# Narrative as a Mode of Vernacular/Folk Discourse

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ABSTRACT:

*This essay takes a granular approach to vernacular discourse. It attempts to take passages of conventional folk narrative texts and classify them as descriptive, narrative, reportative, informative, or argumentative. The goal of such classification at the microtext level is not only to describe folk narratives with greater accuracy but also to explore what parts of vernacular discourse previously less focused on might warrant attention by folklorists. KEYWORDS:* verbal arts, narrative, discourse, genre, genre analysis

At a moment when everyone everywhere is talking about data—about how our lives are sifted, sorted, and compiled by algorithms—it is perhaps not surprising that we have also taken a renewed interest in stories. That is, if there is anything that seems counterpoised to big data, it is narrative, in its ability to invoke a sense of "being there." This interest in stories has grown considerably over the past decade, escaping the bounds of fields where we expect it to be central—literature and

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communication studies—and has become a focus for cognitive and computer sciences. It stretches from fMRI studies of how the stories affect our brains to considerations of the variety of shapes they take in various media. In this storied moment, if you will, folklorists are well situated to make significant contributions to a variety of researches, from the biological to the cognitive to the statistical.

Two long-held assumptions about stories have been that the narrative structuring of discourse is the most likely to yield texts and that the affective nature of those texts makes them effective in communicating ideas, beliefs, and values. The notion of "storytelling" has become both big business and so broadly applied that the term has been practically emptied of meaning: almost anything that moves us is a story, and stories, by definition, move us. The trend has swelled to such a point that Stefan Sagmeister, a graphic designer who is often credited with leading the way in the storytelling movement in marketing, has begun to push back, complaining that people have taken the idea too far: "recently I read an interview with a rollercoaster designer, and he referred to himself as a storyteller. No, you're not a storyteller, you're a roller coaster designer, and that's fantastic. Yes, things go through space, but if that's your story, then it's a boring story." If that strikes some readers as outlandish, then they have not spent time amongst marketers, or even architects: I regularly sit on architectural thesis committees, and there is a trend among architects to describe what they do as "telling a story."

As folklorists, we can be just as loose in our use of *story*, converting every text into a story. Then, because we think of stories as being narrative in nature, we describe a lot of texts as narrative that perhaps are best not described that way. A number of oral history texts I have collected over the years, like the one later in this introduction, are quite rich in descriptive detail and establish rich scenes of interaction, but describe no actual events, as in "and some people sat here and others stood there." When you look at some texts more closely, there is a great deal

of "this was here and that was there" as well as chronologies of events, some habitual and some historical. (Some of the latter occasionally tip into the kind of texts we might describe as narrative, a moment in which two actions are conjoined in a "this, then that" relationship. If we were to reverse this sequence, it would result in a different meaning.)

From at least one perspective, this kind of looseness in our handling of discourse is a product of our not having a particularly good vocabulary for talking about the various kinds of texts that have long been our purview, apart from genre labels or explorations of performance. It is, in fact, a grounding in performance studies that drives this essay; specifically, the process of *entextualization*, of removing a bit of talk from one setting and deploying it in another, is my main point of departure. And this approach raises important questions: How does a particular sequence of words within a longer string of words stick together sufficiently, and reliably, for our brains to mark it as a text? Do narrative passages in a text possess more of this stickiness, coherence, than others? While we can all agree that this is the case at the level of discourse, how is that related to the way stories seemingly stick so well in our brains?[1]

Part of the problem, as Diane Goldstein observes, is that the vernacular texts that are so often the focus of folklore studies do not fit the dominant models of (and thus expectations even folklorists have about) narrative. The result is, as she notes, that such texts examined through lenses meant for other objects are considered fragmented, too small, or full of gaps. Our focus, she argues, should be on patterns and their uses: "Pattern is at the heart of audience expectation, underlying the nature and shape of performance and reception, and sometimes deeply coded in ways that suggest culturally or personally significant agreement, subversion, resistance, or difficulty" (Goldstein 2021:42).

While Goldstein and others are focused on treating matters of textuality one analytical level up from the current work, attention here will be on the discourse itself in which texts are

instantiated. Narrative is not separate from discourse: it is a mode of organizing discourse, one mode among (as is argued here) five. We tend to think of narrative as special, set apart from regular discourse. However, if we return to the promise of performance studies, which was to be able to articulate breakthroughs into performance (the shifts in a teller's words, tones, gestures, and postures that signaled that something extraordinary was about to happen), then it is our job to better understand one of the foundations of the whole enterprise: the words themselves.[2] Performers string clauses together, and they string those clauses according to culturally determined (and determinable) relations between words and the events or items they seek to represent.

Put another way, discourse is little more than a string of words that we parse in various ways, according to our understanding of what this bit of the string is and what that bit is. Some parts move us about in a space, inventorying people and objects. Others step us through time, and still others set forth ideas. Folklorists have long accepted that there is more to human discourse than stories. We have also embraced some schemes claiming that not all parts of *stories* are in fact *storied*—accepting that there is a role for description and/or "free clauses" within a narrative text. Is there an easier way to explore what people do with discourse—why someone chooses to tell a story as opposed to making an argument, or why some events require hardly any description or narration at all, for people to accept them as valid accounts?

The goal of the current work is to attempt to develop a classificatory scheme, a typology, that gives folklorists more precise ways to describe the discourse we encounter across a broad range of activities and events. My own particular interest is in anecdotes and legends, something I explore in a study of the talk surrounding a murder that took place in a small Midwestern town just after the Second World War (Laudun 1999). In any number of interviews, I encountered passages like the following one, in which speakers would locate themselves and their audience in a time and place and then tour them about. This

move is reminiscent of cinematic montages that locate view-
ers in a place and time; perhaps the cinematic gesture is itself
founded on oral tradition. This particular example is typical of
a kind of move that was quite frequent among the Midwestern
speakers, among whom were both men and women as well as
African American and white people:

> People would gather round the old square and sit on the
> fenders of the old cars and they'd chit-chat for an hour.
> But the neighborhoods, the families that lived in that area,
> they'd frequent one grocery store to buy all their groceries.
> And they'd have a charge account. And you could go in
> there like on Sunday morning and get a quart of chocolate
> milk and a dozen donuts and put it on the tab, if you didn't
> have the money. Or you could buy the Sunday paper.[3]

