THE NATURE OF MEANING OF STORIES IN CONVERSATION

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Although the texts of stories told in the course of everyday conversation are as open to variant readings and multiple interpretations as many literary texts, the participants in the conversational storytelling situation orient themselves towards assigning a meaning to a given telling of a story. This process of definitivization is necessary so that the talk following the story can proceed smoothly, with the excursion into the storyworld sufficiently understood so that at least some of those actively engaged in the talk can integrate the point of the story into the conversation. Without such a possibility of integration, the story would function as an obstacle to further talk, since no one would know what it was about well enough to deal with it. Think for a moment, if you will, of the situation which sometimes occurs when someone tells an inappropriate joke. That joke, that chunk of talk, hangs in the air unresponded to, until somehow, awkwardly, socially noticeably, the talk resumes on the «other side» of the faux pas. In order to avoid the tension and discomfort which result from such a misfire in communication, storytellers and story recipients allow their behavior to be regulated, in so far as possible, by a set of constraints which requires the assignment of meaning to possibly ambiguous texts, while simultaneously facilitating the interpretive process.

As we shall see, the «meaning» of any given telling of a story in a conversation is socially determined: a story is «about» what it is taken to be about, for that telling as revealed by both the internal structure of the story as told and the talk which follows the telling. Should someone «re-tell» the «same» story in another conversa-

tion, then *that* telling would be assigned a meaning which might or might not be identical to the interpretation the story was given the first time around. A story told in a conversation is thus not a fixed semantic entity, but is an open text which is «closed» or «fixed» each time it is told by the way it is told and received. Clearly, however, a storyteller and the story recipients are not at liberty to assign random interpretations to stories. What a story can be taken to be about is constrained in important ways by the linguistic and conversational conventions which regulate this sort of verbal social behavior. In this paper, I will outline briefly the inter-relationship between the everyday storyteller, his interlocutors, the text which is produced and the constraints arising from the conversational context which shape both the conversational act of storytelling and the stories themselves. Because it is especially illustrative, much of this discussion will center around the special relationship which obtains between a «first story» and a «second story,» since, in his choice of topic or point of his own story, the teller of the second story demonstrates his understanding of what he believes to have been the point of the first story.[1]

II

Telling a story in a conversation, one of the commonplace linguistic acts of creation, takes a type of courage not unlike that needed by an author in giving consent for his work to be published. Just as the writer launches his precious text defenseless into a world where it may well be misunderstood and disliked and almost certainly ignored, a conversational storyteller thrusts his story onto the assembled company, exposing his text to disinterest or dislike and inevitably exposing himself to the immediate critical judgment of his interlocutors. A bit overdone, one might think. But let us consider for a moment the situation which normally obtains in a conversation and see what is altered in a relatively democratic event by one conversationalist taking on the role of storyteller.

Generally speaking, conversations can be characterized as «democratic» because unlike interrogations, testimonies, sermons, classes, lectures, etc. all speakers have more or less equal access to the floor. In practice, of course, a pecking order exists in most social organizations and some speakers may be able to dominate

the floor. That «domination» is only perceivable, however, because we share a normative model which includes the information that turn-taking takes place frequently and in an orderly manner despite the fact that no one speaker has a length of speaking time reserved for him in advance. One need only observe a fast, furious discussion to notice how seldom, relatively speaking, more than one person is talking at one time. In order for turns to be taken in an orderly manner and overlaps and problems to be resolved efficiently, it is clear that speakers are in command of some sort of talk management system, as has been claimed by ethno-methodologists who study conversational interaction.[2]

The situation of regular speaker change is disrupted when one speaker decides to tell a story. In order to tell a story properly, the storyteller must structure his story well and satisfy the narrative conventions which require situating the characters in the story in time and space, telling the significant events in the order in which they took place and differentiating among the events and circumstances included in the telling so that the relative importance of various aspects of the story can be evaluated. Providing all of this information takes time, and for the protracted length of time it takes, one speaker, the teller, holds the floor.

One immediate consequence of this is that the story recipients are a more or less captive audience. Once someone has said «Did I ever tell you about the time...» (or «That reminds me of when...» or «I've got to tell you what happened yesterday...») the story recipients must listen and refrain from talking freely. Unlike the reader, who can always put down the book he is reading if it proves to be displeasing for any reason, the story recipients must listen through to the end or risk unpleasantness and awkwardness in the interaction.

