HETEROGLOSSIA IN SAMOAN ORATORY

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In this article I discuss the relationship between art and politics in the performance of a Samoan oratorical genre called *lāuga* [laːúŋa].[1] In the course of my discussion, I will reconsider the role of formalized language in the reproduction of the existing social order. In particular, I will reassess some of Bloch's (1975) hypotheses about the role of traditional oratory in maintaining the status quo. Drawing from the work of Bakhtin (1981) on the differences between the epic and the novel, I will argue that in the context of Samoan political and judicial meetings *(fono)*, the ceremonial genre *lāuga* is functionally "corrupted" to serve needs different from those served by *lāuga* on other occasions. By framing discourse in the political arena to be related but different from the discourse of ceremonial exchanges, speechmakers can establish a context for real confrontation and, hence, for potential change. No longer an epic genre that celebrates an immutable past projected toward a predictable future, the *lāuga* in a *fono* becomes the vehicle for political appraisal and political confrontation. As we shall see, its forms are consistently adapted to such ends.

My analysis of the relationship between politics and verbal art in Samoa will be based on my experiences documenting, analyzing, and trying to learn traditional oratory in a Western Samoan village (Duranti 1981, 1983, 1984, 1990a, 1990b). The data for this study include participant observation of many occasions in which oratory was performed, informal discussions with knowledgeable speechmakers in the community, and transcripts of over thirty hours of audio recordings of oratorical speeches in spontaneous (i.e., nonelicited) performances. This arti-

cle is part of a more general project on the role of verbal art in conflict management situations and the mechanisms through which social actors frame their own actions to conform to or undermine culture- and event-specific expectations.

As typical of "epic" genres in general (see Bakhtin 1981), Samoan ceremonial *lāuga* celebrate an ancient world, full of mythical-historical characters and places, eternal values, and immutable hierarchies. The performance of such speeches characterizes ceremonial encounters of all kinds, including rites of passage (e.g., weddings, funerals) and ritual manifestations of acts of reciprocity (e.g., visits of traveling parties, payments for labor). I refer to such events as "ceremonies." In these contexts, there are several "aesthetic" canons that guide the performance of a *lāuga* and its appreciation by an audience. They make up a set of formal properties that guarantee the efficacy of the speech to connect the "absolute past" (Goethe and Schiller [1827] 1902–1907, quoted in Bakhtin 1981) to an equally idealized present. Some of the recurrent properties of traditional oratory found in ceremonial performances of *lāuga* are (a) the frequent use of arcane expressions, metaphors, and proverbs (see Schultz 1953), and the consistent selection of lexical items, called *'upu fa'aaloalo* (respectful words),[2] that index the high status of the people present as the descendants of mythical-historical figures; (b) a celebrative but controlled and rhythmically predictable tone of voice (the combination of high volume and low, deep voice is common) that is not suited for sudden changes of mood or genuine appeals to emotions; (c) the tendency to refer to people in terms of their positional instead of personal identities (e.g., as representatives of particular descent groups or sections of the village or district); (d) the identification of the speaker with the voice of tradition *(aganu'u)*, so that the speaker is expected to focus on predictable truths and avoid controversial issues; (e) the preallocation of turns, that is, who gives the speech and when he gives it,[3] is predetermined by a sometimes ritualistic, other times genuine verbal confrontation among the more experienced speechmakers; once a person has started a speech, he continues to the end unless he is ritually interrupted by an orator from another "side" (see below); any form of spontaneous dialogue with speakers alternating in an unpredictable manner is avoided; and (f) past, present, and future events are presented as unavoidable and therefore not open to criticisms or doubts.

Some of the same properties of "traditional oratory" led Bloch to posit his hypothesis about the coercive nature of "formalized language" (1975). As demonstrated by a number of studies (see Brenneis and Myers 1984), including my own work on Samoan political oratory (Duranti

1981, 1990b), there are, however, situations in which oratory is used to question at least some aspects of the social order and to accept the conflictual nature of ongoing social processes—what Turner called "social dramas" (1974). Such cases would seem at first to undermine or bluntly contradict Bloch's thesis that in formalized language there is no room for discussion, dialogue, and logical argumentation. The counterexamples to Bloch's argument, however, are not a total rejection of his view of the coercive role of traditional oratory. To make sense of the differences between Bloch's claims and the reality of Samoan speechmaking practices, we need to refine for each case what we mean by "formalization of language," and we must accept that there are different levels of formalization. Even Irvine's (1979) critical discussion of formal events underestimates the degree to which the features of formality she discusses (increased code structuring, central focus of attention, code consistency, evoking of public identities), all of which can be found in the performance of Samoan *lāuga*, may vary in intensity and quality within the same event. What we might uniformly gloss as "formal language" within any given stretch of interaction may in fact show signs of variation and may in some instances come close to "informal talk." We can properly test such a hypothesis only with detailed transcriptions of spontaneous verbal interactions and by matching local taxonomies with detailed linguistic and rhetorical analysis. If highly formalized language is identified with the celebration of the "absolute past," the need to step into a controversial "relative present" might be matched by a speaker's attempt to step out of the genre by creating a relative "freedom of expression" exemplified first of all not so much by a change in genres and codes (Comaroff 1975; Salmond 1975b) but by a mixture of forms and contents that evoke new contexts while maintaining a link with the old ones. I suggest that such a process occurs in Samoan political discourse.