This kind of account is far more common in oral histories than
we credit: I have seen similar reports or descriptions captured
by a variety of fieldworkers and counted as narrative. Given
our preference for marking memorable texts as stories, it is not
clear if this particular passage even counts as a text: how much
it coheres on its own, since it really is mostly description, is
perhaps a matter subject to a different kind of consideration
than is offered here. Narrative or not, this string of words, this
passage if you will, was highly evocative for me in the moment,
and the image it presents is one that has stayed with me. It has
a text-like quality, but it is clearly not narrative: there is no be-
ginning, middle, end. There is only a loose collection of states,
of things as they were, that might be better labeled description.
    Description and narration are often considered intertwined,
with description usually considered the handmaiden to nar-
rative. One of the goals of the current work is to understand
to what extent such an assumption is true, and to what extent
we could enhance our efforts to understand the relationship
between tales and storyworlds.[4] It might be better to consider
the worlds created in and through conversation as discourse

worlds, products of (as Meir Sternberg termed them) representational functions, parts of texts from which a listener or reader infers dimensions of a represented reality.[5] Sternberg's notion that such functions reflect different kinds of movement through imagined worlds highlights the importance of focusing on how the words of a tale instantiate a storyworld. This extends into a better understanding of what context and reference might mean: in my own work on Louisiana treasure legends, I was regularly astonished by how short some of the texts were, how few words were required to spin up a rather elaborate storyworld in which represented events took place. In some cases, the events themselves were sparsely described and/or narrated, and yet the tale itself, calling upon adjacent tales and experiences, enjoyed a richness within a given community.

Folklore studies have documented and analyzed the remarkable variety of such worlds that human beings create out of a relatively few words. The precision I am seeking is in understanding the particular sequences of words, one level up from the words, but one level down from the text itself: are there patterns or sequences that more readily spin up such imagined worlds, and are there any cultural, topical, or generic patterns that might reveal themselves, allowing us to glimpse a bit more of the relationship between such sequences and human thought and action? Such precision might offer us better answers, or at least better questions, about why narrative is one of the best forms of making a text. If entextualization is simply a way of making it possible for human beings to snip strings of words from one discursive stream, carry them around, and then insert those strings into another discursive stream, what is the relationship between narrative passages and the entextualization process they seem to enable so readily?[6]

THE TURN TOWARD MODALITY

Folklorists have previously questioned whether narratives as we find them in their original form are as narrative as we imagined them to be. In "Do Narrators Really Digress?", Robert Georges

points out that folklorists have long bracketed, and sometimes dropped, those moments of discourse that lead up to and away from a traditional narrative as merely commentary, explanation, and possibly evaluation (Georges 1981). The underlying logic is that such comments, explanations, and evaluations were transitory and not really "a part" of the story. In doing so, Georges was simply pursuing a line of inquiry begun by William Labov and Joshua Waletzky when they asserted that, at least in so far as personal anecdotes were considered, such elements were far from ephemera but in fact were part of the overall strategy deployed by performers to ground their text, to contextualize it in the moment of the telling (Labov and Waletzky 1967). Interestingly, Georges also chose to measure discourse, counting words in order to establish the statistical significance of seemingly "extraneous" passages.

Georges argued that these digressive passages are often part of the interactional order of a performance, bringing an audience into the text itself. This was based on close attention to activations of that form in carefully described and analyzed performances. That is, the ethnography of speaking had encouraged a generation (or more) of folklorists to re-consider what is, and should be, our analytical focus. Such a reconsideration made it possible for us to re-think the forms themselves. Georges' conclusion was to switch from a consideration of *storytelling*—which, he argued, suffered from a built-in presumption of an object to be discovered, a story—to *narrating*, an activity. Narrating still has, in his conception, the presumption of narration as the dominant mode of organizing of texts and thus of experience. As he noted:

> The overriding objective of narrating is for individuals involved to conceptualize, and through their individual conceptions to experience vicariously, a happening or series of interrelated happenings that somehow seems autonomous and easily segmentable from one's total experience continuum because of the reactions that

envisioning them evoke in the participants. (Georges 1981:251)

Five years later, in "Digression in Oral Narrative," İlhan Başgöz inventoried so-called breaks in folk narratives in Turkish romances and epics as catalogued in the literature (Başgöz 1986). Performers, the reader is told, remark on something *in* the story, indicating that the remark is *outside* the story, or they stop the story or leave it, reinforcing the notion that such forms have spatial or temporal boundedness that can be crossed even while in the middle of them. Başgöz's own definition of digression in narrative is both conceptual and interactional. He noted that it is "the interjection of the narrator's horizon and individual content into the performance," and he observed that:

> [it] can easily be identified during a performance because the teller either directly addresses the audience, changes the third person narrative into the first, or alters the pitch of his voice, or speed of verbal disclosure, or gives a gesture and movement to let the listeners know that he speaks now about or for himself. (Başgöz 1986:7)

Ever observant of the texts themselves, Başgöz added that there was a second kind of digression, which mainly consists of embedding other traditional discursive forms—"such as proverb, anecdote, legend, folk poetry, and quotations from written and oral sources" (Başgöz 1986:7)—into a performance. For him, this second kind of digression is an indirect form, in as much as the performer is not the creator of the digressive material but a selector of already extant materials to be embedded (contextualized, if you like) into the current text. Such material marked, for Başgöz, traditional forms of digression, which begin to blur the boundary about what is inside and what is outside a folk narrative as we conventionally understand it.[7]

   The last thing Başgöz introduced is the most compelling, and that is the notion that digressions are interdependent with

the folk narrative forms in which they are embedded. He observed that the length and nature of some forms make them more porous than others, with short forms having little room for digressions, thus limiting the opportunity and nature of them, and longer ones presenting more opportunities for more kinds of digressions to be embedded. But Başgöz upended how we might imagine the interdependence, that is, that the digression depends on the text. Instead, he noted that:

> In every romance narration, a gap—small or big, historical, linguistic, social, or ecological in nature—develops between the past and present culture. This cultural gap, if not eliminated, upsets the pleasure and understanding derived from the story. Digression bridges this gap, making the unknown known, irrational rational, obscure, clear, incredible credible, unacceptable acceptable in the story. (Başgöz 1986:13)

Digression bridges the gap between text and performance. Digressive passages are one dimension of contextualization, and as such, as much a part of the overall performance of a text as the narrative passages themselves.