Taken together, there is a good deal of pressure on the conversational teller to tell a story that is worth telling and, even more importantly, worth hearing. Generally speaking, the rule in conversational interaction (in most parts of the Western World) is that people are interested in themselves and therefore what is «worth telling» and «worth hearing» will address their concerns most directly. In an everyday conversation, adherence to this relevance rule is observed in storytelling by making sure that the «message» of the story has sufficient generality so that it can be seen to be applicable to circumstances outside of the story-world; by tending to tell as stories events which are relatively recent rather than those which are very far removed in time and which concern persons of some

importance to the interlocutors—if only because they are important to the teller, who being co-present in the interaction is close to the other interactants; and by telling stories which can seem to be related to the talk going on. [3]

In general, one can say that a competent conversationalist does not just start to tell a story at any moment. The story must be seen to follow naturally from a point being made, a topic being dealt with in the general talk. Stories in conversation are often thought of as «illustrations,» and a well integrated story will be introduced in order to illustrate a point already being discussed. When carefully done, storytelling can be experienced as an effective and vivid way of exploring one aspect of a matter under discussion in some depth; when badly accomplished, telling a story can be seen as a digression and a blatant attempt to change the subject and «grab the floor» for oneself. Therefore, storytellers in their «entrance talk,» in that part of the talk which serves as a transition between the story proper and the surrounding and triggering discussion, strive to make their story seem relevant to the talk which immediately preceded it. If it is not relevant, if it does not seem to be suggested by the flow of talk and the topics at hand, then the storyteller must do a great deal of extra work in the interaction to «excuse» the fact that the point of the story, «why it is being told,» is NOT related to what people have been talking about. That it is, in other words, off the subject. [4]

Once the story is underway, the pressure to remain relevant to the immediate concerns of the story recipients lessens. However, storytellers do demonstrate «recipient design» in building their stories. They choose some aspects rather than others to dwell on in detail, or leave out information troubling to some of the recipients or problematic in the circumstances of telling which might well be included at other times. A story which hinges on a foible of a particular character will be told in a different way to someone who is familiar with that person and to someone who does not know him, since failing to given enough explanation can bewilder some interlocutors and cause difficulty precisely as giving too much can insult and exasperate others. The presence of the story recipients, their precise identities and presumed states of knowledge of the goings-on in the storyworld have a decisive effect on the story text which is produced. [5]

The question of «the text» is in itself a complex and interesting one for the case of oral storytelling. Careful examination of the transcript of an interaction at the point at which one knows a story

is being told can easily result in confusion as one looks for the «story.» Literary texts normally have beginnings and ends and although authors can try all sorts of tricks to suggest that the story is open-ended, one has a text which is itself an object. Only philosophers of literature and other folks who deal in the arcane would seriously want to include the reader's responses as part of the *text* of the work.[6] In oral storytelling, the text is a composite of many types of clauses, some of which can be evaluated as true only in the storyworld evoked, while others are «true» only in the conversational instant of being spoken (i.e. «I can't remember right now what his name is but...»). There are clauses spoken by story recipients who have never heard the story before but chime in with their own details of what must have gone on as a way of showing understanding and appreciation of the story, and there is all manner of talk oriented towards the storytelling itself from the embedding conversation («Oh, the phone's ringing, I'll finish this story when I get back,...»).[7] Since a «text» of some sort is produced through the interaction and it is only that talk which can possibly contain «the story,» such questions as whether the recipients' responses should be part of the «work» or part of the «experience» come to have more urgency because some «responses» are not extraneous to the telling, are not a theoretical construct on the part of an analyst but are actually present in the talk exactly as much as the talk containing information about the storyworld.[8]

III

So far we have concentrated on the role of the storyteller, merely mentioning the role of the story recipient and the nature of his contributions to the resulting story text in passing. Though one's first impression is that the story recipients are largely passive in a storytelling interaction, their role is actually a good deal more complex than merely not talking while the story is being told. There is a strong expectation that they will evidence understanding throughout the course of the story with nods, uh-huhs, laughter, expressions of sympathy or whatever is appropriate. Failing to produce proper tokens of following what is going on in the storyworld will elicit queries from the storyteller asking for confirmation that the listener is, indeed, listening and understanding.