In the Samoan political arena, participants—usually *matai*, that is, individuals holding titles—must confront the present and, even more important, control and fashion a future in which the polity can survive —whether in an old or new form. In this context, as I will show, some of the features of the ceremonial *lāuga* must be partly altered. The alleged search for "truth" and "justice" that characterizes the Samoan *fono* is in conflict with the canons of verbal art as a commemoration of the heroic past. Rather than one voice (the immutable and inaccessible voice of the ancestors), a multitude of "voices," with different opinions and varying assumptions, must be heard. Instead of prophecies and certitudes, predictions and possibilities must be entertained. In addition to

arcane proverbs and metaphors, mundane and even disrespectful language may be heard. In the political arena, these needs are met by exploiting the genre while breaking some of its conventions, that is, by infiltrating its contents with contingent facts and urgent problems, and by corrupting its forms with a "mixed bag" of linguistic devices. In other words, it is through documentation of what Bakhtin (1981) called "heteroglossia" that we can appreciate the merging of political and artistic ends in the course of the daily battle through which the social system is tested and reproduced.

Variations across Contexts

In Samoa, the term *lāuga* is used for a wide range of speeches, some of which will not be discussed here. For instance, it not only covers traditional oratorical performances of all kinds but also has been extended to (Christian) church sermons, which lack the subdivisions characteristic of other *lāuga* (see below) and exhibit an overtly Western logic of expository prose that is at odds with traditional rhetorical strategies. Thus, Protestant sermons are dedicated to explaining a passage of written text (from the Bible), have a main theme *(matua)*, which is announced to the audience, and are based on a monologic model of communication in which the preacher does not provoke or expect responses from the audience. More traditional *lāuga* are not based on written communication, have several "themes," most of which are the same from one context to another, and evoke audience responses, namely, phrases of appreciation such as *mālie!* (well said!) or *mo'i* (true). During the Christian service, no appreciation of the pastor's delivery is shown, although afterwards a few adults might individually congratulate him on his performance.[4]

When asked about the contrasting usage, Samoans are quick to point out that not all speeches casually referred to as *lāuga* are *lāuga* strictly speaking or in the true sense of the word. On any given occasion, there usually is one (more rarely two) "true" *lāuga*, with other (either preceding or following) speeches being seen as "replies" *(tali)* or simply "discussions" or "chats" *(talanoaga)*. Thus, even within a *fono*, the word *lāuga* can be used in referring to a chief's speech (e.g., the speech presenting the chief's opinion and binding decision) but only in a loose sense of the term. Strictly speaking, in a *fono*, only the very first introductory speech of the day is considered a *lāuga*. As I will discuss below, the rest of the speeches are part of the discussion *(talanoaga)* of the agenda and do not follow too closely the rules governing the performance of *lāuga*, although they incorporate some features.

Although I previously drew a sharp distinction between *lāuga* and *talanoaga* (Duranti 1984), which I saw then as two separate genres, I have come now to the conclusion that the distinction is in fact one of degree. Speeches delivered on formal occasions are always seen as some version of *lāuga,* as shown by the fact that one can always refer to them by that term. What changes in a *talanoaga* situation is that the speechmaker is not tied to the traditional *lāuga* plan (see below) and can violate some of the constraints of formal speechmaking by introducing features of talk from other genres and contexts.

The *Lāuga* Plan

Despite idiosyncratic and contextual variation, even the most summary investigation of a few *lāuga* will reveal a well-defined structure across contexts. The existence of a basic pattern composed of various parts is readily admitted and recognized by all orators, who can talk at ease about names for different parts, their order, and their content; give examples of the expressions used within each part; and discuss possible variation to fit the occasion. As I learned during my first attempts to discover the basic principles of *lāuga* performance through informal interviews, individuals may, however, differ in their ability to provide a general (or ideal) plan that can explain specific contextual variants. For this reason, my categorization of *lāuga* organization is based not only on speechmakers' metastatements about the *lāuga* plan but also on recordings of actual performances and discussion with knowledgeable performers.

Any *lāuga* is composed of several parts *(vāega)*—typically four to seven—each part having a name and performing a different function. Recent work by a Samoan scholar, Tātupu Fa'afetai Mata'afa Tu'i (1987), has largely confirmed the prototypical *lāuga* plan I originally outlined on the basis of fieldwork in 1978–1979. Below, the *lāuga* plan I outlined for ceremonies (Duranti 1981, 1983) is compared with the one Tu'i proposed for the *fono*.