Working on a parallel path as Georges and Başgöz in trying to come to a clearer understanding of the relationship between narrative and exposition, Gillian Bennett investigated how some stories about supernatural experiences are offered as explanations. In "Narrative as Expository Discourse," she argued that the Labovian model of narrative was far too restrictive, suggesting that Labov and Waletzky had misunderstood the function of some of the texts featured in their analysis: she argued that 26 stories from their corpus had been "isolated from the surrounding exposition" and that some stories had been offered by respondents when they clearly "wished to avoid expressing an opinion" (Bennett 1986:418). While I think this initial assessment is misplaced, confusing form with function, Bennett's analysis does complicate our conception of what

we think narrative texts do and how they achieve their effects. While the narratives she examined were largely told through a series of representations of events in chronological order, what I want to focus on here is her delineation of the mix of descriptive asides and quotation that performers use to structure and to pace their stories so that a text's meaning is clearly established. In a later essay focused on shape and structure in storytelling, she noted: "the women whose narratives I have studied use sentence-structure, descriptive asides and reported speech (i) to paragraph their stories, creating and signaling narrative stage; (ii) to pace the storytelling so that special moments do not go by too quickly; and (iii) to mark climactic moments" (Bennett 1989:168). Her interest in the long sentence is particularly compelling here because of the challenge it offers for analysis, and we will return to one of her examples later in this discussion: the notion of overlapping discursive units that contribute to a text "accumulate[ing] subtleties and resonances of meaning as it unfolds" opens up the possibility that not all that contributes to a story's world is narrative.

Folklorists were, and are, part of a larger project of calling attention to the textuality of texts, working in tandem with William Labov and Joshua Waletzky's "Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience," a study which, in addition to breaking texts into clauses explored by various ethnographies of speaking, also explored classifying clauses by function.[8] Often lost in later considerations of the essay is Labov and Waletzky's observation that narrative is but "one verbal technique for recapitulating past experience, in particular a technique of constructing narrative units which match temporal sequence of that experience" (Labov and Waletzsky1967:13).[9]

## The Modes of Discourse

Some time ago, in his treatment of folk narrative as a genre, Elliott Oring introduced a compelling complication that has, so far as I can tell, largely gone underexamined in folklore studies (Oring 1986). He began by offering an example of a series of

clauses arranged in sequential order that clearly followed the model laid out by Labov and Waletzky, and then he offered the following revision of that series as an example of nonnarrative text: "He knew that he had been poisoned when he felt the searing pain in his stomach from draining the drink that she insisted that he taste, but which he had first refused," noting afterward that while "this second formulation is perfectly logical and communicative," it is not a narrative because it does not re-present events in the order in which they occurred within the text itself. He reinforced this definition of narrative by observing that such a sequencing "distinguishes a narrative from other kinds of event reporting" (Oring 1986:121).

There are two ways to respond to Oring's assertion: one is to agree that folklorists regularly document discourse of this kind but that since the individuals involved consider them stories, then they are stories. This approach values local definitions over universal ones, and thus lacks any principled way to build a typology of discourse that can be ported from instance to another, save by some analytical proximity (e.g., social, cultural, historical, areal). There is no way to build a general theory of folk narrative, which for some may very well be the point, seeing such generalizing impulses as dangerous or wrongheaded. Another way to respond is that Labov and Waletzky's model is too strict, or, perhaps better, that it is too simple, relegating narrative to a few key clauses and everything else as "free." This suggests that narratives are more varied than we suppose, and that we need a more accommodating definition, one that somehow recognizes, or includes, this kind of out-of-sequence representation of experience.

A third way to respond, and the one pursued here, is to develop a typology of discourse structures suggesting that individuals build discourse worlds out of words and that we can use analytical terminology to describe the relationship between segments of discourse. Pursuing this third option, we need not worry about matching local designations of "story" with our analytical use of "narrative." With a focus strictly

on discourse itself, we need not worry about what cognitive processes lie behind either the creation or reception of such passages, only how they manifest themselves in the flow of vernacular discourse as one word is placed after another, assembling ideas, worlds, actions, actors, events, and states of affairs. Yet, the reliability and repeatability of some passages, some sequences of words, over others will, perhaps, give us some insight either into human cognition or into enculturation. If we can do so, then it is possible that we can build a typology, or at least add additional layers of nuance to extant classificatory schemes. The goal of the larger project is to explore the possibility of a typology—it may be revealed that there are no patterns of repeatability sufficient to mean anything, which in itself might prove useful. Constructing a typology is not possible here and lies outside the scope of the current work, which seeks only to lay out the basis for a possible typology and to apply it to a small selection of examples.

The first step in considering the kinds of texts humans deploy is to understand the structures that underlie them. Carlota Smith's account of "modes of discourse" is particularly useful in this regard, breaking discourse into passages and then describing each as being structured by one of five modes. In Smith's schema, each mode conveys certain types of situations and has a principal form of progression:

> Discourse conveys several kinds of information. Underlying a story, historical account, or argument is information about situations and participants, time and place, continuity, text progression of two kinds, point of view. Part of the complexity of a text comes from its multiple linguistic cues to inter-related meanings, expressed simultaneously. (Smith 2003:20)

The delineation of the modes that follows relies considerably on Smith, but it is adapted to fit better folkloristic ways of thinking about texts and textuality. In particular, the assumption here is

that texts are, by dint of their portability from one context to another, reliably definable as texts by the speech communities within which they circulate.[10]

The model of discourse and texts at work here assumes that within any flow of discourse shared between two or more participants, there are any number of utterances that *may* be segmentable (entextualizable, in folkloristic terms), but that relatively few of those utterances will cohere sufficiently in terms of both content and form to become distinct texts: that is, humans seem to recall content abstracted from discourse more readily than they necessarily recall formed content *qua* texts. Within any given such text, there are passages that realize one of the five modes of discourse—with distinct passages being less probable in smaller texts that may consist of only a few clauses.[11] The clause here is the founding unit, with the nature of clauses being fairly flexible, following an ethnomethodological assumption that participants within speech communities are competent assemblers and parsers of complex discursive sequences.[12]

In her work, Smith enumerated five modes: *narrative*, *descriptive*, *argumentative*, *reportative*, and *informative*. She went on to distinguish them through two key features: the type of situations they introduce and their principle of progression.[13] That is, each mode introduces certain types of situation—event, state, generalization, abstraction—in a given stretch of discourse (and thus into the discourse worlds created), and each mode also has a characteristic principle of progression, either temporal or atemporal.[14] Some of this seems quite obvious: at the level of discourse, noun phrases introduce entities (people, places, objects, ideas, etc.), while tenses and time adverbs introduce times. The two combine in a clause to introduce situations, the events and states that are the subject of the discourse. Much of the way discourse proceeds is through the introduction, development, and resolution of situations.

