğa
[No:::w]
iaq’áima!
[He’s all by himself!]
kʷapt gàliguqám –ktyena-
[Then he met up with whatzisname.]
iq’álalas,
[Raccoon,]
—thá’t’s Raccón.
And then—

And then iq’álalas gačiúlxám,  
[And then Raccoon told him,]

“áwia náika dáya dáuka nak’áima!  
[“I’m all by myself too!”]

“tₚ—kánatx makʷşt pu it—ıt[xúya,  
[“The two of us should go along together,]  

“p[u]+àga klikáyx wá?:au –aktyena- idwáča!”  
[“It would make a much nicer whatchacall, story!”]

RM: mm!
LS: āhã
[Yes.]  
iRaccoon gačiúlxam, iq’álalas gačiúlxam;  
[Raccoon told him, Raccoon told him;]

isk’úlia:  
[Coyote (says):]

“ā:::!”  
[“Oh ye:::s!”]

“daxká daxdau q’áxš nu_xt, idwáča!  
[“That’s just what I want, stories!”]

RM: ā:!  
[Ye:s!]

As can be seen from this small (but representative) sample, Mrs. Smith’s July 1984 version of the cycle was narrated much more densely—and rapidly—in Kiksht than the 1983 version we have been sampling so far. It is also narrated in the Kiksht ‘remote past’ tense (verbs prefixed with ga- before consonants, gal- before vowels), the normatively appropriate tense for myth narration. The 1983 telling, by contrast, was narrated in the ‘future-conditional’ (a- before consonants, al-
fore vowels)—hence my translations: not ‘they went’, but ‘they’d go’; not ‘he jumped’, but ‘he’d jump’, etc. The future-conditional is the appropriate tense to use when telling about a myth, summarizing the plot, as opposed to telling it; it’s a way of telling someone what would be happening in a story, were one to tell it.

Wanting to check my transcription, and needing help with translation, the day after Mrs. Smith recounted the cycle from which item (3) above is taken, I played the tape recording for another of my colleagues and teachers on the reservation, Mrs. Alice Florendo (see Moore 2009 for a text from her). When we reached the passage quoted above I had to shut off the tape recorder so that she could recover from an almost convulsive fit of laughter: “She’s talking about you, you know!” Mrs. Florendo explained, as soon as she was able to regain her composure (lines 82–83 above).

Though not terminologized (so far as I know) in Kiksht ethno-poetics, the passage here recalls an Arizona Tewa narrative technique discussed by Paul V. Kroskrity (1985) and termed ‘carrying it hither’ (-ma:di-ma’a): a set of techniques for “situating the narratives for the present audience,” by, for example, “situating the narratives in known geographical locales, elaborating or editing episodes as part of recipient designing, and other details that contribute to the audience’s sense of immediacy by virtue of the narrator’s reshaping of old texts to new contexts” (Kroskrity 1985, 196).

Discussion

Clearly, these narrations from Mrs. Smith—replete with code-switching and all manner of ‘extraneous’ metanarrative asides to her interlocutor—represent something other than “full performance” (Bauman 1977; Hymes [1975] 1981). These are not transcripts of ritual speech acts performed over winter nights to an audience of adults who already knew the plots of all the stories, or to children who were made to “bathe in ice water” if they fell asleep, as they inevitably did (Silverstein 1996); this is talk between Mrs. Smith and me, sitting at her kitchen table or side by side on the “daveno” (sofa) with the tape-recorder between us, in her senior citizen’s house at Warm Springs, on long summer afternoons. In situations like these, the boundary between performer and ‘audience’—so central to folklore study (e.g.,
Bauman 1977)—turns out to be permeable and up for negotiation, as Mrs. Smith frequently breaches ‘the fourth wall’ and addresses me directly.

Jacobs, writing about his fieldwork with the Clackamas Chinook narrator Victoria Howard, opined that

[the change in emphasis from a meticulously correct presentation for a wholly native audience to informing an outsider about a story which he had never heard tied in with acculturative disintegration. . . . [Mrs. Howard’s] task with me was to tell a story, not to tell it with all its trappings. . . . In Mrs. Howard’s time, stories were stories rather than plays which everyone present also knew. (Jacobs 1959, 223)

Jacobs’s point here about “acculturative disintegration” could be rephrased in more reflexive language: what we observe in these transcripts is the transformation of a narrative speech genre in the context of community-wide conditions of language shift and replacement, and in more specific conditions that partly reflect long-term interactions between Mrs. Smith (and other Chinookan elders) and a succession of anthropological linguists, most notably in the present instance Hymes himself (starting in the 1950s) and Silverstein (starting in the 1960s).

