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Dialogic Editing: Interpreting How Kaluli Read *Sound and Sentiment*

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> The word in language is half someone elses.
>
> —Mikhail Bakhtin

> When the writer becomes the center of his attention, he becomes a *nudnik*. And a *nudnik* who believes he's profound is even worse than just a plain *nudnik*.
>
> —Isaac Bashevis Singer

An engaging dimension of current interpretive ethnography and its critical rhetoric is the concern to situate knowledge, power, authority, and representation in terms of the social construction of literary realism. Ethnographers today are reading, writing, and thinking more about the politics of ethnographic writing.[1] That is why I read Bakhtin; in his literary world, a dialogic imagination helps reposition ethnographic writing beyond its overt trajectories, and toward reflexive, critical readings. Yet I've had a tendency to *kvetch* about the very literary genre and trend that I'm here to contribute to. I like the emphasis on a self-conscious, dialectical invention of culture, but I worry that the enterprise not devolve into an invention of the cult of the author. First-person narrative may be the fashionable way to write and critique ethnography these days, but that alone doesn't guarantee that the work is ethnographically insightful, self-conscious, or revelatory. That is why, in tandem, I read Singer; in his literary world, there is caution that first-person writing not pass as a ruse, that hermeneutic not pass for a mispronunciation of a *nom de plum:* Herman Nudnik.

A Context

This article opens to a fixed-in-print text to look at how a new set of readers—its original subjects—opened up and unfixed some of its meanings and repositioned its author's authority. I am the author, and the text is *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression* (1982), an ethnography about the Kaluli people of Bosavi, Papua New Guinea. While I have been stimulated in this endeavor by previous "afterword" essays in Papua New Guinea ethnographies—Bateson's for *Naven* (1958), Rappaport's for *Pigs for the Ances-*

tors (1984)—what follows was more directly inspired by a series of significant field experiences that positioned Kaluli and me in a more blatant subject-to-subject relationship.

In 1982 I returned to Papua New Guinea for a short summer field trip after an absence of five years. While I was back in Bosavi, my book was published; its arrival in the field, and my momentary fixation on it stimulated the Kaluli to ask about it, and stimulated me to attempt translating sections of it for discussion with them. This article reports on the form of ethnographic discourse that developed in these encounters.

The "dialogic" dimension here implicates what Kaluli and I say to, about, with, and through each other; with developing a juxtaposition of Kaluli voices and my own.[2] My focus on "editing" invokes a concern with authoritative representation; the power to control which voices talk when, how much, in what order, in what language. "Dialogic editing," then, is the impact of Kaluli voices on what I tell you about them in my voice; how their take on my take on them requires reframing and refocusing my account. This is the inevitable politics of writing culture, of producing selections and passing them off as authentic and genuine, and then confronting a recentered view of that selection process that both questions and comments upon the original frame and focus. In more direct terms, my aim here is to let some Kaluli voices get a few words in edgewise amongst my other readers and book reviewers.

My secondary title, "Interpreting How Kaluli Read *Sound and Sentiment*" is meant to implicate the work Kaluli helped me do in order to "write" them, and the work I had to do for them to "read" that writing. I want to suggest that this understanding is multiply textual, that Kaluli perceive the coherences and contradictions in my representational work as being about me in similar ways to how I perceive the book to be written about them. I also want to suggest Kaluli perceive it as a story about themselves that they also have occasion to tell, a line I'll use to play off of Geertz's phrase situating culture as "a story they tell themselves about themselves" (1973:448). But Kaluli tellings are different from mine in arrangement, focus, intention, and style. I'd also suggest that my Kaluli readers realize as clearly as I do that all of our tellings elide and/or condense certain scenarios while playing out others in detail; and that both kinds of tellings and tellers have a complicated cross-understanding of the way they speak and write with an acute awareness of different audiences.

A Text

Sound and Sentiment is an ethnography of sound as a cultural system, a book about natural and human sounds—birds, weeping, poetics, and song—and how they are meaningfully situated in the ethos, or emotional tone, of Kaluli expression. The form of the book originates with Kaluli ideas as they are packed into a myth about the origin of weeping, poetics, and song in the plaintive sound of a fruitdove, the *muni* bird. I present and unpack that myth, following its structure, with chapters on birds, weeping, poetics, and song that alternate structural and

cognitive summaries with symbolic/performance case studies. In this fashion, the book continually moves back and forth between Kaluli idealizations, prescriptions, intentions, and actualizations, and these are played off each other by my juxtapositions of linguistic (from metalanguage to texts), musical (from form to performance), and cultural (from ideation to action) analyses.

As to what is "in" the book: Kaluli myths and cosmology portray birds and humans as transformations of each other in death and life, living in different planes of visible and nonvisible reality that in part "show through" to each other. Birds can "show through" by their sounds; Kaluli apprehend and relate bird sound categories to spirit attributions according to which ones "whistle," "say their names," "talk Kaluli," "cry," "sing," or "make a lot of noise." The explicit link between bird sound and human emotional expression is first formed in the arena of weeping. The descending four tones of the *muni* bird call creates a melodic framework through which women's funerary wailing turns into wept song.

While the performance of this sung-texted-weeping evokes the image that, like the deceased, the weeper too has "become a bird," the switch from spontaneous to elaborately planned ritual expression hinges on poetics. Transforming the "hard words" of assertive discourse to the "bird sound words" of poetic song involves evocative linguistic strategies to speak "inside" the words, and to "turn them over" so they reveal new "underneaths." Song texts are organized by these devices to follow a "path" along a set of place-names; these evoke the pathos of experiences Kaluli share together at the places that they travel to or visit each day.

These poetic "bird sound words" are then melded with the musical material of bird sound, a melodic song scale again based on the tones of the *muni* bird call. A polysemous lexicon of water motion names the contours of song melody and creates a theoretical vocabulary for compositional and aesthetic discourse on song. To be deeply affective and to move members of an audience to tears, these "flowing" sings are then performed in a plaintive bird voice by a dancer costumed as a bird at a waterfall.