Duranti (1981)	*Tu'i (1987)*

1. *folasaga*
   introduction
	1. *folasaga* (also *tūvaoga* or
	   paepae-ulufanua)
	   introduction

2. *'ava*
   kava
	2. *'ava*
	   kava

3. *fa'afetai*
   thanksgiving

3. *fa'afetai i le alofa o le Atua*
   thanksgiving to the Lord's love

4. *taeao*
   mornings

4. *taeao*
   mornings

5. *pa'ia*
   sacred [titles]

5. *pa'ia*
   sacred titles

6. *'auga o le aso*
   foundation of the day

6. *faiā* or *matā'upu*
   agenda

7. *fa'amatafi lagi*
   clearing of the sky

7. *fa'amatafiga o lagi*
   clearing of skies

The sequence and distinctions presented above should be seen as an ideal plan that is rarely fully realized. One quality of a competent speechmaker is the ability to adapt this ideal plan to the contingencies of the day or even of the moment. Thus, the number of parts and the length of each part are important elements in the evaluation of a *lāuga* performance. Whereas a young or inexperienced *failāuga* (orator) might use speechmaking as an opportunity to show off his knowledge of traditional customs and hence go through each part of the plan, an experienced and skillful *failāuga* knows when to be concise and when to be lengthy. Furthermore, on many occasions a speechmaker is formally interrupted by another orator. The shortening of the ideal plan of a *lāuga* is in fact a common feature of verbal performance (Duranti n.d.).

The *Lāuga* as an Epic Genre

Lāuga in ceremonies and the first *lāuga* in a *fono* celebrate mythical-historical characters and places, eternal values, and immutable hierarchies. In this ideal model of social life, "things are beautiful" *(matagofie mea 'uma)* and words are powerful enough to constitute the social order. One of the recurrent lines of some *lāuga* is *e le'i liua*, "[it] has not changed," followed by names of *matai* titles and ceremonial address forms. The world represented is a place of harmony, where social hierarchies are immutable. For instance, the sacredness of the titles, their dignity, is portrayed as something that comes from the past *(vavau)* and reaches eternity *(fa'avavau)*: *'o pa'ia mai le vavau e o'o i le*

fa'avavau. The speechmaker professes belief in these titles and their immutability: *'ou te talitonu* (I believe) is a recurrent phrase introducer in certain *lāuga.*

Much of the *lāuga* is dedicated to praising and recognizing powerful figures and events that are depicted as beyond human control. Thus, the "Thanksgiving" (part 3) recognizes the Lord's power to bring an end to life on earth and thanks Him for allowing the particular occasion to take place. "Mornings" (part 4) celebrates important events in the history of Samoa, for instance, the arrival of the Gospel. The "sacred" names (part 5) reminds everyone of the power of mythical-historical figures and their descendants, who are depicted as the "gods on earth."

Like the idealist philosophers criticized by Marx—Hegel in particular—the Samoan speechmakers present to their audience a model of the universe in which the traditional social order, with its hierarchies and values, is given historical and philosophical justification. In many ways, the world and style of the *lāuga* is reminiscent of Bakhtin's characterization of the "epic" as opposed to the "novel" in Western literature:

> The world of epic is the national heroic past: it is a world of "beginnings" and "peak times" in the national history, a world of fathers and of founders of families, a world of "firsts" and "bests." . . . The epic . . . has been from the beginning a poem about the past, and the authorial position immanent in the epic and constitutive for it . . . is the environment of a man speaking about a past that is to him inaccessible, the reverent point of view of a descendent. (1981:13)

The style and discourse of the epic, like the style and discourse of the *lāuga,* is removed from everyday discourse, where one may find openendedness, indecision, indeterminacy (ibid.:16). Instead we find certitude and, with it, a world of established hierarchies. Instead of knowledge of contingent facts we find memory. Creativity is manifested in the way in which the past is reevoked and not in the manner in which the present (through the past) is reevaluated:

> The absolute past is a specifically evaluating (hierarchical) category. . . . In the past, everything is good: all the really good things . . . occur *only* in this past. The epic absolute past is the single source and beginning of everything good for all later times as well.

In ancient literature it is memory, and not knowledge, that

serves as the source and power for the creative impulse. That is
how it was, it is impossible to change it: the tradition of the past
is sacred. There is as yet no consciousness of the possible relativ-
ity of any past. (Ibid.:15)

In Bakhtin's view, the epic world cannot be changed, because it is
beyond the realm of human activity. In the *lāuga*, the social system is
presented in such a way that one cannot explicitly argue against its
premises, at least not without stepping out of genre (see below).

Formalized Language and Power

A characterization of traditional oratory similar to the notion of "epic"
proposed above has been used by Bloch to argue that strict formal can-
ons condition and hence coerce speakers to accept what has been said or
presupposed by other speakers: "It is because the formalisation of lan-
guage is a way whereby one speaker can coerce the response of another
that it can be seen as a form of social control. It is really a type of com-
munication where rebellion is impossible and only revolution could be
feasible. It is a situation where power is all or nothing" (1975:20).