Because folklorists have historically focused on narrative, events and states cover a lot of what interests us, but more

is introduced into the world of discourse than that.[15] In order to treat the inclusion not only of discourse that addresses a particular state—as when someone notes "There were a lot of people there at that time"—but also information on when patterns of events or states are addressed—"And people would gather around the square every Saturday and just chitchat"— we need to be able to address generic states and events, here termed *general statives*. Further, we need to remind ourselves that people regularly include within their speech things like facts and propositions, which Smith terms *abstract entities*. These four elements—events, states, general statives, and abstract entities—cover most items that arise in vernacular discourse.

In addition to how a passage handles situations, there is also the means by which it progresses. In the case of a narrative, progression and the advancement of time are in lockstep. As Smith notes:

> This advancement is based on sequence: we interpret the events of a narrative as occurring in sequence, one after another. Aspectual and temporal linguistic cues in a passage trigger the interpretation of advancement. Bounded events advance narrative time; temporal adverbials also advance it. Event clauses with the perfective viewpoint express bounded events; the progressive expresses ongoing events. (Smith 2003:14)

Events in narrative are naturally bounded by the logic of narrative itself: one event must conclude so that another can begin. Such boundedness has a wide scope of potential cues, allowing room to explore how many, and of what kind, are preferred within a given tradition and within particular performances.

Narrative's discursive twin is the report. Texts constructed in the reportative mode have events and states not related to each other, as they would be in narrative (where spatial contiguities and temporal continuities matter), but related to the time

of the report itself. If we examine Oring's example at the start of this section, we can see that all the clauses are subordinated to the time of the report, what some might call *speech time*, rather than to each other. Another way of putting this is that reports give an account of situations from the temporal stand-point of the reporter. They are, like narrative, mainly concerned with events and states, but in reports, the relation to speech time determines temporal advancement. Within reports, situa-tions are related to speech time rather than to each other. This is the deictic pattern of temporal advancement. In passages of the reportative mode, the order of events does not determine the interpretation; rather, the standpoint of the reporter is the organizing factor.

The last way of treating particular events and states is de-scriptive, which usually introduces or extends states or ongoing events. Descriptive texts advance in space, not time. As Smith noted, while entities within the descriptive mode are located in time, "the information that tense conveys is anaphoric: the time of description is that of a time established earlier in the text" (29). Put another way, while description is located in time like narrative and reports, textual progress in the descriptive mode differs from the narrative and the reportative in not being tied to time: rather, discourse unfolds through spatial advancement through a scene or object.[16]

While folklorists may prefer the concreteness and specificity of these three modes—descriptive, narrative, reportative—the fact is that participants in discourse only rarely stick to the par-ticular. As the Labovian schema makes clear with its addition of textual frames (e.g., orientation and coda), often participants in discourse move back and forth between particularities and larger generalities. The informative and argumentative modes address such generalizations and allow for further abstraction into facts and propositions.

The informative mode introduces mainly general statives—generics and generalizing sentences, typically presenting them as uncontroversial. Where descriptive passages focus on

particulars, informative passages address recurrent events and patterns of situations. On the other hand, argumentative passages are concerned with states of affairs, with facts, and with propositions. Given this focus on the generalized and generic, on states, facts, and propositions, both the informative and argumentative modes are atemporal in nature: the situations they introduce into discourse transcend time, transcending even the time of the discourse itself. Given this atemporality, it should also be clear that textual progression cannot be tied to anything within the represented situation. Instead, Smith offered the notion that there is "metaphorical motion through the text domain" (31), which will make more sense in the case studies presented below. For now, we simply note that progression through a text that is structured as information or argument is accomplished neither by the passage of time nor by movement in space, marking a significant difference from the other three modes.

The table below offers a summary of the modes, the situations they introduce into discourse, and how the sequence of clauses achieves a sense of progression. Also noted in the table is temporality: as a temporal phenomenon itself, a discursive utterance must also mark its relationship to time. There are more dimensions to the modes than discussed and noted here, but these will suffice for an initial exploration of their utility to folklore studies.

| MODE | SITUATIONS | TEXT PROGRESSION | TEMPORALITY |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Narrative** | specific events and states related to each other | as narrative time advances | dynamic, located in time |
| **Reportative** | events and states related to time of report, not each other | as time changes | dynamic, located in time |
| **Descriptive** | events and states | spatial advancement through the scene or object | static, located in time |
| **Informative** | generic events and states (as pattern) | metaphorical motion through the text domain | atemporal |
| **Argumentative** | facts, propositions, generic events and states | metaphorical motion through the text domain | atemporal |

**Table 1—*The modes of discourse***

## THE MODES IN ACTION

In many ways, my search for a better accounting of vernacular discourse began with fieldwork in the late 1990s, which was focused on a clearly dramatic event (murder in a small Midwestern town that highlighted racial and other social tensions), but it has continued as I shifted focus to legends and to collecting oral histories of material culture artifacts. While folklorists conventionally, and perhaps conveniently, think of folk history as being made up of a series of stories, perhaps clustered into episodes that then build, either individually or communally, into a larger arc, what I encountered was a lot more aggregate, less like beads on a string and more like rocks in a river bed, each a different size and shape, some clearly suited to a purpose and some whose purpose was less clear, but all of them timeworn

and oft-used. A few simpler examples, all quite short, might help to illustrate the utility of this approach. Afterward, we will turn to a few examples that demonstrate how pursuing this kind of exploration of discourse allows us to address the complexities of discourse upon which speakers regularly embark.

The first example is taken from a small collection of legends about treasure documented in oral tradition by me and others. This text emphasizes that in many cases the actual topic (treasure) is entirely connoted, here almost twice removed: the treasure is implied through the piratical figure who himself is suggested by his proximity to a chest. This series of embeddings is achieved through a larger folk belief, common in Louisiana as it is elsewhere, that children are more sensitive to the supernatural realm because they have not yet been ensorcelled by or inured to the everyday world. As I explore elsewhere, the intersection of land and water is a common motif in these legends, here achieved through a house raised to avoid flooding.