While these are some of the features detailed in the book, it is probably more to the point to say that my "topic" was the aesthetics of Kaluli emotion, or, put differently, the invention of sound as aesthetically organized sentiment. My work in *Sound and Sentiment* was to demonstrate how sound is constructed and interpreted as the embodiment of feelings; that is, as aesthetically affecting evocation in the Kaluli ritual performance of weeping and poetic song.

Readers and Readings

Let me now introduce some of my Kaluli readers and say something about how they read and about how they are positioned in relation to my ethnographic work. Virtually all Kaluli have seen books of some kind. (E. L.) Buck and Bambi Schieffelin (the researchers with whom I have worked in Bosavi over the last ten years) and I have always had a variety of books around the house, and Kaluli have had ample opportunities to watch us read. We also on occasion have read out loud

to Kaluli and have shown them pictures and illustrations in books and magazines. Many Kaluli have gazed silently as we sat silently turning pages. A typical late afternoon interchange among Kaluli standing on our porches and looking in the windows might go like this: "What are they doing?" (interrupted by) "Nothing . . . they're looking at books." Indeed, the word "book," which has the same phonological shape in English and *tok pisin,* the pidgin/creole lingua franca of urban Papua New Guinea (where it is spelled *buk*) is one of the few *tok pisin* words universally placed in the Kaluli loan-word lexicon at this juncture.

Other varieties of familiarity with books have developed through contact Kaluli have had with missionaries who have been in residence since 1971. The mission people have done a small amount of literacy work, and a local school now run by the provincial government exists at the mission station. There are books in the local school, and all Kaluli know that the missionares have a master book of their beliefs, the Bible, that they intend to translate into the Kaluli language. Books are also not entirely the domain of whites: Kaluli have also been read to by other Papua New Guineans, for example, in church by Kaluli and other pastors, at the school by teachers, or in other situations by government workers.

Kaluli have also watched the Schieffelins and me type and write by hand, and they have asked why we do it. As an explanation we have all probably told them at one point or another that we write so that we can remember what they tell us, and make books about it that our own people can read. Moreover, writing and the handling of books is an activity clearly central to work we and Kaluli do together. When a missionary linguist went to Bosavi in 1964 to supervise the building of a local airstrip and to take a first crack at the language, he introduced the word "school"as the name for the activity that local people would do with him to teach their language. The word was turned into a verb, *sugul-a:la:ma,* "do school," and "doing school" is generically what Kaluli do when they work with us.[3] Part of school work is watching us *dogo:f wanalo,* "yellow skins," as Kaluli call us, write. One day Ayasilo: was helping Bambi Schieffelin and me recruit a new transcription assistant. "Doing school is very hard and goes slow," Ayasilo: explained to young Igale; "when you speak they write it and rub it out and keep writing it again." (The Kaluli verb for "etch" was semantically extended long ago to cover the activity of "writing.")

Young men like Ayasilo: and Igale are not typical Kaluli. Both have a Papua New Guinea school education, are among the five or six Kaluli we know who speak English with moderate conversational skill, and can read and write to a very modest extent in Kaluli, *tok pisin,* and English. Men of this sort have worked often with Bambi Schieffelin and me as linguistic transcription assistants. They have sophisticated senses of their own linguistic and cultural identities as well as substantial contact with outsiders and other Papua New Guineans.

Ayasilo: and Ho:nowo: were two young men in this category who read *Sound and Sentiment* with me at informal and formal school sessions. On occasion these men actually did read out loud directly from the book—passages that I selected for them, knowing that there would be relatively few difficult words or places with

lists or diagrams full of Kaluli words. With these men I speak in a continual mixture of Kaluli and English.

At the other end of the spectrum of my readers were older Kaluli men. They typically have had no prolonged experience of the world beyond their immediate neighbors. What they know of the outside is what of it has been brought or narrated by yonger Kaluli. With them I speak only in Kaluli. These men included Jubi, a Kaluli man of wisdom and knowledge in various realms of things traditional. Jubi was a particularly astute natural historian, and he lived through the whole sweep of contact experiences from the mid-1930s until the present. Jubi was someone with whom Buck Schieffelin and I had done substantial schooling during each of our previous field trips.

Somewhere in between these two poles were two other people. Gigio was in the same age range as the young men mentioned earlier, but he has never been to school. He is a nonliterate Kaluli speaker with several experiences in the 1970s on labor contracts in the Papua New Guinea world outside Bosavi, and thus has had substantial contacts with Europeans and with other Papua New Guineans with whom he can communicate in *tok pisin.*

As a young boy, Gigio started working as a cook for Buck Schieffelin in 1966, and has held a continually expanding version of that position during each of our field trips over the last 20 years. Gigio is in many ways our closest confidant, friend, and barometer of everyday meanings and events in Bosavi. He is someone we talk to each day about everything from the weather and local garden crops to the poetics of ceremonial songs and linguistic nuances of Kaluli speech. He is enormously intelligent, curious, and perhaps the most knowledgeable interpreter to other Kaluli about what the "yellow skins" are up to.

When I returned in 1982, I found that Gigio had married Faile; she joined him each evening with the cooking and washing work, and then often with the conversations that we typically had before we all went off to sleep. Some of the reading sessions with Gigio also included Faile, a monolingual Kaluli speaker with no experience outside of Bosavi. Gigio also helped me stage my most experimental attempt to hear Kaluli responses to *Sound and Sentiment,* by taking a tape recorder to the communal longhouse one night and there recording discussions he prompted about the book while I was away at my own house.

In summary, the diverse social positioning of these five readers couples with the general understanding of the book-as-work-and-object surveyed earlier to clarify the fact that the appearance of my book and the claim to Kaluli that I wrote it about them was not incomprehensible or bizarre. Now to turn to the substance of these casual and "doing school" readings and to some of the dialogues they animated.

Before translating from the English to Kaluli, I started the first sessions by letting my Kaluli readers handle and thumb through the book. A substantial amount of time was thus spent discussing the book as an object, especially the amount of and kinds of black and white and color photographs, line drawings, and print. Doing this, Ho:nowo: and Ayasilo: noticed that there were two different

kinds of print, standard and italics, and they questioned why this was so. That started the next dialogue in motion.

