

cultural *production* of genres, styles, or forms, and their meanings. In a formulation exemplary of this approach, Duranti (1986) addressed "the audience as co-author," in the sense that the audience's interpretations and responses recontextualize, enlarge, and transform the meaning of utterances or texts.

The analytic approach of this article has focused on what the performance of audience contributes to the activity system it is part of. Drawing on Erving Goffman's sociology of face-to-face behavior (1959, 1961, 1963), I have examined the role and function of audience in the context of focused interaction at public gatherings. This perspective integrates the processes of cultural production and consumption, which are often treated in isolation. On the other hand, some limitations of such an approach are evident as well: First, while it offers a view of the social structure of performative interaction, it does not necessarily bring out its cultural meaning. It can help to understand how such meaning is constituted, however, and, as a sociological perspective, will gain in value when combined with anthropological questioning of what meanings it produces. Second, it is obviously of limited reach as regards the evergrowing field of mass mediation of cultural products, where direct interaction between performance and audience no longer necessarily constitutes the social situations where the main action takes place. Lastly, I summarize the basic findings this approach has brought into perspective, and then consider what these might suggest to the established anthropology of traditional celebrations and the future problem of approaching the history of modern media use in West Africa from an interactionist perspective.

It is a key feature of audience at vernacular celebrations in Mali that the repertoire of responses to performance includes taking part in performance. As Ruth Stone (1988) puts it, "the audience in Africa is active, merging in and out of performing roles." The distinction between performance and audience, conceived of in terms of roles in social interaction, is congruent with the social differentiation of groups of participants in some but not in all cases. Stable allocation of performance and audience roles to distinct groups by way of bending or suspending communicative turn-taking is but one of various possible modes of performative presentation. The widespread idea of audiences as distinct bodies of people who choose to consume what other groups supply is to be complemented by the possibility of more diversified sets and fluid allocation of roles in performance/audience interaction. Yet, however participatory the inter-

action at a gathering might be, each and every performance still needs to be presented to an audience to make sense. Life cycle celebrations in Mali are fundamentally dependent on audience, as only through the presence of participants who embody and show attention and attachment to the situated presentations are these presentations – and the gathering and the occasion in general – socially realized, recognized, and validated.

There are many enlightening descriptions of participatory performance at celebrations of different Mande-speaking groups in West Africa.¹³ These do not explicitly take account of the role and function of audience. However, I would argue, the assumption of audience is implicit in most of them. It is simply not explained. Take, for example, Michael Jackson's study of Kuranko celebrations at initiation rites.¹⁴ Jackson interprets his experience and some insiders' explanations of dancing at these events¹⁵ as follows: "Dance and music move us to participate in a world beyond our accustomed roles and to recognize ourselves as members of a community, a common body" (Jackson 1989: 132). In a word, their "point is the creation of community" (135). Jackson emphatically refrains from using symbolist interpretations, yet nevertheless acknowledges that dancing is conspicuous action "socially implemented and publicly played out" (129; emphasis original). In other words, while ritual dancing at celebrations is in Jackson's view not a *representation* of something outside itself, it is still *presentative* in character. Jackson, then, distinguishes between two aspects in his interpretation of community building: "Insofar as they permit each individual to play an active part . . . initiation rites maximize participation as well as information" (130). The aspect of collecting and recognizing presented information, I would argue, can be conceived of as what I have analyzed as

13 See, for example, Humblot's (1921: 140) colonial report, Keita's (1950: 44–47) belletristic approach, or Hardin's (1988) rich ethnography; Knight (1984) and Charry (2000) have already been cited above.

14 This text (1989: chapt. 8) is particularly significant because it forms a decisive point in Jackson's existentialist plea for radical empiricism in anthropology, i.e., a radically participatory anthropology of body use and the embodied character of all social practices.

15 Participants held that the dancing took place "just for entertainment" or "for no other reason but to have everyone take part" (Jackson 1989: 132). Compare the similar statements on the meaning of participatory performance at celebrations in Bamako, as quoted from Modic (1996: 79): "It entertains you only. It is good. People will like it. You participate in what they organize . . . When you die, you go singly. Before you die, you should be in a crowd. That is good."