At the end of a story, it is particularly incumbent on the story recipients to demonstrate that they have really followed what the story was about. After the story proper, there is always a chunk of talk, at least a couple of turns long, which revolves around the story, integrating it into the re-establishing conversation. Often a story participant will ask a question during this period of «exit talk» which shows his awareness of some key aspect of the story, or people may laugh and repeat a key phrase or two from a humorous story. If there is no reaction to a story, if it is ignored and the conversation procedes without taking into account any information or moral presented through the telling, both storyteller and story recipients know that the storytelling has been judged inappropriate in some way and the storyteller's status is low, at least for that moment. In the more usual case, notice is taken of the story and there are comments and remarks about the happenings in the storyworld and the implications for the situation under discussion in the talk that make it clear that the storyteller's effort is *not* being badly received and demonstrate how the story is being interpreted: as comic or sad, about one event or another, one circumstance or another. Following the telling, the story recipients will normally proffer an interpretation, either explicitly as a comment or implicitly by orienting further talk around a given topic.[9] Should the storyteller disagree with the interpretation, there will be a period of negotiation dealing with what the story should be taken to be about, and the storyteller may even re-enter the storyworld and add more details, put things differently, present things from alternative points of view or even merely repeat what had been said before in order to enforce his own interpretation of what the point was. Should this not work, the storyteller may give way and re-tell the story to support a different interpretation, one more acceptable to his interlocutors.[10]

In any case, as was mentioned earlier, an absence of exit talk or a lack of willingness on the part of the story recipients to engage the story at all is a socially salient reaction which might result from embarrassment, confusion, annoyance, or lack of esteem for the speaker. Since the reception of the story is highlighted during exit talk, a failure on the recipients' part to understand the story may reflect badly on them: failing to understand an appropriate, well structured story is a mark of conversational ineptitude on their part. On the other hand, an appropriate response which demonstrates understanding of the story and presents in that reaction some new insight or development is most well-regarded. One

of the most interesting and important ways to react to a «first story» in a conversation is to *tell the next story.*

IV

Telling a «second story» or, more generally, the «next story» in a conversation, presents the teller with its own difficulties. Put most simply, the next story must be «on the same topic» as the previous one or «about something which was mentioned» in the first story. However, not just any semantically related story will do: there are a number of constraints which must be observed. The most important of these, is that the next story must take as its starting point something which the previous story was «really» about.

If we were satisfied with an «explanation» for what a second story could be about which went no further than vaguely asserting that the next story must be related to something in the first story, we would have no way to account for the inappropriateness of a second story built around a trivial incident in the first story.[11] For example, if in the first story one of the characters entered a room where a crucial event took place, a next story which began «That reminds me of the time when I went into a room» would probably not be acceptable unless what happened in that room were analogous in some way to what greeted the character in the first story upon entering the original room. If the second storyteller built his story around an incident totally unrelated to what greeted that character in the original story upon entering the room, the teller of the first story and the others present would judge the second teller to be either incompetent or manipulative, since he used an *incidental detail* in the first story as an excuse to tell a story that he, himself, wanted to tell. In other words, whatever his motivation, he failed to heed in the telling of the first story the clues that act to differentiate the «important» aspects of the story from «incidental» or «background» material, mere details of setting or enabling events, which do not enter into the complex logic of role fulfillment and reversal of circumstances which underlie the plots of conversational stories no less than literary ones.

One might assume that it would be self-evident which aspects of a story were most important. One might say, those aspects of a story which are most important are those which are «most in-

teresting» or «most novel,» which deviate most from the norm of what one expects to be the case. In fact, «explanations» of this sort really do not «explain» anything, since they assume a highly normative world with some, albeit few, highly marked aspects. This sort of analysis might be applied with success to some science fiction stories, but it is unsatisfactory in accounting for the «tellability» of stories whose actions revolve around losing one's luggage at the airport in London or having survived the collision of shopping carts at the supermarket: the sorts of stories one commonly tells in conversations.

Explanations of the «what is interesting is interesting» school are based on the correct observation that in stories (i.e. those narrative texts describing specific incidents which occurred in the past) something «happened» and that «something» was in some sense, unexpected and came about because of the juxtaposition of a number of factors which caused «it» to «happen» and to have the status in a conversation of a «reportable» incident. In stories, these reportables are presented as deviations from the «script,» (a stereotypic sequence of events that one expects to find in the sort of situation described by the text, deriving from our knowledge of the world which structures our expectations). [12] However, material may be included in a story which represents a deviation from a script which is in itself not particularly important or the key issue being illustrated by the storytelling.