I explained that at many places in the book I told an idea first in the Kaluli language (italic print) as they had helped me write or transcribe it from conversation, texts, or songs. Then I said the same thing in English (standard print) so that my people would understand it. I did not know a Kaluli term for "translate," so I simply pointed to the italic writing and said (in Kaluli), "Here it is written in Kaluli," then pointing to the standard typeface below said, "and then the same thing is written in English." Ho:nowo: pointed and said (in Kaluli) "So Kaluli language is written there, then turned around in English language written there below."

I then questioned him in English and Kaluli about his use of this verb "turn around" for the English word "translate," with two things in mind. First, it is ironic that in *tok pisin* the term for "translate" or "translator" is *turnim tok.* (The term for the *tok pisin* verb "turn" is not related and comes from English "about," namely, *baut, bautim.*) My immediate thought was that Ho:nowo: had directly back-translated this Kaluli verb from the *tok pisin* idiom *turnim tok,* thereby coining a literalized Kaluli verb for "translate."

But another piece of lexical evidence was contradictory. The same Kaluli verb for "turn around" is used in poetic metalanguage to refer to a text copied in terms of major imagery but reformulated with new place-names and minor imagery. This kind of "turning around" is a compositional strategy for recycling poignant poetic phrases while dressing them up enough to have a fresh impact that bears the mark of their singer/composer. What Kaluli call a *gisalo nodolo:,* a "turned around *gisalo* song," is one that has had the text reworked in this way. One way to rework a *gisalo* text is to switch back and forth between the use of the Kaluli and Sonia languages. The latter is known by few Kaluli speakers, and this kind of textual "turning around" has the effect of obfuscating the message, building the poetic intensity until the idea is then again "turned around" back into Kaluli. I was taught this metalinguistic term and the strategy it labeled in 1977 when I learned to compose *gisalo,* and I noted it in the chapter on *gisalo* in my book (1982:166). My teacher on that subject was principally Jubi, an older Kaluli man; it is highly doubtful he could have been aware of the *tok pisin* term. Therefore I had been under the impression that this "turn around" notion was indeed an old Kaluli compositional term related to nuances of linguistic similarity and difference, or even code-switching per se in the song context.

When I mentioned this, Ho:nowo: and Ayasilo: both claimed that what Jubi had told me was correct, that "turn around" was also an old Kaluli way to talk about code-switching or translation. They said they had not "turned" this "turn around" term from *tok pisin* back to Kaluli; that it was *Kaluli to hedele,* a "truly Kaluli word," that is, not a loan-word or introduction from another language. Nevertheless, there are a variety of ways that "turn around" could have come from the *tok pisin* word *turnin tok* in the last thirty years, and it is doubtful whether we will ever really know the solution to that lexical puzzle.[4]

But the real importance of "turning around" Kaluli as the ethnographer's translation work comes by juxtaposition with the next part of the story. During this discussion, Ayasilo: and Ho:nowo: also noticed that there was far more standard print than italic print in the book. I explained that after I translate from Kaluli to English, the book then uses more English to tell the meaning of the translation. I should point out that having noticed this difference, Ho:nowo: and Ayasilo: did not question or contest why there was more English than Kaluli. In fact, it made perfect sense to them that a small bit of Kaluli would have to be followed by a long stretch of English, because even once the Kaluli is directly translated ("turned around") they assumed that it would take a long time to reveal ("turn over") all the relevant meanings ("underneaths").

During this discussion I used the Kaluli word *hego:*, which means "underneath," for the English word "meaning." The phrase *hego: wido:* (or *wilo:*) means "showed the underneath."[5] The implication is to lay bare the meaning, to indicate what might not be literally evident, to show another side of the coin, or, literally following the idiom, to get under the surface of things. The notion that meanings are "underneath" surfaces is a rather fundamental Kaluli idea. Things are not simply what they appear to be; what is intended is always potentially far more than what is said or how it is said. In this context, the Kaluli metalinguistic label *bale to,* "turned over words," is quite apt to designate metaphors, obfuscations, allusions, connotations, lexical substitutes, and poetic devices (Feld 1982:138–144).

The everyday speech contrast of the two verbs *nodoma,* "turn around," and *balema,* "turn over," is revealing. One "turns around" objects with observably symmetrical, oppositional, or discrete planes; one "turns over" continuous multisurfaced objects without them. Replacing one language with another is a "turning around" of discrete items by substitution. Getting to the "underneath" of what is implied is "turning over" words to rotate or shift their multifaceted figure and ground possibilities.

Ayasilo: and Ho:nowo: then told other Kaluli that this book for "yellow skins" is "turned around" and "turned over" Kaluli.[6] They said we ethnographers are *Kaluli to nodolesen kalu,* "Kaluli language turn around people," and *hego: widesen kalu,* "underneath shower people," whose books "turn around" Kaluli into English, and then "show the underneath" of the words. This rather clever image of the intricacies of ethnographic work fits, even if the notions of "turn around," "turn over," and "show the underneath" strike you more in the way of a kinky cross-language pun. After all, we may claim to benignly or sympathetically "translate" and "interpret" languages and meanings, but many of our critics claim that this amounts to little more than "ripping off" or "fucking over" the languages and peoples concerned.

Progressing to other readings, the tendency turned to more about the book's words rather than the nature of the book's work. Before discussing the details of some of these readings, a word about the general style of these dialogues is in order. The form often went like this familiar scenario: You begin to recount a story, and, without your realizing it, the story is in fact one your partner has al-

ready heard. Perhaps you previously told it to them and forgot you did so. Perhaps it was told to them by another person. Perhaps that other teller first heard it from you. In any case they are hearing a familiar story, but being either polite, disinterested, or unable or unwilling to interrupt, they let you continue the tale without letting on that it is redundant for them. But at some point when you, the teller, pause of stumble for a word, your hearer provides it, and capitalizes on the opening to finish or close the interchange, or even fully situate the hearing as a second one.

Interactions like this constituted the most common form of my readings with Kaluli. Essentially I was providing foregroundings or anchors or scaffoldings to things they knew well; they would dive in and remind me of the workings and outcomes of it all, as if I were unaware of them, had forgotten them, or as to remind me that we'd been over this ground before. Other times my translations might be slow or halting; a second spent stumbling around for a word or mispronouncing it is all it took to animate a Kaluli hearer.