To review: Mrs. Smith’s Coyote cycles present a number of new or anomalous features when viewed against the background of what is known about ‘traditional’ Chinookan myths of this type: episodes featuring Coyote as culture-hero or transformer are notably absent—the Rabelaisian trickster is dominant; the episodes are not localized to specific sites (including geologic formations) along the Columbia River, though they are presented as having taken place there; finally, and most obviously, Mrs. Smith’s distinctive narrative style emerges in the complex but orderly intertwining of quoted and non-quoted speech, narrative and metanarrative discourse, English and Kiksht. What is more, it is clear that from Mrs. Smith’s point of view, they are not myths at all, but “stories.”

Below in (4) are the native-language labels for major narrative genres in Kiksht. The term for ‘myth’—a genre for which the Coyote cycle would be the exemplar—is the un-prefixed and unanalyzable noun stem qánutč, shown in (4a), which takes a masculine-singular cross-referencing pronominal (-i-) in the verb. The verbum dicendi that goes with this noun is built on the semantically ‘light’ verb root ẋ
‘be, make, do’, in a ditransitive construction, so that, to translate the Kiksht idiom, one “does” a myth (for someone).

The term roughly translatable as ‘tale’ (4b) is an invariably plural noun (with it₃- ‘plural’ prefix) that is transparently a deverbal nominalization, made from a verb construction that denotes the act of ‘bringing (an object) forth from an enclosure’—hence my literal gloss ‘recollection’. The speech act involved in the telling of a tale or recollection would be denoted by the verb given in (4b), with absolutive₃ inflection for speaker, and dative₄ inflection for hearer.

But Mrs. Smith’s narrations belong to neither of these categories—they are, as can be seen from the passage quoted above in (3), stories: the noun is id-wáča, an invariably plural form that has broad semantic range, taking in ‘stories’ as things one has heard, as well as gossip, information, and, perhaps most saliently, ‘news.’ Etymologically the noun is related to the body-part term for ‘ear’—hence, to gloss the noun etymologically, one might offer ‘hearsay’ as a rough English equivalent. The Wishram lexical files (begun by Sapir, and massively expanded by his student Walter Dyk) contain a neologism for ‘telegraph wires’ that is built on this noun, structurally glossable as ‘news-carriers’. Qanučkmač can only be told on winter nights, before an audience of children and adults (who would already know the plots); idwáča can be imparted by anyone, to anyone, at any time.

(4) Labels for major narrative genres in Kiksht²

(a) qánúč (pl. qánúč-mač) ‘myth(s)’
   verbum dicendi: [l₂][l₃][l₄][l₇]-u₆-√x₇
   ‘[l₂] “do” [(myth)]₃ for₅ [l₄]’

(b) it-q‘íx’ik’ałx ‘tales’ (lit., ‘recollections’)
   verbum dicendi: [l₃]-x₆a-[l₄][l₇]-√k₈li₇-čk₈
   ‘[l₃] recount something to₃ [l₄]’

(c) id-wáča ‘stories’; ‘news’; ‘gossip’; ‘information’
   verbum dicendi: [l₂][l₃]-√x₇-₇
   ‘[l₂] be saying to₃’
   possessive: id₃-[l₄]-wáča
   ‘[l₄]’s story’

Mrs. Smith was utterly consistent in using the term idwáča as the label for the stories she told me. In July of 1984, for example, as I was gently coaxing her to re-tell the Coyote cycle for me, this is
how she responded, just before launching into the beginning of the narrative:

(5) Before beginning narration, July 10, 1984

LS: Talk Wasco?
   O:h.
   Well, what will I tell you 'bout?

RM: isk’úlia?
   [Coyote?]

LS: isk’úlia?
   [Coyote?]
   O:h.
   au, iagámla idíawač[a]’ isk’úlia!
   [Yes, Coyote’s story (is) no good!]

RM: [laughs]

On that same occasion, she crafted a remarkable formulaic ending to close off the narration of an episode concerning Coyote’s encounter with a child-stealing ogress; note here the hybrid of ‘oral’ and ‘literate’ story-final formulae (she intones the phrase The End just as if she were finished reading a bedtime story to a child), and the metaphoric reference to Coyote’s story (idiawača isk’úlia) as a physical object with a definite ‘edge’ (kǝmkit):

(6) Ending of “Coyote and Adat’alhia,” July 10, 1984

LS: daya káuxwau gaiuxkʷá.
   [This Owl went home.]
   agá yaxda
   [And finally now, that,]
   saːqʷə.
   [is (absolutely) all (of it).]
   Thé Énd.
   kʷapt sáq’ yaxdaú kǝmkit idíawač[a] isk’úlia.
   [Then that (is) the very (outer) edge of Coyote’s story.]