For Bloch the formalized language used in traditional oratory typi-
cally works outside of the canons of empirical evidence and logical rea-
soning whereby contradiction is possible. In traditional oratory, contra-
diction would not be possible because there is only one truth. Thus,
following each statement there is only a limited set of other possible
statements, each of which substantiates the prior one and cannot be
denied by empirical evidence or logical argumentation.

Bloch has been widely criticized for his "deterministic" view of the
relationship between language and social order (see Brenneis and Myers
1984; Burling 1977; Myers and Brenneis 1984; Payne 1981) and for his
assumptions about what constitutes "formalization" or a "formal event"
(Irvine 1979). In fact, Bloch's position is an attempt to invert the "vul-
gar" materialists' view of the unidirectional impact of the base (eco-
nomic structure) on superstructure (e.g., law, religion, art) by stating
the fundamental role played by language in human praxis. In com-
paring his proposal with my data on Samoan oratory, I have become
convinced that, with some minor modifications, we can maintain
Bloch's generalization while complying with some of his critics' points.
The Samoan data on oratory across events suggest that Bloch's argu-
ment about the constraining force of formal oratory should be contex-
tualized rather than assumed to hold across all kinds of speech events.

In the Samoan case, Bloch's generalization might be accurate for those situations in which the most prototypically ceremonial *lāuga* are performed, but not necessarily for the speeches that are more distant from that model. In particular, it does not seem to describe the use of oratory in political and judiciary contexts such as the Samoan *fono*. In ceremonial contexts (outside of the *fono*), the day is sacred because of the perfect match of what the *matai* planned and what has resulted from successful negotiations. The performance of the speeches typically celebrates a found agreement: between the family of the groom and the family of the bride in an exchange of dowry, among the members of the extended family first and then between the family and the village when a new titleholder is installed, between workers and those who commissioned them when payments are made and the products of labor delivered, and so on.

Whereas in ceremonial contexts the *lāuga* is the final act of an often long series of negotiations, in the *fono* the *lāuga* opens the meeting. It is delivered before the discussion of the agenda, that is, when participants are about to argue with one another while searching for the truth *(mea tonu)* and the right solution *(mea saʻo)*. In a ceremony, the world found by the speechmaker before delivering the main speech of the day is a world of reassessed order, which he helps constitute through his speech. The world the speechmaker finds at the beginning of a *fono*, rather, is one of disorder, contrast, and disagreement, often tinted with strong feelings of resentment, anger, envy, and misunderstood or misplaced pride. Accordingly, although the first *lāuga* in a *fono* opens the meeting by reassessing the way things were (the "absolute past" of Bakhtin's epic) and the way things should be (the normative order), it also assumes a forthcoming discussion in which participants must abandon the world of past and eternal values and enter the contingent world, full of uncertain truths, conflicting narratives, and divergent perspectives. The speakers in a *fono* verbally handle these conflicts by progressively removing or changing some of the properties of ceremonial *lāuga*.

In this process the tension between the formalization of verbal art on the one hand and political, pragmatic goals on the other is acted out. The same ethos that keeps the tradition alive through symbolic-communicative acts such as the ceremonial *lāuga* also enforces the need to expose differences, disagreement, ugly facts, violations, faults, and individual and group responsibility. As in other Pacific cultures (see the articles in White and Watson-Gegeo 1990), in Samoa it is believed that the return to social harmony and mutual love *(fealofani)* requires the exposure of the ugly *(matagā)* facts. This is the way to clean up and

make the village beautiful again *(teuteu le nu'u).* During the discussions, those who have violated the law must be confronted with their responsibility, shamed, and punished. If a political decision must be made, the different positions must be presented and evaluated, and a consensus must be reached.

This process, full of dangers and uncertainties, cannot take place in the most typical *lāuga* format. Like the end of the epic and the birth of the novel discussed by Bakhtin, the new set of contents and implicit worldviews needs new forms of expression. Such forms have been produced by introducing a number of important changes in and around the *lāuga* performance. The following compares some of the salient differences in features between *lāuga* in ceremonies and in *fono.*[5]

Ceremony	*Fono*
1. Before the *lāuga*, there is a debate *(fa'atau)* about who should deliver the speech.	1. There is no debate.
2. The number of *lāuga* is known beforehand (usually two parties—e.g., guests and hosts, or family of the bride and family of the groom—deliver one speech each). The reply *(tali)* to the first *lāuga* may in some cases partly overlap with it. This overlap may or may not be seen as competitive (see 8).	2. The number of *lāuga* may not be known in advance.
3. The *lāuga* is part of an exchange, that is, a complex ritual of reciprocity.	3. There is no exchange of goods.
4. The speechmaker is recognized as skillful *(poto),* (being the one who won the debate [see 1]).	4. The speechmaker is the one who holds a particular title or role in the meeting.