Part of this was simply a matter of excitement and of Kaluli interactional styles, many of which seem governed by the maxim: Always maintain intensity; don't hold back. Kaluli interactions, with outsiders and Kaluli companions, often come across as animated, sharp, bubbly. This is a key feature of Kaluli assertion (E. L. Schieffelin 1976:118–126; B. B. Schieffelin 1979:141–143). Borrowing some hip-hop argot from Grandmaster Blaster, many Kaluli don't hesitate to

> cap your rap,
> seal your deal,
> steal your meal
> while you spin your wheel

Indeed, it does not take long to figure out that Kaluli are quick to speak up and quicker to interrupt. You don't have to be like me, Jewish and from the urban Northeast, to enjoy and engage in Kaluli interactions, but I think it helps, particularly in terms of interpreting the subtleties of this lively interpersonal and verbal style as collaborative engagement rather than pushy abrasiveness (a not-so-uncommon attribution made both about Jews and Papua New Guinea Highlanders).

In any case, a good amount of interruption, side and splinter conversation, overlapped speech, and direct or challenging polyphonic discourse is common in Kaluli interaction, whether light or heated. And in this marked context I felt like I was often able to say no more than a few words before Kaluli would steal the moment, elaborate the tale, or provide the punchline without any of the buildup. Often I was left with the sense of "what you meant to say was . . ." before I knew what hit me.

Yet the form of these interchanges went beyond the use of my utterances as precadential formulae, *aide-mémoires,* or Rorschach stimuli for willing rap-cappers. The much more interesting outcome of this was that even when I was able to get a fair amount of my story told, my Kaluli readers essentially reconstituted portions or versions of source materials in my field notes upon hearing them summarized, capsuled, or stripped of their situated details. Kaluli took my stories and

resituated them as their own as they had once before. To do that, they took every generality I offered and worked it back to an instance, an experience, a remembered activity or action. In effect, they "turned over" my story by providing recountings of the stories that more typically are left behind in my field notes, the stories I otherwise mined in order to report Kaluli "underneaths" to my own "yellow skin" constituency.

More pointedly, the abstracting, depersonalizing, summarizing, and generalizing moments that appear in my ethnography unanchored to specific instances, attributions, and intentions are the ones that Kaluli readers most often responded to with a concretizing and repersonalizing set of questions, side comments, or interpretations. On the tapes from the evening when Gigio took my tape recorder to the longhouse, the most common interjections are: "who said that?" and "who told him that?" It was that desire to situate knowledge and experience with specific actors, agendas, and instances that was most on my Kaluli readers' minds.

An example of this sort of contestation was evidenced both in the readings of the chapter on *gisalo* songs and the comments about that chapter that Gigio recorded. That chapter contains a case history of a song sung through a spirit medium during a seance. The medium was a man from a distant community, and the seance took place at Nageba:da:n, a community an hour or so away from Sululib, our home. Additionally, the initial transcriptions of the songs were done with the help of Kulu, a young man who was also from a distant community, and most of the exegetic commentary, responses, and ethnographic information that went into my characterization came from work I did with the medium and with people from Nageba:da:n who were at the event. Few people from Sululib experienced the event, although many had heard the tape recordings.

The discussions then constantly involved quizzing me about who told me what and, one way or another, mildly challenged the authority involved. Direct and veiled accusations that the medium was a fraud and that my transcription assistant was a Christian who didn't really understand the "turned over words" of the songs were mixed with queries as to whether Buck and various people from Nageba:da:n also agreed with what I said, and suggestions that I really should have discussed a song sung during a seance at Sululib by another medium everyone (including Buck and me) knew was a better performer.

Another example involved my characterization of male and female styles of weeping. The second chapter of the book contains a metalinguistic, structural, and behavioral statement of the dimensions of contrasts that differentiate these styles. When we read this material, my readers immediately complicated the generalizations I offered, largely related to events we experienced together, as if to question my memory. They recalled that most of my experiences of weeping derived from funerals that took place when I initially arrived in Bosavi. Hearing their comments was like reading my field notes. In other words, they set their explications in the context of specific events, actors, and actions, and constantly asked who had told me one thing or another. Field notes, of course, attend to such on-the-spot actions and situations in a way that pattern overviews typically do not.

The problem of compacting and compressing instances, structuralizing their form, and presenting them pulled away from the biographies and practices in which they were embedded is no minor problem in the critique of ethnographies. So how do we understand the obvious differences of the account and its readings? One way is to claim that they are fairly superficial. For example, there is always a difference in degrees of remove from situated experiences. And book work implicates style; the writer must select, edit, compress something. Investment and salience are also different; the ethnographer more typically accounts for self-investment and the reported investments of many Others rather than the single perspective of any one actor, any one Other. Different audiences also implicate different expectations.

An alternative is to suggest that Kaluli have given me a critique and lesson in poststructuralist method; that they have exposed a deep problem about (my) ethnography, and not a superficial one. A more cynical reaction would be to claim that all I have shown is that my Kaluli commentators are stuck in a world of the concrete (or stuck in the forest mud) and that this is precisely why an ethnographer is necessary—to tell "the point" of it all. Surely *Sound and Sentiment* is not intended as unmediated copy of "the native point of view." I think that few ethnographers these days would quibble with Geertz's (1976) assertion that ethnographies are supposed to be what we ethnographers think about things as much as they are supposed to be accounts of what we think the locals think they are doing.

Up against these possibilities, my own take on the interpretive moves of my readers is more local. I don't think that Kaluli readings of my ethnography are poststructuralist and praxis-centered, or that Kaluli are really "grounded," unable or unwilling to abstract what is going on in a way anything like mine. I also don't think that the issues here are easily resolved by just attributing them to differences of writing and audience. Part of my reasoning turns on the next layer of readings.

When I was reading with Gigio and Faile from the material in my chapter on women's weeping and recounting there the weeping by Hane *sulo:* over the death of Bibiali at Aso:ndo:, Gigio quickly interrupted, giggling slightly, asking if I had told the story of my trip to Aso:ndo: to record the weeping and of my unexpected overnight stay there. I told him that I had not, and he was truly puzzled by that.