> (1) A relative of ours lived in the country near the woods of Morse and Crowley when she was a little girl. (2) She lived in a house that was on stilts so that when a flood came their house would be okay. (3) When she was a child, our relative would play with the other kids under the house during the summer to stay out of the heat. (4) The story goes that our relative, along with the rest of the children, saw a man sitting on a wooden chest beneath the house. (5) This apparition did nothing to the children, although it did frighten them for a time. (6) Strangely, only our relative and the children could see it. (7) Not the adults.[17]

The text consists of 7 clauses, one prepended by a dependent clause (3) and the final clause (7) fulfilled through a parallelism with the clause that precedes it. The first half of the story is three clauses long, all descriptive in nature: lived in the country, in a house on stilts, under which children played. The second half of the text is narrative (and in fact the speaker

even acknowledges the shift to narrative within the text itself). This is a paradigmatic narrative: set up provided by descriptive clauses and then a shift to narrative clauses.

Part of the same collection, the following text is almost entirely informational in nature, offering a series of generic states that were, or are, extant within the world described by the discourse:

> (1) Me and my brothers would hear this story a lot from one of our neighbor's parents. (2) She said she was a fortune teller. (3) Supposedly, there was treasure buried by a stump and only a child could find it. (4) The treasure would rise up out of the ground and appear to the children. (5) The only time a child could find it is if they were playing by the stump, but if they left to go get help to get the treasure, when they came back for it, it was gone. (6) It had disappeared. (7) It didn't pay for a grown up to go look for it because they wouldn't find it.

Here, the report frame is clearly articulated and, after a single moment of description, gives way to a series of facts that ends with something like a proposition. This is not unlike a number of other texts in this collection in presenting an extant state of affairs in the world of the discourse to which the audience is asked to subscribe. It is possible that much of the difficulty in trying to discern when a legend text is a narrative or when it is a statement of belief comes down to the fact that legends can be represented in discourse with modes other than the narrative being dominant.

Not just legends enjoy this kind of discursive complexity. Folk history can often include simple descriptions, as the text at the top of this essay reveals, as well as passages of information and sometimes even argument—the nature of the past is sometimes something to be negotiated. In the following text, a Midwestern speaker addresses both a personal past and a more general one. It was typical of the kind of talk shared among

this particular community, in which they would often recall places and moments from their lives. This particular speaker was renowned for his humorous accounts, especially of his service during the Second World War. Here he is recalling coming home and taking up a series of jobs:

> (1) Then I, let's see, where I'd go from there? (2) Oh, I got another job out north of town where Seventeenth hits Walnut. (3) Used to be a Spur filling station. (4) They'd change your oil and you'd pump gas, but they gave you glassware. (5) If you bought so many gallons you got a dish or a bowl or something. (6) And I went to work there for a friend I knew real well.[18]

The text seeks to locate a past landscape from the speaker's memory in terms of a current landscape possibly shared by the speaker and listener.[19] The clause effecting the transition does so under the guise of offering a chronology, suggesting a possible narrative frame (1-2). What follows are several clauses of description (or possibly information, if you consider that the speaker is describing a general state of Spur stations everywhere). These informative clauses are sandwiched between two clauses that articulate an event—I got another job / I went to work there—though it should be noted it is the same event. The kind of temporal pause this effects is fully born out by the four clauses that fall between the two, all of which are informative, offering general statives of the "they used to" nature.

So not all texts that we receive as narrative are necessarily narrative in nature. What this opens up is the ability to map the variety of kinds of discourse in which members of a speech community engage in treating the world as they understand it. In some instances, the texts we encounter are as carefully constructed as anything we might conventionally understand as "artistic" (where speakers are encouraged to show and not tell). One such text came to me while visiting a well-known elder of an African American community in Bloomington, Indiana.

Around the time of our conversations, current events had dug up old wounds: town officials wanted to convert a neighborhood community center into an after-school center for troubled teenagers. The center had once been *the* school for African Americans and had after some years of decline been converted into a community center mostly through neighborhood initiative. Residents were furious with city officials, and the woman with whom I spoke, Elizabeth Bridgwaters, had told the mayor and his lieutenants in no uncertain terms that they understood little of the history and function of the building. In discussing how recent events had brought old, and unhappy, memories to light, Ms. Bridgwaters told me:

> (1) It's interesting you know. (2a) When I was a little girl, (2b) most black people lived on the east side of town. (3) But some black people lived over here. (4) But they didn't want us over there. (5) So they built a school over here.[20]

Nothing in those 41 words is accidental. No word is out of place, precisely because those six clauses (5 independent and 1 dependent) are exactly about displacement, and they enact the displacement grammatically so that a historical moment is felt and not simply heard. Recourse to the discourse modes helps us to explore how that effect is achieved.

The text maximizes the use of deixis to create the effect. "It's interesting you know" is a framing clause that I found to be quite common among both Midwestern and Southern speech communities. (It seems to be less common in online vernacular discourse, and finding if there are equivalents [or not] merits exploration.) The impersonal pronominal clause "It's interesting" announces an intent to claim something as information by distancing what follows from any personal perspective. The address of a second person is quite common in performances I have observed, and not as a verbal tic but as a way of reinforcing the informative claim by including the listener directly in the discourse: they are now a part of what is to come, quite

literally invested. Here, the deictic markers of person are used as one might expect in a conversation: the *I* marks the speaker, here deferred until the second, and dependent, clause; and the *you* the listener, introduced right away. However, the second clause introduces a temporal shift with the adverb *when*. Following the (subordinated) shift, a third person is introduced, *black people*, which extends the I-you dyad. The syntactic construction is repeated twice—black people:east side of town, black people:here —with the second location, *here*, hinting at the larger deictic shift to come. The full effect of the displacement is realized in the penultimate clause of the text: again, twinning syntax, by beginning with *But*, the text grammatically displaces the implied *they* of "black people" with the sudden actual *they* of the local power structure, here understood as white. This displacement is reinforced by the shift as well from first person singular to plural, such that "black people," which had been located in third person, become first person. The text finishes its historical account by repeating what *they* did: build the school in question.[21]

Few would argue that the account of a historical moment offered by Ms. Bridgwaters is narrative in nature: the temporal sequencing is largely subordinated to the larger point being made, an argumentative point since what holds the clauses together is a series of assertions, of clauses, that effect a series of deictic transformations. There is, then, movement, but it is within the referential space of the text itself: "black people/ [they]" becomes "they" while, simultaneously, "I" becomes "us." The "you" remains anchored, somewhat, in the discourse, but, as was fitting given that I was the listener in this moment, is now shifted closer to the second "they," the local power structure who, it is implied, was largely white. Just as importantly, all six of the clauses are clearly meant to be taken as a series of facts, with perhaps only five being possibly understood as a proposition. Thus, the entire argument is carried as a series of informational statements.