That’s what I know now.
Conclusion

The reinvention of ethno poetics proposed here is intended to enable the study of discourse practices in multilingual speech communities undergoing the dramatic socioeconomic transformations associated with language shift and obsolescence. Like all heuristic devices, it should be evaluated for what it allows the reader to see, or whether it enables the reader to learn more. But because the transcription format proposed here is superficially so similar to that of Hymes in its appearance on the page, it may be useful to sharpen the contrast between the intentions, and the effects, of the two approaches.

Introducing his analysis of a Hopi text, Hymes remarked, “Experience of a number of Native American traditions, and of narrative traditions in some other languages, including English, has led to a conception of a narrator as weaving together two threads. One is a thread of incident, what is going to happen, and the other is a thread of form, how what happens is to be given shape” (1992, 47). The dialectic between narratable content and rhetorical form that Hymes puts front and center here has certainly been central to the development of European and modernist (ethno)poetics and literary culture, as has been the concern with what is going on in the mind of the narrator or literary artist. The relevance of this to the verbal traditions of other peoples, however, has not so much been argued for as it has been taken for granted.

One cannot help but notice in Hymes’s later ethno poetic work an increasing sense of certainty: “Again and again, an analysis of form leads to recognition of larger relationships, to deployment in the service of balance and point. One is able to recognize with some degree of accuracy just what parts a narrative has” (Hymes 1992, 50). At the same time, there is a move toward universalism, deploying a notion of narrative competence that is clearly modeled on the Chomskyan notion of linguistic competence:

[T]he principles of narrative performance are not limited to any language, cultural tradition or area, but rather are universally human. We must imagine children as being born with the capacity to acquire mastery of such form. Local circumstance will determine the particular groupings acquired—two and four, three and five, or some other. Local circumstances will also condition the degree of mastery acquired. As with grammar, so with discourse: not everyone has access to all that
has come to be done with it, or is given encouragement to extend its range. . . . When texts come from a culture grounded in oral tradition and a narrative view of life, it is not surprising to find text after text that shows rewarding artistry. (Hymes 1982, iii)

Indeed, Hymes explicitly claims that the formal structures revealed by verse analysis “involve competence. It is a competence that probably is largely out of awareness, like the competence that enables us to deploy complexities of syntax we could not ourselves analyze” (1992, 50).

As a heuristic, the format I propose may prove useful as a research tool because it deals not in abstractions of narratable content (onset, ongoing, outcome) arranged in a numerically regimented rhetorical scaffolding (i.e., verse structures based on pattern numbers). Rather, it highlights explicit distinctions between speech-event modalities grounded in language-universal principles: mechanisms enabling direct and indirect quotation exist in every language, along with *verba dicendi*. In speech communities undergoing language shift and other forms of sociolinguistic transformation, quotation can become a crucially important resource in negotiating the interpersonal politics of language ‘choice’ (see Moore 1988, 1993, for development of this point).

To segment or re-segment a narrative into lines, the smallest unit of narrative verse analysis, Hymes relied heavily on particles translatable into English as ‘now’, ‘and then’, etc., and on the principle of one verb (or predicate) per line; thus, narrative structure at the level of the (Hymesian) line devolves upon a chunk of language exactly coextensive with a proposition—the foundation of truth-functional semantics in a long European (and classical) tradition of philosophical discussion of language. For the grouping of lines into verses and stanzas, Hymesian verse analysis relies on summaries of narratable content, employing a technique clearly inspired by the modernist literary theories of Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren—“exposition, complication, climax, denouement” (Brooks and Warren 1949)—a debt that Hymes acknowledges in many places and creatively explores (e.g., Hymes 1981, 106, 225). The larger units that Hymes calls scenes are clearly determined on the basis of the classical (European) ideal of unity of time, place, and participants.

Rendering the denotational content of a narrative text as a repeating pattern or (to use a visual metaphor) an all-over design akin to a Navajo rug or a Klikitat basket captures one dimension of aesthetic
form; my argument here is that this view, while grounded in verbal structures that are perfectly patent, turns out to be incomplete. Insofar as we wish to move beyond the idea that we are dealing with a literature realized in oral performance, we need to see how poetic structures in discourse not only emerge in contexts of verbal interaction, but also help to (re)shape those contexts in particular ways. We need, in other words, a transcription format that enables us to represent on the page these situated aspects of poetic form that unfold in “the interaction order” (Goffman 1983).