5. People continue to evaluate the beauty of the speech for days after the performance.

6. The speech often sanctions an agreement of some sort.

7. The speech is usually addressed to a particular group or lineage within the village.

8. The speechmaker may be formally interrupted *(seu)* by the other party, who might be testing his skills.

9. Once the speech is over, no parts are added, that is, no corrections are made.

10. The address forms and titles mentioned are those relevant to the occasions.

11. The speech is usually delivered at a high volume and with a distinct voice quality (e.g., guttural).

12. The orator takes off his shirt and lets parts of his tattoo (if he has one) show.

5. People are less likely to make comments about the beauty of the speech.

6. The speech does not represent an agreement but the beginning of a negotiation process.

7. The speech is addressed to the entire village or assembly, which may include several villages.

8. The speechmaker cannot be formally interrupted, although he may be informally interrupted.

9. Another, senior *matai* may correct or repair a faulty performance, for example, if something was left out.

10. Part of the speech is dedicated to greeting or recognizing all the most important titleholders in the village.

11. The voice of the speechmaker conveys a sense of the routine at a normal to low volume.

12. The orator usually wears a shirt while he is delivering the speech. (Usually, only the people who sit in the "back" region of the house and are in charge of

preparing and serving *kava* take off their shirts during the event.)

13. There is public compensation for the speechmaker.	13. There is no compensation for the speechmaker.

The features listed above indicate that both the speaker and the audience of the ceremonial *lāuga* are more committed to the "performance aspects" of speechmaking, as discussed by a number of scholars including Bauman (1977) and Hymes (1975). There is "an assumption of accountability to an audience for the way in which communication is carried out, above and beyond its referential content" (Bauman 1977:11). In ceremonial exchanges, the delivery of the *lāuga* is both presented and received with particular attention to all details that enhance the sacred nature of the occasion and make everyone proud of participating in it. In a *fono*, however, both the speaker and the audience are less concerned with performance per se and some of the canons of verbal art are lifted. In a *fono* there is not much enjoyment of the *lāuga* performance; participants are too worried about what is coming next. They are silently rehearsing their own speeches or trying to anticipate the other parties' moves in the forthcoming debate. In this way the problem of faithfulness to artistic form and content, on the one hand, and faithfulness to contingent, pragmatic needs, on the other, is partly resolved by downplaying, in political arenas, the artistic dimensions of ceremonial speechmaking. The delivery of the *lāuga* in a *fono* is more like a "job" that needs to get done than an honor or an occasion for proud display of verbal skills.[6]

Variations within a *Fono*

After the opening speeches, the *fono* discourse becomes even further removed from the epic form. From the beginning of the event, when the first *lāuga* is performed as an opening speech, to the discussion part, when the issues of the day are presented and analyzed, the *matai*'s language is transformed into a truly hybrid genre, which still utilizes the lexicon and other aspects of *lāuga* but at the same time allows for features of everyday talk and register markers that are not typical of the "epic" genre and are even less typical of the formalized language described by Bloch.

In particular, when compared to ceremonial speeches, *fono* political

speeches are characterized by the use of a variety of codes, registers, and strategies that violate at least three of Irvine's (1979) four features of formalized language, namely, code consistency, increased code structuring, and focus on positional identities. In the *fono*, after the initial *lāuga*, the consistency of the code and the restrictions imposed on what can be said are partly released toward the creation of a "blurred genre" in which multiple voices and multiple perspectives can be heard. This domain of speaking exhibits what Bakhtin has called "heteroglossia" *(raznorečie)*, namely the social diversity of speech, the combination of "centrifugal forces" in language, which move away from standardization and codification of one particular register. These forces conspire to produce a language that "represents the co-existence of socio-ideological contradictions between the present and the past, between differing epochs of the past, between different socio-ideological groups in the present, between tendencies, schools, circles and so forth" (Bakhtin 1981:291).

Features of Heteroglossia in the *Fono* Discussion

The following features of the language used in speeches in the discussion part of the *fono* demonstrate the heteroglot nature of *lāuga* in *fono* when compared with the more controlled and unified character of *lāuga* in other contexts. They correspond to features (a) through (f) of formalized language listed at the beginning of this article.

Mixed registers. Whereas the first *lāuga* is consistently full of respectful terms *('upu fa'aaloalo)* for the *matai's* actions, feelings, relations, and possessions, later on in the discussion part *(talanoaga),* alongside the respectful words we also find ordinary and even profane words, as shown in examples 1 and 2.[7]

(1) *(Fono* of 25 January 1979)
    249   Moe'ono;   *oi kālofa!*
                           'Oh, too bad!'

(2) *(Fono* of 17 March 1979; full Samoan text in Duranti 1990a:474)
        Moe'ono: I also spoke on that day when you had come to the house. "A., stop, there is an important affair (going on)." Oh! But you came back outside (you instead) repeated those words "Fuck off! Ass! Prick!"

These are words that would never appear in a ceremonial *lāuga*, but they can be embedded in reported speech, in recounting events that are being evaluated in a *fono*.