He then quickly began to recount in great detail how I had only been at Sululib for one month, how it was my first trip away from the village without Buck or Bambi, how I barely spoke Kaluli, how they had left me in the hands of a guy named Kogowe, instructing him to return with me the same day, how many people thought Kogowe was a bit flaky and unreliable, how everyone started speculating on why I wasn't home when it turned dark, how upset Bambi was that Kogowe might have gotten lost leading me back, how there was one really bad river bridge to cross on the way, how it had rained heavily all afternoon so maybe the river flooded or I slipped on a log and fell in, how Buck managed to gather up Hasele and Seyaka for the miserable task of walking with him through the forest at night, two-and-a-half hours from Sululib to Aso:ndo:, and how when they got there, they just found me resting comfortably by the fire with a mild stomach ache.

And Gigio went on to tell how we stayed up that night and listened to the tapes with the mourners at Aso:ndo:, and then walked back home the next morning at the crack of dawn, and how everyone playfully teased Kogowe about getting lost, while Kogowe kept protesting that after starting out in the heavy rain the new "yellow skin" kept falling down, stopping him in order to fix the plastic bags protecting the tape recorder case, and at each instance of a fall or stop turning yellower, as if he would puke any minute.

Gigio told this very dramatically and had Faile and me in stitches. But it was more than an amusing story about embarrassing moments in the lives of the "yellow skins." It was Gigio saying, on the "underneath": "This is what good stories are made of; so why didn't you tell it?" Here we were beyond the more typical routine of Kaluli hearers trying to position my account in terms of what other Kaluli speakers said, thought, or told me. Now I was hearing Gigio criticize me for not putting enough of myself in the book. I found this at once a recognition that Gigio read the book as *my* story as much as anyone else's, but also that the concern with positioned Kaluli speakers and their biographical accountability was no different for "yellow skins."

Later on there were a number of similar instances of asking why I didn't tell my stories. I couldn't say to Kaluli that I simply didn't tell my stories more because I often felt them to be unimportant sources for illuminating the Kaluli stories I was trying to tell. So I defended myself by reading with them certain sections of the book where I am more clearly situated in the story. But what was always at issue in these dialogues was the need for a personally situated point of view. My sense here is that Kaluli readings of *Sound and Sentiment* key closely on their sense of biographies, because biographies frame what is memorable about experiences. They extend that concern to all stories, tellers and tellings, even if they don't imagine that other meanings might be assigned to them beyond the ones they momentarily have at hand. I think Kaluli assume that what they find memorable about me is also something that I should be able to recognize. And it is perplexing that I might ignore such an obvious fact in the context of writing about events and times we shared.

One other Kaluli cultural framework helps make sense of this issue; namely, a clear model for this kind of storytelling is neither myth nor historical narrative, but song. There are two reasons for that. One is that Kaluli assume that I know what songs are about and how they are constructed. Another is that song poetics are the height of an aesthetic evocation of the meaning of shared experiences. Kaluli song poetics simultaneously reference abstract qualities and values, and personal situations and experiences, particularly poignant ones. Since the book so deeply concerned such questions, I found that as time and readings progressed, Kaluli seemed to absorb and respond to it as a kind of meta-*gisalo* song, an evocation about evocation, a map of shared experiences about other maps of shared experiences.

In part, the book readings (particularly the chapters on poetics and song) were greeted like any Kaluli performance meant to move an audience, a performance intended to communicate to that audience the skill, care, and affective sen-

sibilities of the composer/performer. And after the fact, I realized that during our reading sessions my companions frequently acted exactly the way Kaluli act at performances, rather than the way they act when we "do school." They often mixed side comments, wild interjections and exuberant chuckles, quiet clucks accompanied by downcast head turning (as if to say "this is heavy stuff"), feigned distraction and disinterest, intense concentration and engagement, and puns, put-ons and joking rounds playing off a passing verbal phrase or two.

As a matter of fact, there were instances in the readings of my chapter on *gisalo* songs when Gigio, Ho:nowo:, and Ayasilo: all went into silly mock weeping routines, as if both the recounting of a powerful song and my sung/spoken rendition of it had moved them to tears the way a real *gisalo* performance might well do. At one point I read Gigio the section recounting the time I composed a song about my loneliness over Buck and Bambi's departure, telling how it brought tears to his eyes. He playfully mocked weeping and limply fell over onto me, the way weepers at a ceremony throw their arms around the dancer they have just burned in retribution for a song that moved them to tears. Then he popped up and burst out laughing hysterically, exclaiming *Yagidi ni Sidif-o!,* as if to say "this is *too* much, Steve!"

What I think was going on here was the negotiation of a playful frame for a moment recalling shared experiences whose original experiential frames were emotionally highly charged. In a certain sense this was probably the most genuine and natural way for Gigio to take the book seriously, to communicate a positive and friendly aesthetic response to me, and to act perfectly Kaluli about the whole matter. In other words, Gigio knew that the way to greet my telling was not with a casual "that's good" or "yes, it was truly like that." Such responses would be distanced, impersonal, uncharacteristic of our relationship, (and something that I would read as "informant behavior"). Gigio's manner of response was a way to say "we can laugh about the heaviness we shared." This Kaluli way to reaffirm the power of shared feelings and experiences is not uncommon; instances of mock weeping are often invoked to convey expressions of camaraderie and affection among young Kaluli men.

Another way to help illuminate the dynamics of Kaluli interpretive style here is to focus on the parts of *Sound and Sentiment* that seemed to be read most easily and successfully, and the ones that seemed to be most troublesome. Most successfully read were my telling of the *muni* bird myth, material in the chapter on birds, and much of the material in the chapter on song poetics. Less successful were some of the things in the chapters on weeping and song. This puzzled me because, with the exception of the ornithological materials, it reverses what I said earlier about a preference for the concrete. Indeed, the weeping and song chapters had the longest and most specifically situated case histories in them, whereas the myth and poetics materials were more often structurally compacted.