So although a next storyteller is «fairly safe» in telling a story which involves some sort of similar script deviation, this is clearly not the only choice which next storytellers make. For example, a story involving being frightened while a child and being comforted by Uncle Bob might follow another story detailing Uncle Bob's kindness on another occasion, or even a story in which it is alleged that Uncle Bob was a nasty man. What these stories would have in common, would be that they would each illustrate aspects of Uncle Bob's personality, and not that they concerned similar script deviations. On the other hand, a story detailing Uncle Bob's kindness to the teller as a child, might well seem an irrelevant follow-up story if the previous story were about a fire in the wastepaper basket at the family reunion where Uncle Bob happened to be, along with a number of other people who were also mentioned in the story. This is not to say that one *could not* tell a story about Uncle Bob at that point, but that the teller would have to do more work in the interaction, in that particular telling of the story, to make explicit the connection between his story and the previous story.

Thus, stories in conversation can not be considered independent disembodied units in the sense that literary stories often are. Conversational stories always function syntagmatically: the choice to tell a story and the judgment of the appropriateness of that choice are always related to the story's position in the discourse. This is most easily seen in the «topping» constraint which operates on next stories and requires that a subsequent story be «better» than a previous story in some way. This is often interpreted to mean mainly that a second story about an accident must be followed by a better accident story, a story about losing one's luggage must be topped by one involving even more luggage and so on. And, in fact, «better is more» is often a rule seen to be operating in next stories. However, the actual parameters for «better» or «more important» are a bit more subtle than that and relate to the observation made briefly earlier that what is «closer» to people in space and time and relationship is «more relevant» to them than things which are further away. Therefore, a story about a neighbor who was killed in a car accident can be perfectly well followed by a story in which the teller has had a bad accident a long time before or a much more minor accident recently. Even a story about something which could have caused an accident can follow a story about a fatal accident to a stranger without difficulty, since what could happen is of immediate relevance not only to the teller but also to the recipients.

The topping rule is suspended if the next story is specifically elicited as a suitable next story. However, if the events in the subsequent story are not as impressive as the events in the previous story, even though the later teller is in no way guilty of the problem which could be caused by taking up the company's time telling them something uninteresting, he will probably try to make his story very short, apologize for its inadequacy or try to «top» in another way, by telling the story in a humorous way, if that is reasonable, or by making it clear that although the events might not *seem* important, they still affect his life in a strong way.[13] Thus, though a next teller operates under slightly different constraints than a first teller, they are in fact very closely related.

V

So far, we have described how the meaning of a story is socially determined, and how a possibly ambiguous, indeterminate open text is closed through the social interaction surrounding the telling. We have made clear that someone who wishes to tell a story must make it relevant to the topic of the ongoing talk and have explained how the teller of a next story may appropriately design a story to tell in response to one just told. His story, we have said, must be relevant to the point made through the telling of the previous story. However, we have not yet given an account of how anyone might know what the point of any given telling of a story might be, whereas we have rejected as inadequate pseudo-explanations which would have us believe that what is «interesting» about a story is sufficiently self-evident so that the story recipients «just know» what the story was about. Therefore, in the concluding section of this paper, I will briefly describe a linguistic framework which details the constraints imposed by the text of the story as it is told on the interpretation of what it is about.

This framework, based upon interrelating the information tellers include in telling stories, gives us the point of the story as determined by the text of the telling. The final interpretation of what a story is to be taken to be about for a particular telling is then assigned through the talk which follows upon the story's being told. This means that if a series of stories is told in a conversation, the meaning of any given story is in large part determined by the stories that follow it, while the meaning of subsequent stories is largely determined by the point made in the telling of previous stories. The text and the reception of the text taken together determine the interpretation of a story, while the text, as we shall see, can be analyzed in terms of three types of information that tellers necessarily include in constructing those texts which we recognize as stories. Texts which do not contain the expected information and the expected arrangements of that information are not stories, as careful analysis of transcripts of conversations which contain talk which we take as stories has shown.