Other kinds of mixed codes include the use of English loan words, as shown in example 3, where the English borrowing *sikolasipi* (from "scholarship") is used, and 4, where we find the informal *suipi* (from "sweep"), a metaphor from card playing—not a very "dignified" activity—in place of the Samoan *mālō* (see line 420 in example 11 below).

> (3) (*Fono* of 25 January 1979)
> 329   Moe'ono;   *ai ua iai le agaga fa'apea 'o ia.*
> 'Maybe this is the way he sees it.'
> 330   *'ua sikolasipi.*
> '[He] had a scholarship.'
>
> (4) (*Fono* of 25 January 1979)
> 761   Usu;   *kau ke suipi.*
> '[We] sweep up [i.e., win].'

Affective particles. The display of affect is also more common in *talanoaga*. Thus, for instance, the vocative and endearing postnominal particle *-e* is at times added to common and proper nouns, as shown in examples 5 and 6.

> (5) (*Fono* of 7 April 1979. The senior orator Moe'ono is trying to convince the young chief Savea to withdraw his suit against the district M.P.)
> 416   Moe'ono;   *ia' Saveae.*
> 'So, oh Savea.'
>
> (6) (*Fono* of 7 April 1979. The chief Tevaseu tries to cool people off after the orator Mata'afa—from his part of the district—has repeatedly scolded important members of the assembly.)
> 1393   Tevaseu;   *'āigae!*
> 'Oh Chiefs!'

Personal identities. In the *talanoaga* part of the *fono*, personal names may be used next to titles. Although this happens only when there is possible ambiguity between two or more parties sharing the same title —as in the village of Falefā in the late 1970s, when the Savea title was split between two men, Savelio and Sione—it demonstrates a concern

for individuals that violates the epic vision of ancestral powers remaining unchanged and unaffected by individuals' actions or deeds:

(7) (*Fono* of 7 April 1979)
    159   Moe'ono;   *ia' 'o lea fo'i ua:-*
                         'So now also has'
    160   *'ua koso fo'i le va'a o le Sa'o 'Ese'ese.*
                         'The boat of the Sa'o 'Ese'ese has been pulled in [i.e., he is running for office].'
    161   *le afioga iā Savea Sioge.*
                         'His Highness Savea Sione.'

Reported speech. Heteroglossia is also constituted by the display of multiple perspectives as produced by the use of reported speech. Reported speech is a common device used to insinuate the possibility of alternative views and discording voices (Vološinov 1973).

(8) (*Fono* of 7 April 1979. The female orator Tafili is speaking in defense of her brother, the chief Savea Sione)
    2886   Tafili;   *'o lea lava 'ou ke kaukala aku ai . . .*
                         'Now is the time that I am speaking'
    2887   *e leaga 'o 'upu gei 'ou ke kaukala iai,*
                         'because these are the words I am talking about,'
    2888   *" 'ua fa'akau Savea e Igu i kupe" . . .*
                         ' "Savea has been bought by Inu with money." '
    2889   *ia 'ua kakau ai lā ga kulāfogo 'upu gā,*
                         'Well those words must be [challenged in] court.'

Not only are verbs of saying referring to someone else's previous speech and to specific wordings used by others much more common in the discussion part of *fono*, speakers also quote and question one another's statements.

Dialogue. In a few cases, especially when there is strong disagreement or a need to clarify some obscure point, the macro-turn format of the *fono* speeches, in which a speaker holds the floor until he is completely through with his speech (see Duranti 1981), is broken by question-answer pairs or assertion-evaluation sequences that introduce a fla-

vor of everyday conversation in the highly controlled and ritualized style of public speaking:

(9) (*Fono* of 25 January 1979)
    1384 Mata'afa: We will also elect our own M.P.!
    1385   (1.0)
    1386 Moe'ono: Fine!

(10) (*Fono* of 7 April 1979. The chief Savea Sione has just fin-
     ished delivering a speech defining his position.)
     3176 Moe'ono: Thank you [for] speaking Savea . . .
                     [. . .]
     3186   I am not very clear
     3187   [about] these words I am taking note of
     3188   whether they are words [said by] Inu
     3189   or by one of our people [about]
     3190   the forty [dollars] that Inu paid
     3191   so that you would run in the elections.
     3192   That is what I would like to get clari-
                     fied.
     3193 Savea: Well Moe'ono I am approaching you
                     again
     3194   . . .
     3195   [since] our assembly wants to get an
                     answer from me
     3196   . . .
     3197   Those very words were by a *matai* in
                     this village.
     3198 Moe'ono: Words by a *matai* in this village?
     3199 Savea: This village.
                     (*continued*)

In this last example, one of the rare cases of a request for clarification during a *fono*, despite the respectful words and the ceremonial phrases (e.g., "words I am taking note of" or "I am approaching you"), the exchange comes closer and closer to a dialogical, almost conversational interaction between Savea and Moe'ono instead of a series of speeches in which each of them globally assesses the other's words without making himself vulnerable to the other's immediate response.