As the text above reveals, the informative mode can be deployed to address sensitive material. In another text taken from the same research project, a man who had had something controversial occur during his tenure as a local sheriff approached the moment of revealing those events this way:

> I felt comfortable as a trooper. And I solved a lot of cases around here. And I got a lot of criminal arrests. And that's why, after a while—six years, I became sheriff. And I should never have done it. But I let the county chairman and two other businessmen come to see me one night. And they said Fred we need you as sheriff of the county. And every boy, you know, has aspirations of being sheriff of the county. I enjoyed the state police and I said let me think about it a few days. And I thought, well, why not go for it? So I ran and I was elected. I carried every precinct in [the] county. I don't think anybody's done it since then.

The passage is fourteen clauses long, beginning with a series of three factual assertions—trooper, cases, arrests—that establish the overall discourse as informative. The fourth and fifth clauses are both propositions—"that's why" and "I should never"—offering an argumentative frame for the narrative that follows—an understanding reinforced by the narrative beginning with the conjunction "but" and not the more conventional "and."[22] The narrative is largely constructed through dialogue, including internal dialogue with the narrator himself.[23] From one point of view, the narrative is interrupted by two informative clauses about "every boy" and "I enjoyed." From another, the informative passage is interrupted by the narrative, and these moments of information within the narrative are part of the informative frame seeking to regain control. Such an interpretation lies in the narrative passage being followed by two informative clauses that reinforce its ending through and ideational rhyme which is itself reinforced: elected/carried every precinct/nobody since.

It is hard in examining this text not to be struck by the possibility of removing the narrative without all the argumentative and informational baggage, but it strikes me that the informational aside, about boyhood dreams and contentment in the narrative present, is central to the text's resolution, and that at least one of those things binds the narrative to the argumentative passage that it follows. This kind of imbrication of two modes happens, I would argue, regularly in discourse, though we usually bracket that material as exposition, digression, or contextualization. All of those terms are, in fact, accurate descriptions, but address the *function* of the discourse involved and not its *nature*.

A more careful examination of its nature might reveal more complex functions or more complex relationships between the modes and the functions they instantiate. The following text was performed in the weeks that followed an exceptional weather event in south Louisiana in August 2016.[24] Because heavy rain and flash flooding are not unusual for the region, most residents were not concerned when the rain began to fall. Over the course of the next three to four days, the mesoscale convection system inundated the region with 7.1 trillion gallons of water: more than three times the rainfall of Katrina. In the aftermath of the storm, asking someone how they did during the flood became a part of most conversations. Responses came in a variety of forms, and stories about getting flooded, driving through flooded streets to get home, or helping family and friends who had been flooded were quite common. The text that follows emerged in a personal conversation I had with a fellow father on the side of a soccer field while our daughters were at practice. It occurred naturally in conversation:[25]

> (1) So my buddy was out. (2) And he went to cross the bridge. (3) And he'd been across it not long before and it was okay. (4) But now he could see it was kind of deep. (5) So he got part way in, and then he decided "nah ah." (6) He didn't want to risk it. (7) But, you know, some trucks

were…. (8) My buddy said he saw some nice trucks. (9) Some nice trucks got flooded out. (10) Some guys just drove their trucks in the water. (11) I guess they were already underwater with their payments. (12) So they thought why not, you know? (13) Anyway, my buddy says he saw some trucks. (14) And their windows were rolled up. (15) You know if you got stuck, you'd roll your windows down to climb out. (16) But their windows were up. (17) So they were pushed. (18) People got to the edge of the water and then pushed their trucks in. (19) He said he'd seen a bunch of nice trucks with their windows up. (20) You know, I guess people were just doing what they felt they had to do. (21) I'm not saying it's right. (22) But I can understand it.

The text begins with a straightforward series of narrative clauses (1-6, with 6 an apposition of 5). Having arrived at a critical moment, a moment of witnessing, the text proceeds through a series of reports that are tied together through a series of repetitions—some trucks, some nice trucks, some nice trucks, some guys … trucks—that build toward the argument that is at the heart of the legend: some guys were already metaphorically underwater financially, so they decided to make it actual (11-12). The text recurs to the clearly reportative clause, which repeats three times: my buddy/he said/says saw/seen some/a bunch of [nice] trucks. Afterwards, the text offers an assertion—"if you got stuck, you'd roll your windows down"—which, embedded as it is within the repetitive "their windows were [rolled] up" is clearly part of the larger argument, which dominates the rest of the text.

None of the texts examined so far is in one mode, but, clearly, depending on the kind of text, it might be argued that one mode dominates, to a greater or lesser degree, in terms of how we receive the text. It seems obvious that most texts, even the most narrative we can imagine, will contain moments of description. What might be compelling to some is the idea that more historical discourse than we conventionally imagine is

not narrative in nature at all. The following example is from Ray Cashman's *Packy Jim: Folklore and Worldview on the Irish Border*. In this particular passage, Packy Jim talks about individuals he had known personally who had been caught up in events along the border between Ireland and North Ireland:

> (1) He lived there closer to the border, back there in Fermanagh, Gerry Coulter. (2) He was a UDR man, and had a place then, up fairly close to the border that come out toward the top of the hill, and down in that till it. (3) Well, he used to have his rifle with him, like, when he was, like, to fire back if there was an attack. (4) Gerry was prepared—as the saying goes—to swap shots with them. (5) But he was a pretty well liked man, and was no way—as the saying goes—over officious of anything like that. (6) He was a likeable personality. (7) Of course, whoever was going to shoot him was going to come from a distance, I suppose. (8) If that was gong to be the case, then they wouldn't be particular about his personality. (Cashman 2016:112)

Everything here is either descriptive or informative, because everything here is an assertion of a particular or recurring state. This kind of description is common among American speakers with whom I have interacted, both in the Midwest and in the South. On many an occasion I have listened to someone take a great deal of time to locate people and places on a landscape.[26] In fact, Cheramie Richard argues, following Cashman's treatment of nostalgia, that such discussions about the nature and location of communities in the past can be the foundation for the construction of communities in the present: that is, the performances of descriptions, narrations, and perhaps even arguments about a community that *used to be* constitutes the community that *is* (Cashman 2006; Richard 2005).