Storytellers always include three types of information in their stories: events, durative-descriptive information and evaluative meta-information. These three types of information are encoded linguistically in the text in distinctive ways. Events that establish a time line for the story are encoded in main clauses in the simple past

or historical present with verbs with instantaneous aspect. The reversal of two of these clauses will result in a change in the semantic interpretation of the text, since our narrative conventions (in English) require that the order in which events are told mirror the order in which they are presumed to have occurred.[14] Durative-descriptive information is all of that story stuff which involves non-instantaneous happenings. Thus descriptions of states and characteristics of people and setting which persist over a period of time are included here, along with occurrences which take place over sufficiently long periods of time so that other happenings could take place during the period of time they are going on. The evaluative information is one of the most characteristic features of conversational storytelling. Due perhaps to the pressure of holding the floor, storytellers will make use of linguistic and paralinguistic rhetorical devices to indicate the relative importance they are assigning to the events and durative-descriptive information in their stories.[15]

Some events, normally those which describe crucial changes of state, are evaluated as being particularly important, while others whose role in the structure of the story is to mark the passage of time and to accomplish tasks such as getting the characters from one place to another and reporting what was said at a particular instant in time may well remain relatively unmarked. Similarly, some durative-descriptive information is singled out through the use of evaluative devices as particularly important. Normally, the important durative-descriptive information will concern particular states, attitudes, situations, etc. which indicate the relevance of the change in state brought about by the heavily evaluated events. Whether a character in a story is very thirsty may or may not be particularly significant. However, if it is an important state which in the narrator's view is an important enabling condition for the logic of the plot or a significant result of an action in the plot, then the narrator will explicitly signal to the story recipients his evaluation of the importance of the character's thirst to the action. Conversely, the action in a given conversational story is often of significance only because of some other condition obtaining in the storyworld. Therefore, in order to justify telling a story about losing one's luggage in the London airport rather than merely mentioning that the luggage was lost, a storyteller must have some sort of point to make which is of interest and significance to his interlocutors. Often that point will be related to the significance which the event had to the storyteller at the time and will involve some particular discomfort

or difficulty or unusual circumstances which surrounded the lost luggage. Perhaps the luggage was lost at the beginning of a vacation, or the people at the airline lost-luggage counter were unusually unhelpful (or even more unusually, particularly helpful). The explicit mention of the circumstance which made this a memorable happening worth narrating at length will help the story recipients evaluate what the narrator's view of the point of the story is to be taken to be. Should they disagree that the circumstances and the events are sufficiently closely related to justify the interpretation that the teller has implicitly assigned to the story by his differential weighting of the information he has presented, the story recipients will ask certainly questions and make comments indicating their lack of agreement after the telling is completed, if not while it is still going on.

Therefore, the «meaning» of the story in a conversation is a product of the interpretation assigned to it by the teller in the telling and that agreed upon by the teller and recipients in the talk following the telling. Should teller and recipients fail to agree on what the story is about, a period of some awkwardness will result in the conversation which may end when the conversation moves on to another topic. On the other hand, the teller may be sufficiently frustrated by the misunderstanding that his story has engendered that he may explicitly try to explain what the story was supposed to have been about. Then, too, the story recipients are not necessarily passive and may, somewhat later, ask the teller the relevance of the unsuccessful story. The story could then be assigned a meaning long after the moment in the conversation when it was actually told.

VI

In conclusion, then, I would like to explain very briefly why I was interested in writing this paper to a literary audience which I do not normally address since I am not a literary theorist but a linguist concerned with the structure of conversational texts.

Within the field of poetics, there have been increasingly sophisticated analyses of the locus of meaning in literature. «Meaning» has been seen variously as a property of the text, an embodiment of the author's intentions, or, more currently, considered an

artifact of the perceptions and reactions of the reader. The emphasis, however, has remained on the «literary,» with no real attention being paid to the nature and construction of meaning in the oral non-literary narrative texts (i.e. «stories») which we routinely produce and interpret in the course of conversations everyday. My belief is that careful, informed attention to the constraints on talk that regulate the orderly flow of non-literary discourse can be, potentially, a source of insight for those concerned with literariness and specifically with questions of communication and meaning in literary texts. Such awareness should not, in any way diminish one's appreciation of the accomplishments of literary artists, but may well help to clarify precisely the nature of that accomplishment.