In the case of the weeping and song materials, which in the book include a full transcription, translation, involved case history, and explication for individual performances, the problems involved the nature of providing a context for a microanalysis, the nature of which item was selected for such intense treatment,

and the fact that neither of these major case studies come from events that took place in my home village.

For example, with the *gisalo* song, Gigio was quick to remind me that it was an early one in a larger seance that included 13 songs. For Gigio this was not in fact the most memorable of all the songs. He was also right that a later song that also moved the same man to tears came at a more climactic moment in the overall seance, and that the later song was also longer, more poetically complicated, and moved several other people to tears as well. My real dilemma here was that Gigio was not only right about all of these things, but that Aiba, the medium, Neono, a man who wept for both songs, and all the original consultants both from Nageba:da:n and Sululib told me exactly the same thing in 1977. I agreed then, and still do now, that the later song was more forceful (though no more typical of the genre) from musical-poetic-performative standpoints. But my choice of the song that appears in the book derived entirely from other considerations.

For example, the later song was almost one-and-a-half times as long as the earlier one, and involved linguistic, poetic, and pragmatic factors that would have required a much more extended discussion in the book. The multiplicity of agendas embodied in that song and the seance activity surrounding it meant that I could not have explained it clearly without discussing the larger event and its participants in greater detail. Also, I ran out of tape in the middle of that song, and the change of reels deletes about 30 seconds where I am not entirely sure of the text. Even though I worked with several people on that issue and have a pretty good idea of exactly what was included in the untaped verse, the situation was not ideal, because I wanted to publish the analyzed song on a record (as I have, Feld 1985) so that my readers could relate the performance to my description and analysis of it. Moreover, I was not really concerned with a discussion of the most powerful *gisalo* from this or any other single event, but simply with one that worked well to typify the style and the performance issues, and could accommodate my concern to integrate a case study into a larger socio-musical discussion of the genre.

Likewise, Gigio and Ho:nowo: were quick to point out that the *sa-ya:lab* weeping example that I picked for close scrutiny was done by a single woman. Indeed, *sa-ya:lab* are more typically wept by two to five women simultaneously. And there were other ways in which Hane *sulo:*'s long *sa-ya:lab* was not typical: it was more songlike than many, more poetically complicated, less ordinary, more profoundly moving. Here we have the inverse of the problem with the *gisalo* song selection. I picked what everyone agreed was the most forceful of the *sa-ya:lab* performances I had recorded for my case study only to be told (again, as I had been told before and knew well) that there were ways in which it was not entirely representative.

What I found interesting in these discussions was not that my readers were contesting my selections. Rather, it was that they were responding in real Kaluli style. Kaluli men seem to assume that whether or not they have anything substantial to say, or are explicitly asked their opinion, they are expected to have one, and expected to be ready with it and entirely up-front about asserting it. A premium is placed on having something to say, on saying it as a form of collabora-

tion, and on engaging demonstratively. Talk is not only a primary measure of Kaluli social competence, but an arena for the display of intelligent interactive style, what Kaluli call *halaido,* "hardness" (Feld and B. B. Schieffelin 1982). If my readers were giving me "a hard time," it was in their cultural idiom, and not mine.

Gigio and Ho:nowo: never told me that I was "wrong," never proposed explicit changes, nor indicated that I should have said things differently. That would be too trivial a response and out of character. Their discussions opened issues rather than resolved them, and their comments were filled with sentences that opened or closed with classic Kaluli hedges, *hede ko:sega,* "true, but . . ." and *a:la:fo: ko:sega,* "like that, however . . ." The pragmatics of these very typical Kaluli phrases are complex, not just in terms of whether they open or close an utterance, but also in terms of how they work to always keep the conversation moving.

What Gigio and Ho:nowo: did say about my editorial policy was also very Kaluli; they occasionally responded to my assertions with a terse but semantically complicated Kaluli term, *ko:le,* "different." Sometimes this term can and should be taken at face value, a neutral and direct "oh, *that's* different." The term also can be distancing, carrying the sense of "well, OK, but that's *your* thing." It can also carry a very positive sense of different, a sort of "far out, I never it saw it *that* way before." It can also imply a rather bland "different," carrying the sense of "I suppose you *could* see it that way." Or a more evaluatively suspect "that's *different.*" Even when attending carefully to syntax, conversational context, intonation, and paralinguistics, it is not easy to get a single semantic reading when Kaluli use this term. My intuition is that the term more often frames multiple or ambiguous attitudes rather than singular ones in any case. Here it seemed that Gigio and Ho:nowo: used it in virtually every way with me, creating a continually mixed feeling of acceptance and challenge.

As for the easier read sections, I went over all of the bird taxonomy, symbolism, and stories in real detail with Jubi. He was perhaps the best ornithologist in Bosavi, and had worked longest and hardest, at one point almost everyday for five straight months, with me on the bird materials originally. I was interested in his reading, and interested to see how similar or different his interpretations would be five years later. In about a week's time we went through the whole chapter; he corrected me on about four or five identifications that I had botched, elaborated others, insisted that I had "forgotten" certain things, but basically gave me the sense that my bird portrayal was fairly complete and accurate in terms of his knowledge and understanding.

It was clear, however, from Jubi and others, that I had not gone far enough in stating that classification of birds by sound was more typical of Kaluli everyday use and knowledge, and more salient than the detailed classification by beaks and feet to which I had devoted so much formal lexical attention. And if I had it to do over, I think that a restructuring of the way those two classifications are presented would be in order. Also, more attention to other bird myths would be in order, as I found that Jubi invoked them often, as he had done in the past, in order to explain

the "underneaths" of bird colors, sounds, and behaviors. In any case, what was most successful here was the organization of the material in terms of metalinguistically and culturally focused Kaluli domains.

Similarly, what was successful to all my readers in the materials on poetics and song structure was the orderly presentation of things following the Kaluli metalinguistic demarcations. Like the ornithological materials, sections of the book framed by Kaluli domains led my readers to act as if my role in the presentation were more secretarial than "turn around"/"turn over." Set in that light, the isolated phrases from songs as examples were questioned less for being taken out of context. There were plenty of instances here that lead me to feel justified in believing and stating that Kaluli can and do think quite abstractly and theoretically about song form, composition, and poetic construction as a kind of symbolic persuasion.