It is quite possible that once we start noting the modes of vernacular discourse, narrative will be less predominant. Take, for example, Patricia Sawin's recording of the following ac-

count by her longtime fieldwork subject Bessie Eldreth of an encounter with a possible revenant. For a long time after her husband died, she told Sawin, there were lights that would flash in her bedroom:

> (1) And, uh, it was for a long time it would kindly. (2) It'd dash me, you know.

> (3) But I got till I, when I'd turn off the light I'd close my eyes real tight. (4) But now, honestly, that light would go down in under the cover with me. (5) It did. (6) That light'd… when I'd turn that cover down and after the light was turned off, that light'd go down under that cover as pretty as I ever saw a light in my life. (7) And, uh, I had a quilt on my bed that I thought might be the cause of it. (8) That … that was on his bed when, before he died. (9) And I rolled that quilt up and sent it to the dump. (10) Because I felt like that made that's the reason. (11) But I still saw the light. (12) It didn't make… it didn't change a thing. (13) But the light … for a long time, well for two of three years or longer … probably than that, light would flash up. (14) But I've not seen it now in a good while. (Sawin 2004:126-127)

The text begins and ends with a series of clauses in the informative mode: the recurring light that haunts her is a generic event, a pattern. The narrative passage in the middle of the text—"I had a quilt on my bed that I thought might be the cause of it … And I rolled that quilt up and sent it to the dump"—is entirely overwhelmed by the situation in which it is embedded, in much the same way that Eldreth was herself. In other words, Eldreth's account suggests that individuals use modes to enact the felt nature of experience, and that sometimes the best way to do that is not in narrative.

It is this tension between modes that perhaps achieves some of the greatest effects. As a number of the examples here suggest, many genres that are conventionally considered

as narrative might deserve re-examination. The strength of such a suggestion is that it puts a compelling question put before us: how does a mode of discourse (narrative) that is not necessarily predominant in a text come to dominate our reception of that text as both interlocutors and analysts? This would be akin to seeing Washington state as only Mount Rainier or the Cascade Mountains because those are the most prominent topological features.

It is clear that folklorists, among others, could do with better accounts of the features in the texts they document both as objects and as subjective realities. One thing the cases I have explored suggest is that current narratological assumptions about narrative's priority in delivering certain kinds of textual experiences, what is sometimes called *qualia*—"a term used by philosophers of mind to refer to the sense of 'what it is like' for someone or something to have a particular experience" (Herman 2009:14)—are not entirely justified: the emotional force of accounts of experience like those of Bridgwaters and Eldreth clearly establish that narrative is not necessary to convey "what it felt like" to be there.[27] While it could be argued that Eldreth artfully introduces narrative, and its expectations of change, she does so in order to subvert such expectations: nothing happens as a result of the narrated series of events. Rather, the general state of things simply fades away, in a way that, perhaps, better mimics the experience of life as most humans know it. Folklorists could take the lead in re-orienting such assumptions based on the volume and variety of texts already in our possession, as well as our awareness of the contexts whence they came.

Just as importantly, while this project was reinvigorated by various attempts to use natural-language processing to discover embedded narrative discourse, it is quite clear that for the time being this work lies entirely in the hands of human analysts, who might find themselves asking what an examination of extant folklore texts tell us about traditional genres and performances. As some of the examples illustrate, once we lose

the blinders of narrative, the composition of a text—what is actually ported from one context to another—becomes open to exploration and analysis.

## NOTES

1    In a 2011 survey of 86 fMRI studies, Raymond Mar explored the various overlaps between the way our brains respond to experience and textual representations of experience, suggesting that such overlaps allow us insights into others, allowing us to construct "theories of mind." The belief among scientists is that narratives are privileged, offering us a view into the hidden realm of characters, their emotions, and their intentions. It should be noted that a number of these studies do not specify the nature of the texts, nor how they define these texts as narrative and others as not. Again, this is a moment of "you know it when you see it." If folkloristics had a better model, it could potentially have a role in refining cognitive science.

2    "Breakthrough into performance" is of course the signal phrase of Dell Hymes' assessment that there is regular discourse, reports of performances, and then performances themselves (Hymes 2004). In this essay, I want to take more seriously Hymes' notion of *report*, as reportative will be the mode of discourse that organizes utterances differently and thus organizes their reception differently. The idea of texts marking themselves as available for separation from the surrounding discourse is not new. This account depends entirely on the robust scheme of contextualization-decontextualization-entextualization developed by Bauman and Briggs, both working separately and in collaboration. This is perhaps best summed up in "Poetics and Performances as Critical Perspectives on Language and Social Life" (1990).

3    Interview with Jack Morris, Bloomington, Indiana (1998). Mr. Morris was a barber at the time, and a ready listener and performer of jokes, anecdotes, and legends. (He was also one of the gentlest men I ever met.) Morris was one of a number of older men and women, black and white, I interviewed over the course of two years, initially focused on the nature of a murder that had taken place in 1946 and which retained legendary status among that population as "The Quarry Hole Murders." As I collected more and more of their oral histories, however, I became fascinated with just what oral history "looked" like: there were not large stories, nor necessarily a series of small stories strung together. The present essay picks up where that earlier work left off.

4    Many folklorists are familiar with Katherine Young's work on sto-
     ryrealms and taleworlds (1987). The somewhat expanded notion of
     storyworlds has achieved some popularity across a number of disci-
     plines, based in part on the increased deployment of "story universes"
     in what have come to be known as franchises like Star Wars or the
     Marvel Cinematic Universe, but it applies equally well to other kinds
     of fictions that dip repeatedly into the same fictional reality. The use
     of *discourse worlds* here is intended as a nod to the contemporary
     notion of "world building" in that (in many cases) worlds are built
     in order for stories to be told in them but the worlds themselves are
     not necessarily the product of the stories, though the two are often
     imagined as best intertwined.

5    In "Ordering the Unordered," Sternberg notes: "[A]ction and descrip-
     tion are not so much discrete segments as functions of discourse—
     representational ("mimetic") functions that relate to complementary
     aspects of the world, the object or locus of one progressing along the
     dimension of fictive time and the other's resting in those of fictive
     space. As such, action and description form not givens but inferences,
     constructs, opposed but not divorced frames of coherence. Whether
     in tense or harmonious opposition, they may cohabit in the very same
     piece of text; and it is only according to the dominant function—or
     primary frame of intelligibility—that we can reasonably speak of ac-
     tional or descriptive writing." (1981:73)

6    We know from fMRI studies in which people read or watch nar-
     ratives that narrative has particular effects on the human brain,
     largely through the mirroring process, but that does not necessar-
     ily explain all the other material that comes with narrative. See
     Silbert et al. 2014.