NOTES

1. The problem of the relationship between the «first story» and subsequent stories in a conversation was first discussed by Harvey Sacks in his unpublished «Lecture Notes on Stories in Conversation» (University of California at Los Angeles, 1971-2). As an ethno-methodologist interested in the sociology of conversation and the structural properties of conversational interaction, Sacks was interested in identifying the social constraints on conversation, and the present paper will rely heavily on Sacks' insights into the operation of social constraints on talk. Readers who would like more information on this point are urged to try to locate a copy of these, unfortunately, unpublished lectures.

2. Harvey Sacks, Emmanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson, «A Simplest Systematics for the Organization of Turntaking for Conversation,» *Language*, 50 (1974), 696-735.

3. The first two of these are similar to John Ross's «firstness principles,» in which what is closer to «me» is more important than things at more of a distance.

4. Gail Jefferson, «Sequential Aspects of Storytelling in Conversation», in *Studies in the Organization of Conversational Interaction*, ed. Jim Schenkein (New York: Academic Press, 1978), pp. 219-248.

5. This is what Sacks, in his writings, and other ethno-methodologists who study conversation (Schegloff, Jefferson, Schenkein etc.) refer to as «recipient design.» I take both the term and the insight into the relevance of recipient design phenomena from them.

6. I am here making a distinction between the «text» of a story as the physical embodiment of the linguistic encoding of the story, and the record of the interaction in

which a given reader meets a given text or a general reader meets a given text.

7.   L. Polanyi and R. Scha, «Temporal Semantics of Stories in Everyday Conversation» (forthcoming).

8.   I am, of course, making reference to explicit responses to a story and not to, what might be called, «reactions» to it. «Reactions» which are not articulated, verbally or non-verbally, at the time of the telling, clearly have the same status for the everyday text as for the literary text. This means that we can not clearly demarcate the literary text from the everday text, but that, theoretically speaking, the conversational story text seems to present more complexities to the analyst than the literary text since it subsumes all of the complexities of its more exalted brother while having a special set of its own.

9.   Again, Sacks' «Lecture Notes» talk about this sort of phenomenon.

10.   Livia Polanyi, «So What's the Point?» *Semiotica*, 25, No. 3-4 (1979), 208-24.

11.   Sacks and the other ethno-methodologists studying storytelling (Jefferson, Ryave) discuss the notion of «topical relevance» very informally and do not draw strong generalizations about the relationship one story can have to another. See Alan L. Ryave's «On the Achievement of a Series of Stories» in Schenkein, *Conversational Interaction,* p. 11.

12.   The notion of «script» is most often associate with Roger Schank and the Yale Artifical Intelligence Group. Though the notion of «script» is really too powerful to be very helpful and claims for the centrality of this notion in language processing (and cognitive processing in general) are too extreme to be taken at face value, «script» is a useful concept which does play a role in story structuring. See Roger Schank and Robert Abelson, *Scripts, Plans, Goals and Understanding* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978). See also, Livia Polanyi, «On Telling the Same Story Twice,» *Text,* I, No. 4 (1981), 315-336 for a discussion of a more modest role for scripts in story understanding.

13.   American storytelling practices, are, in part, based on competitive talking. The «topping constraint» derives in large part from this aggressive attitude. While many of the observations about story telling which are presented in this paper probably apply to many different cultures, this «going the teller one better» behavior (and the associated social justification) seem to me to apply very well to American conversations and very possibly would apply less well to some others.

14.   See W. Labov and J. Waletsky, «Narrative Analysis: Oral Versions of Personal Experience,» in *Essays on the Verbal and Visual Arts*, ed. J. Helms (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1967) and W. Labov, «The Transformation of Experience in Narrative Syntax,» in *Language in the Inner City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972) for a discussion of the «narrative constraints» in English oral narrative.

15.   For a much more extended discussion of this framework with extensive analyses of tape recorded oral stories see L. Polanyi, «American Story: Social and Cultural Constraints on the Meaning and Structure of Stories in Conversation,»

Dissertation University of Michigan 1978 (esp. chapters II and III); «Getting the Point: The Role of Cultural Presuppositions in Storyunderstanding,» *Poetics Today,* 2, N°. 2 (1981), 97-112; «Can You Tell the Same Story Twice?» Text I, N°. 4 (1981), 315-336. «Literary Aspects of Oral Storytelling» to appear in *Written and Spoken Language,* D. Tanner ed. (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corp.).