Logical argumentation. Alternative views and comparisons between past and future events are also achieved by the recurrent exploitation of logical argumentations in the form of "if-then" statements.

(11) (*Fono* of 25 January 1979)
      419   Moeʻono;   *ʻa kākou ō koʻakolu,* (1.0)
                       'If all the three of us go [i.e., run for
                       office]'
      420   *ʻua mālō Lufilufi.* (2.5)
                       'Lufilufi will have won.'
      421   ?;   *mālie!*
                       'Well said!'
                       [. . .]
      486   Moeʻono;   *auā e vaivai Iuli*
                       'Because [if] Iuli is weak'
      487   *ʻou ke vaivai foʻi.*
                       'I am also weak.'
      488   ?;   *mālie!*
                       'Well said!'

These rhetorical figures are common in the *fono* discussion and violate
the characterization of formalized language presented by Bloch, for
whom "formalized language is . . . non-logical and any attempt to rep-
resent it as such, whether by a paraphrase into ordinary language which
implies 'explanation' or by the use of tabular representation containing
a logical form, is misleading" (1975:21).

These features of the *fono* talk indicate that we must think of "for-
mality" or "formalized language" as variable not only in a cross-contex-
tual and cross-cultural sense, as discussed by Irvine (1979), but also in
the sense of intracontextual variability, whereby rules are more or less,
sometimes progressively, altered in the course of what is defined and
perceived as the same event.

I should point out here that the *matai* in a *fono* are quite aware of the
plasticity of the genre *lāuga*. The senior orator who acts as the chairman
of the meeting provides an explicit invitation, after the first introduc-
tory *lāuga*, to talk things out, to chat:

(12) (*Fono* of 7 April 1990)
      398   Moeʻono;   *ma:- ʻo lo kākou aso,*
                       'and our day,'
      399   *ʻo lea faʻauso[8] loa le kākou aofia . . .*
                       'now our assembly is open for discus-
                       sion'
      400   ?;   *mālie!*
                       'Well said!'
                       [

401	Moeʻono;	*ʻo lea ua faʻakigo mai makāʻupu e-*
		'Now that the topics have been clari-fied by'
402	?;	*mālie!*
		'Well said!'
403	Moeʻono;	*ʻoe le Laukogia.*
		'You the Lautogia [title referring to first speaker].'
404		*makāʻupu e uiga i le Falelua . . .*
		'Topics about the two subvillages'
405		*kākou kalagoa muamua i ai.*
		'let us first talk about it.'
406		. . .
407	Loa;	*(mā)lie!*
		'Well said!'

One of the functions of the conventional phrase /ʻo lea faʻauso loa le kākou aofia/ (in line 399), with which the discussion is started, is to relieve participants from complying with the canons of *lāuga* performance and to allow them to introduce features of less formalized and more colloquial talk to fit the needs of the discussion.

Metacommunicative statements of this nature also abound in the rest of the discussion, as several of the participants explicitly frame their own speech as "discussion" or "talk":

(13) (*Fono* of 25 January 1979)
       685   Usu;   *ʻou ke kaukala aku ma laʻu amio kogu.*
                         'I am talking [to you] with honesty [lit., with my true behavior].'

Such expressions as /ʻou ke kaulaka/ (I am talking) must be seen in opposition to phrases like /ʻou ke kalikogu/ (I believe, trust) which, as I mentioned earlier, characterize the ceremonial *lāuga*.

Conclusions

The contrast between artistic verbal genres and everyday talk is common across societies. Among the Malagasy, for example, a distinction is made between *resaka* (ordinary talk) and *kabary*, a context-sensitive multipurpose ceremonial genre similar to the Samoan *lāuga* (see Keenan 1973). The Samoan case is special in that the dichotomy

between "ceremonial speech" and "talk" or between a formal, artistic genre and a register designed for political debate is at work within the same event; the boundaries between the two are kept tentative, purposely fragile. If the interaction gets out of control, the more formal features of the artistic genre can be resumed to reestablish order and balance. Within political encounters, the speech register used in the discussion part displays some of the features of conversation but never completely matches the kind of casual talk that might go on among some of the same individuals in a different setting (or before the meeting starts). The switch from *lāuga* to *talanoaga* within the *fono* is thus a rhetorical (and politically pregnant) device to lift some of the canons and the expectations implicit in the kinds of ceremonial performances where *lāuga* are otherwise used. Such a move is necessary to discuss controversial and potentially damaging issues without putting the overall social system at stake. By changing genre, the celebration of the status quo is momentarily suspended, while participants remain engaged in the task at hand—the explanation and resolution of the conflicts or crimes brought to the attention of the *matai*. The goal is to create a "time out" from "epic talk" and hence predictable and beautiful acts. It is only in this "liminal space" (Turner 1974) that things can be talked out, complaints heard, conflicts aired, contradictions displayed, and opinions confronted. Only after this discussion process can the village be made beautiful again and its internal and external social ties *(vā)* be reestablished or mended.