7    Başgöz delineates three kinds of digression. The first he terms *ex-
     planatory*, and it is used to explain information with which the audi-
     ence may not be overly familiar, such as archaisms, geography, histo-
     ry, or even cultural references. *Evaluative* passages include opinions,
     comments, and criticism from the performer on events, entities, or
     ideas contained within the overall text. Finally, *reflexive* passages al-
     low performers to bring in personal information, should an audience
     prove receptive to such things.

8    This brief history leaves aside a consideration of the version of modal-
     ity that was a part of the narrative turn in some domains that took up
     narrative as a mode of thought. For more, see Bruner 1986, Hymes
     1996, and Ricoeur 1990. In Hymes's treatment of narrative as a mode
     of thought, he argued, like Lévi-Strauss before him, that different
     ways of thinking should not be essentialized nor, especially, ranked.

9    Of course, nothing in Labov and Waletzky's definition, nor in subsequent work, precludes human minds from re-mapping a more complex representation back into sequential order, but we do not have access to that process. The two of them noted as well that narrative could not be reduced simply to a series of clauses but rather was better described in the clusters of clauses they deemed the basic components of, in their case, the personal experience narrative: the six sections that move from framing the story, to the action, to those passages that connect the story back to the current moment of its telling (Labov and Waletzky 1967:32–41). Not all of these components—abstract, orientation, complicating action, resolution, coda, and evaluation—need be present in any given narrative, and indeed Labov's later revisions of the model suggest that two key components, orientation and complicating action, may in fact be one, at least in the case of some narratives; in the case of more informal settings, the first two components are often missing altogether (2010).

10   In the discussion that follows, "passage" tends to be used to refer to smaller portions of such texts that are being drawn out for analysis. My apologies to readers who know Smith, or who turn to Smith, who may wonder if this discussion is confused about terminology. In general, the model here is that words make up clauses; clauses make up passages; passages make up texts. All of these units are embedded variously within discourse, with texts being those clusters of words, clauses, and passages that humans can shift from one embedding to another.

11   Smith observed that even small narratives often reveal themselves to be a mixture of narrative and non-narrative elements: most texts consist of several passages in different modes. Narrative episodes, she notes, "rarely consist only of sequence. There are also descriptive passages, and perhaps argument as well" (Smith 2003:8).

12   Such an approach fits well within the Labovian schema, which, as is noted above, has ample room for a variety of elements, especially within the components that frame the narrative episode. The centrality of narrative within the Labovian model should be noted: one of the goals of establishing modes of discourse is to make it possible to gauge the centrality of narrative within passages of discourse more broadly considered "a narrative" and to understand how that centrality is achieved discursively. Within this schema, for example, bounded events advance narrative time, while unbounded situations do not—we interpret unbounded situations as occurring with a time previously established in the discourse. The management of temporal locativeness would seem critical to understanding narrative. How discourse is

located in time has been the subject of a number of inquiries, some of which have sought to approach it at the level of the clause.

13  These terms are not quite the same as hers, but they map to the same modalities—essentially, I have standardized the terms to be adjectival in form such that they always describe a unit of discourse and are never bits of discourse themselves. For example, a text being "a description" or "a narrative" is eschewed here for passages being *descriptive* or *narrative*. The motivation for doing so is to begin to build a method for describing texts in terms of *passages* so that we can later explore how a given mode dominates a text so that an audience hearing (or reading) a text perceives it as a story or a report, or some other genre typology to be determined or discovered.

14  Temporality, Smith notes, is the "key to the discourse modes. Temporal factors are woven into the fabric of a language and are part of our tacit knowledge of language structure" (2003:22).

15  The Labovian model treats non-narrative moments, or passages in Smith's terminology, as being a part of *orientation* or *evaluation*, segments of discourse that surround and frame narrative.

16  In his seminal work on description as a mode of discourse, Meir Sternberg notes: "What distinguishes verbal…description is thus the asymmetry between spatiality of its object and the temporality of its presentation. Oriented to the statics of the world—states of affairs, enduring properties, coexistents—it subjects them to the dynamics of the reading-process, built into a medium where elements combine and patterns emerge in an ordered succession" (Sternberg 1981:61).

17  This text, and the one that follows, is from a larger corpus of treasure tales collected by myself, fellow folklorists, and undergraduate students at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. These two were recollections by a student, Jeffrey Broussard, of legends he had heard. The text is verbatim.

18  Interview with Hugh Gobles of Bloomington, Indiana (1998).

19  In my experience, there was a limited amount of time a speaker would spend trying to establish this congruence before simply launching into a text that might, depending on the dominant mode, be considered a report or a narrative.

20  Interview with Elizabeth Bridgwater of Bloomington, Indiana (1998). Ms. Bridgwater was a well-regarded public speaker who had, for a time, even preached locally. In her nineties when I spoke with her, she demonstrated her ability to speak plainly as well as poetically.

21  This geographical shift erased a part of Bloomington that had once been known as Bucktown, whose extent varied in oral accounts. Sto-

ries about the neighborhood itself and the nature of race relations that it realized abounded. When I asked Ms. Bridgwaters about the veracity of her own account, she replied, "You hear me testifyin' don't you?" Such a response marks the seriousness with which she took her discourse about the past.

22  For a fuller discussion of Midwestern speech patterns when addressing past events, see Laudun 2001.

23  The role of dialogue in text-making, and thus also progression, has been addressed by a number of scholars. See Laudun 2012 for an examination of the phenomenon in a Louisiana African American speech community.

24  For a more complete account of the context of this legend and its historical implications, see Laudun 2019.

25  This transcript is from memory, and so it is not as exact as some might prefer, and I do not have any way to verify its accuracy or precision. I can only assure readers that I have a good, and practiced, memory for this kind of thing—having done a lot of fieldwork in contexts in which recording simply wasn't possible (e.g., inside the cab of a combine while harvesting)—and that I excused myself for a moment to write the text down as soon as I could. Shelley Ingram describes these moments as being "accidentally a folklorist."

26  Typical of such discourse is this part of a conversation I recorded: "You remember Golden's Market? Let's say this is the block. This is Second Street, this Rogers, this Maple. Well, Golden Market was on this corner and EJ's bakery was in there, and halfway…there's a pharmacy in there now, called Value Plus or I don't know now. But right in there was where that little old lady, in her house, had this little clothing store."

27  See David Herman's explorations of qualia as one facet of what narrative discourse produces (2009:137-159).

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