Dialogic Editing of Another Kind

I thought my most radical move in *Sound and Sentiment* consisted in simultaneously stressing the theoretical importance of sound (as distinct from music or language per se) and its situated importance in understanding how Kaluli constructed and interpreted their expressive modes. It turned out that this was read as rather less adventurous by both Gigio and Jubi. They were taken by how much time I had spent discussing a single song and a single weeping episode, but then how much less I had spent talking about the more mundane daily sounds—the ones that tell the weather, season of year, time of day. They asked why I told so much about birds but so little about frogs, about insects, different animals. They asked why I had told the *muni* bird myth and not told many others. They asked why I had not told about how all sounds in the forest are *mama,* "reflections" of what is unseen. I responded that I thought birds were most important; they had more stories, there were more of them, Kaluli *ane mama,* "gone reflections" (spirits of dead) more often show through as birds, and so on. They did not dispute this; they simply made it clear that every sound was a "voice in the forest" and that I should tell about them all.

The responses of Jubi and Gigio to the emphasis on weeping, poetics, and song, and to the ethnoliterary device of the case example made it clear to me that there was a gap between my emphasis on the meaning of Kaluli-performed human sounds and the kind of practical and affective everyday interaction with environmental sound that more deeply grounds the specific aesthetic and performative arenas that I focused upon.

My main response to this was to record more everyday sounds, usually on early morning and late afternoon treks each day in the surrounding bush with Jubi, and then to have playback sessions where I would let the tape recorder run and simply invite people to sit around and listen. I also stayed up all night on several occasions to record nighttime forest sounds, and tried to get Kaluli to identify and discuss all of them. What I was trying to do here was to create a pool of sensate material from which Kaluli and I could have different kinds of discussions from

the ones we more typically had about linguistic, poetic, and musical material. My hope was that this kind of refocused activity could lead to better realizations about the nature of sound, particularly at the level of everyday Kaluli meanings and interpretations.

The dialogues that followed made it clear that the sociomusical metaphors I had earlier identified in discourse about human sound are thoroughly grounded in natural sounds. For example, *dulugu ganalan,* "lift-up-over-sounding," is an important concept in Kaluli song form and performance. It turns out to also be the most general term for natural sonic form. Unison or discretely bounded sounds nowhere appear in nature; all sounds are dense, multilayered, overlapping, alternating, and interlocking. The constantly changing figure and ground of this spatio-acoustic mosaic is a "lift-up-over-sounding" texture without gaps, pauses, or breaks.

This key image clarifies how the soundscape evokes "insides" and "underneaths (*sa* and *hego:*) and "reflections" (*mama*). These notions involve perceptions, changes of focus and frame, motions of interpretive access to meanings packed into layers of sensation as they continually "lift-up-over" one another. It is not just that the forest is the abode of invisible spirits; it is that all sounds invite contemplation because their juxtaposition and constant refiguring make it possible to mildly or intensely interpret presences.

"Lift-up-over-sounding" sounds and textures disperse, pulse, rearrange. This constant motion is also an energy, a "hardness" that comes together and that "flows," remaining in one's thought and feelings. In song poetics, "making hard" *(halaido doma:ki)* is the image of competent formation; it is force, persuasion, the attainment of an energized evocative state. The holding power of that "hardened" state is its "flowing" *(a:ba:lan),* the sensation that sounds and feelings stay with you after they have been heard or performed.

What to do with these new understandings and new sounds? I had already produced two sampler phonograph discs illustrating all Kaluli song and instrumental styles (Feld 1981, 1985). The first of these contained an 8-minute-long unbroken stretch of Kaluli talking, singing, and whooping recorded during garden clearing work. But this brief attempt to place Kaluli soundmaking in the environmental context does not contain examples of the interplay of human and natural sounds (like singing and whistling with birds and insects) that I recorded in 1982. I decided that an extended version of this kind of recording would make it possible to illustrate the interaction of environmental sounds and Kaluli aesthetic sensibilities at the everyday, nonritual/ceremonial level. That led to the conception of *Voices in the Forest,* a tape recording depicting a day in the life of the Kaluli and their tropical rain forest home.[7] This tape attempts an editing dialogue with sounds in order to work more reflexively with Kaluli in a sensate idiom so naturally their own.

When fieldworkers make tape recordings and select a representative set of materials for publication or presentation, they generally follow certain realist conventions of sound as a mode of ethnographic representation. In these practices I think it fair to claim that the typical mode of tape editing and use is literal and

descriptive; more important, bounded and discrete. The on/off switch or the fade up/fade down potentiometer of the tape machine marks a control over the finiteness of a recorded item. What comes in between the on and the off or the fade up and the fade down is itself expected to be whole, unmanipulated, unviolated. In other words, we expect a tape excerpt or a record band to be a true sonic index of the temporal stretch it occupies. Assurances that what we hear in that temporal stretch has not been spliced, cut, rearranged, altered, filtered, mixed, or otherwise edited are part of the guarantees of a recording's authenticity.

The kind of selection and editing necessary to construct *Voices in the Forest* is of a different sort. While it is a sound construction that is both narrative and realist in convention, it is closer in concept and execution to *musique concrète* than ethnomusicological tape display. Its form is accomplished by editing sounds. While it displays a concern with both ethnographic representativeness and audio accuracy, this concern is realized compositionally rather than literally. In this sense it owes much to R. Murray Schafer (1977) and the World Soundscape Project's concern that soundscape research be presented as musical composition.

To make *Voices in the Forest* I selected three hours of source material from about 60 hours of recordings made in 1976–77 and 1982.[8] The selected materials were arranged according to various graphs (again, modeled in part on Schafer's work) made in the field. These plot the pattern and interaction of daily human and natural sound cycles and have the names of the sound sources as well as Kaluli commentaries about them, noted at the time of recording or during playback sessions. These selections represent the typical cycle of sounds during a 24-hour period, patterned from a human point of view. In other words, the progression of sounds follows the progression of general Kaluli activities in the village and surrounding forest settings. The recording then attempts to present a participant's spatiotemporal ear-perspective.