The positive proposal is that we should, as a first approximation, attempt to organize our presentations of the texts ‘on the page’ to reflect the way that narrators and their interlocutors deftly shift their footings (Goffman 1981) during a storytelling encounter, both with respect to each other and with respect to the story being told. We need to capture these indexical dimensions of the event-bound functionality of speech, because they reveal another dimension of poetic patterning. The ethical and political entailments of this alternative proposal include a sustained attention to the ethnographic encounter as a cultural episode in its own right—an orientation articulated early on (before “verse analysis”) by Hymes himself, most notably in “Breakthrough into Performance” (Hymes [1975] 1981), and explored further by Tedlock (1983), Richard Bauman and Charles L. Briggs (2003), and many others.

Finally, what of ethno poetics as a literary and cultural movement? If, as seems to be the case, it was at least in part an effort to destabilize or subvert certain conventional pieties of the literary establishment through the introduction of the verbal arts of ethnic and racial ‘others’ (in translation), then perhaps it should be studied alongside the development of World Music (Feld 2000) and the emergence into the global art market of Australian Aboriginal painting (Myers 2002).

Jerome Rothenberg, the coiner of the term *ethno poetics*, explains in a 2009 interview his own view that ethno poetics is not a way of making poetry, but rather a way of talking about poetry, both the practice and the theory of poetry, as it exists in different cultures, with a certain emphasis on cultures without writing or in which oral poetry and poetics seemed to be dominant. And all of this was as much of a challenge to a conservative poetics as was the work of the most radical experimenters among us. It also tied to the quest for “a primary human poten-
tial” by allowing us to start with a serious search across the spectrum of cultures. (Rothenberg 2009)

The time may be ripe for the kind of reconsideration and critical analysis proposed here for ethnopoetics as an intellectual, political, and poetic project. Ethnobotany, for example, has assumed a new kind of importance in the contemporary moment, especially insofar as it now aims not only to offer an account of how the natives (incorrectly) interpret the natural world, but also to demonstrate how such “Traditional Environmental Knowledge” (TEK) can help ‘us’ make discoveries that may lead to scientific (or pharmaceutical) breakthroughs.

And so the prefix ethno- is not merely a mark of irreducible cultural difference, but a positive source of value for a whole set of rather differently positioned observers and experts: linguists, poets, musicians—and now, biologists. A long Western artistic and now scientific tradition of finding (or creating) value in the ethno- seems to emerge again and again at the intersection of similar cultural concerns, albeit at different social and cultural ‘sites.’ Many of these concerns, for example, coalesce in the discourse of language endangerment (e.g., Hill 2002; Moore 2006; Moore et al. 2011)—a term that again cuts across the linguistic-cultural-biological divide.

Reinventing ethnopoetics along the lines suggested here entails recognizing that we are dealing with verbal genres that are being transformed under conditions of language shift—and that we have been all along (as the quote from Jacobs above suggests). Lucinda Smith wasn’t “doing” (performing) myths for me, she was telling me stories (idwáča). Ethnopoetics reinvented would recognize that there is another layer or modality of poetic patterning beyond the level of denotational text, one that inheres in the kind of recurring yet orderly shifts of footing that characterize Mrs. Smith’s narrative style. We need an approach to speech genres in transformation that allows us to represent on the page the way that narrators and their interlocutors navigate among speech-event modalities and role-fractions in storytelling events. This alternation of footings, grounded in three distinct but overlapping participation frameworks, is crossed or overlain by an alternation between two languages: one language on its way out, the other on its way in.

Lucinda Smith was bracingly unsentimental about all of this. Untouched by the identity politics that was just then reshaping local...
consciousness of ancestral languages at Warm Springs, placing them in a regime of value mediated by culture and heritage, she simply said that she stopped speaking Wasco when she realized that there was nobody left to talk to. “I’m the Last of the Mohicans, I guess,” she once remarked with a sardonic grin.

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**Notes**

1. Field recording of Michael Silverstein, January 6, 1972; I thank Silverstein for generously granting me access to his field materials.
3. The literary critic Kenneth Burke (e.g., Burke 1925) loomed much larger in Hymes’s intellectual (and personal) life than did Brooks and Warren, as is well known. A fuller treatment would address the impact of Burke’s ideas on Hymes’s ethno-poetics more generally, and on his development of the “onset/ongoing/outcome” scheme in particular.
4. See, for example, the “profiles” that Hymes attached to his verse analyses of later years.
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