The Samoan data suggest, rather than an absolute distinction between "traditional oratory" and "conversation," as one might infer from a strict interpretation of Bloch's argument (1975), a case in which traditional ceremonial speechmaking bends, without completely breaking, to the needs of political speechmaking and a mixed, spurious genre is created (the discussion speeches within a *fono*). Like Bakhtin's "novel" vis-à-vis the earlier "epic," speechmaking in a political event such as the *fono* is parasitic on the *lāuga:* it uses its parts, tropes, lexicon, grammar, and at times even its name, but it also infiltrates it with a type of discourse that does not belong to *lāuga* properly speaking and is not quite in the realm governed by aesthetic canons. For this reason, each individual speech within the discussion part of the meeting can also be called *lāuga* but only in a loose, evocative, and at the same time "corrupt" way. When pressed, Samoans will always recognize that in a *fono* only the opening speeches are "real" *lāuga*. Even those, however, are not as aesthetically pleasing as ceremonial *lāuga*. Thus, it is not by accident that most of the times I asked to meet a good *failāuga* (speech-

maker), I was taken to someone who was well known for skills in cere-
monial settings and not in political arenas.

The skills involved in political oratory are thus related to but not
identical with those required for ceremonial speechmaking. Politics and
verbal art, as I have tried to show here, are closely related domains of
human praxis that rely upon each other, but they should not be con-
fused with one another.

NOTES

1. This is an extensively revised version of the paper "The Conflict between Beauty and
Truth in Samoan Political Oratory" presented at the session on "The Arts and Politics"
organized by Karen Nero at the 1990 meetings of the Association for Social Anthropology
in Oceania. I would like to thank Pamela Rosi for her encouraging comments and Paul
Kroskrity for his helpful suggestions on how to revise an earlier draft.

2. These are words that refer to high-status individuals (typically chiefs and orators),
their actions, properties, feelings, relatives, possessions, and body parts (Milner 1961;
Duranti 1992).

3. I have used the masculine pronoun in referring to orators, given that they are over-
whelmingly male. There are, however, a few women in Samoa who hold an orator title.
Although oratorical contests tend to be exclusively male, women use oratory in a variety of
contexts, especially in women's committees.

4. Sermons, like any other form of public performance, are routinely evaluated, but in
separate, often more private, contexts, when people discuss the preacher's ability to get a
point across or his knowledge of the sacred scriptures.

5. This list is a revised and expanded version of a similar figure presented in Duranti
1984.

6. Artistic skills in verbal performance are on display during ceremonial encounters,
whereas they are downplayed in a *fono*.

7. *Transcription Conventions.* The transcripts used in this article were prepared with the
help of "SCAN," a program written by John B. Haviland for the personal computer. The
conventions are basically those introduced by Gail Jefferson (see the appendix in Sacks,
Schegloff, and Jefferson 1974) for analysis of English conversation, with the following
exceptions: I use a semicolon following identification of speakers (the colon is used after
the speaker's name when only the English translation is provided). A stand-alone bracket
"[" signals a point of overlap; "=" indicates latching; parentheses indicate uncertain hear-
ing or timed pause; brackets around English words in translations indicate interpolation to
ease understanding or to match Samoan idioms with English ones; three dots indicate an
untimed pause; three dots between parentheses indicate that a speaker's following words
have been omitted; and three dots between brackets signal that a portion of the transcript
has been omitted in the middle of an example for simplification. A comma indicates a
slight rising intonation; a hyphen is a break in the flow of talk, often realized as a glottal
stop; a colon indicates lengthening of a sound. Samoan is transcribed according to tradi-
tional Samoan orthography—i.e., the inverted apostrophe (') stands for a glottal stop, a

macron on a vowel (ā, ē, etc.) indicates length, and the letter "g" stands for a velar nasal (transcribed as "ng" in other Polynesian languages)—taking into consideration sociolinguistic variation.

A *note on phonological registers.* Samoan has two phonological registers: *tautala lelei,* or "good speech," used in writing and for speaking in Western-inspired activities such as schooling and Christian rites, and *tautala leaga,* or "bad speech," used in both formal and informal traditional activities such as the ceremonial occasions mentioned in this article, *fono* discussions, and talk among intimates. In "bad speech," the sounds /t/ and /n/ disappear and in their place /k/ and /ŋ/ (here written /g/) are used. For this reason, a word like *tonu* (true, real) is pronounced /koŋu/ (here written /kogu/). In this article, I use good speech when I discuss Samoan words and phrases in general terms, but I preserve the bad speech pronunciation, between slashes, any time it occurred in actual talk. This means that the same word may be found in two different versions, for example, as *tonu* and /kogu/.

8. The word *fa'auso* could be literally translated "like brother(s)" or, more precisely, "like *(fa'a)* siblings of the same sex *(uso).*" If we accept this etymology of the term, the expression *fa'auso le fono* would imply a call for "brotherly" (or "sisterly") as opposed to formal and antagonistic behavior.