Once the materials were arranged, no scissor cuts were made. Editing was accomplished by rerecording slices of the source material directly onto an eight-track recorder, using three sets of stereo tracks and two monaural ones. The eight tracks were then mixed down to two, continuously cross-fading to create the illusion of seamless narrative. In this way the sounds sampled from a 24-hour period are condensed to 30 minutes, beginning with the early morning hours, progressing through dawn in the village, morning and midday work in the forest, an afternoon rain storm back in the village, dusk and settling in for the night, and returning to the night and early morning hours.

As a sound object, *Voices in the Forest* is a mixed genre: experimental ethnography and musical composition. Its sources of inspiration include a variety of non-Kaluli notions that condition my perception of sound as an environmental sensorium. Nature recordings (like Jean-Claude Roché's extraordinary series *L'oiseau musicien*), environmental compositions (like R. Murray Schafer's *Music for Wilderness Lake*), and experiments in interspecies communication (like Jim Nollman's underwater guitar duos with dolphins) have all been interesting to me in this regard; they tell cultural stories about nature.

Voices in the Forest also tells this kind of story, using Kaluli directorial participation and my technical skills to complement each other. Here multitrack recording becomes the ethnoaesthetic means to achieve a Kaluli "lift-up-over-sounding" and "flowing" sound object full of "insides" and "underneaths" that speak to the "hardness" of Kaluli stylistic coherence, and to its "reflection" in my appreciation.

The main thing I have learned from the experience of recording the sounds, discussing them in the field, and editing *Voices in the Forest* is that for Kaluli, the nature of sounds is far more deeply grounded in the sounds of nature than I had previously realized. In other words, Kaluli culture rationalizes nature's sound as its own, then "turns it over" to project it in the form of what is "natural" and what is "human nature." This is the link between a perception of a sensate, lived-in world and the invention of an expressive sensibility. "Lift-up-over-sounding" sounds that "harden" and "flow," producing a sense of "insides," "underneaths," and "reflections" reproduce in Kaluli cultural form the sense that nature is natural, and that being Kaluli means being aesthetically "in it" and "of it." This is both the background and stage for Kaluli expressive styles, the natural condition and world-sense that makes it possible for bird sound, weeping, poetics, and song to be so inextricably linked, not just in mythic imagination and ritual performance, but throughout the forest and in the treetops at the same time.

While dialogic editing of the first kind mostly taught me how Kaluli felt the "underneath" of *Sound and Sentiment* needs more sentiment, the second kind made it possible for us to work together to "harden" the sound.[9]

Notes

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[1]Some of the recent literature that I have found stimulating in this regard includes Tedlock 1979, Clifford 1983, Marcus and Cushman 1982, and the essays in Clifford and Marcus 1986. My thoughts about the value of reflexive follow-up accounts and the dialectics of cultural invention were stimulated during fieldwork in 1982 by immediately prior readings of Dumont 1978, Rabinow 1977, and Wagner 1981.

[2]"Dialogue is the fashionable metaphor for modernist concerns. The metaphor can illegitimately be taken too literally or hypostatized into philosophical abstraction. It can, however, also refer to the practical efforts to present multiple voices within a text, and to encourage readings from diverse perspectives. This is the sense in which we use dialogue" (Marcus and Fischer 1986:680). This is also the sense in which the notion of dialogue is employed in the present article.

[3]The missionary-linguist was Murray Rule of the Unevangelized Field Museum (today, Asia Pacific Christian Mission); Rule 1964 is a first description of the Kaluli language. During an interview in November 1984, Rule told me that of all the people in Papua New Guinea he had worked with in his years of translation, he was most impressed with the intelligence and quickness of his Kaluli linguistic informants. He attributed this to "a definite gift for language that the Kaluli tribe must have received from the time of Babel." Minus biblical rationale, Rule's perception is not unique among both long- and short-term visitors to Bosavi.

The Kaluli *are* energetically verbal; the cultural focus on language skill as a social resource is a significant feature of Kaluli everyday life, and this is readily manifest in the adaptation of new words, lexical expansion and coinage, and interest in other languages, not to mention the more typical arenas (metalanguage, poetics, conversation, registers and styles, socialization, etc.). This verbal "high profile" is described in B. B. Schieffelin 1979, Feld and Schieffelin 1982.

[4]What is clear is that in the last ten years a number of literal back-translations have come into Kaluli everyday use, sometimes standing alongside a Kaluli equivalent, sometimes introducing a concept and coining a label. In 1984 Bambi Schieffelin and I came upon several of these back translation uses, for example, *tok pisin, stretim tok* ⟶ Kaluli *di-galema:no: to.* Here the term for "settle a complaint" or "solve a discussion," literally "straighten (-ed, -ing) talk" is back-translated by the direct Kaluli terms for "straighten" and "talk."

[5]Kaluli also use this "show" term as a metalinguistic label to indicate what mothers do when teaching language to their children (B. B. Schieffelin 1979:105–106).

[6]While the Kaluli generally interpret the Bible as an elaborate compendium of Christian "turned over words," my readers volunteered that missionary translation work is different from ours and is not "turned around" and "turned over" Kaluli.

[7]*Voices in the Forest* was funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Satellite Program Development Fund of National Public Radio. The tape was coproduced with Scott Sinkler, who was also the chief studio engineer. We thank the above agencies and Magnetik Recording Studios, Philadelphia, for their assistance. *Voices in the Forest* was aired in 1984 and 1985 on NPR, Pacifica, and independent stations in the U.S.A., Europe, and the Pacific.

[8]Stereo recordings were done with omnidirectional AKG condenser microphones in an X-Y configuration; monaural recordings, mostly of bird sounds, were made using a Gibson parabolic reflector. All were originally recorded on a Nagra IV-S at 7-1/2 or 15 ips. Sound pressure level readings in dB A, B, and C were taken at the time of each recording to insure proper volume level continuity throughout the studio rerecording and mix.

[9]Cassette copies (from 15 ips stereo mastertape) of *Voices in the Forest* are available from the author for $7 prepaid, postage included; allow 2 weeks for delivery. The B side of the cassette contains musical examples discussed in *Sound and Sentiment.*

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