

**NEGOTIATIONS IN PERFORMANCE: A STUDY OF THE STORYTELLING
PERFORMANCE OF TWO ADOLESCENT AFGHAN STORYTELLERS**

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the storytelling performance of two adolescent male Afghan narrators. From conventional stories similar to those found across the Islamic world to obscene *afsAneh* or *märchen*, the boys' performance encompasses items across the spectrum of oral, Persian fictive genres. During the performance, various negotiations occur. In this paper, I discuss two: "appropriateness" and "othering."

By looking at how concepts of appropriateness are negotiated during the storytelling event, this paper illustrates movement along a performance continuum: from perfunctory performance to more authoritative tones. Performance, then, is understood as a matter of degree. After issues of appropriateness are resolved and a "breakthrough into performance" is realized, the performance discussed here moves towards the pole of "full" performance.

Similarly, the narrators parse conflicting ideas of identity in a joke cycle. Their highly ambiguous handling of the joke material reflects their relationships to the categories named in real life.

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TRANSCRIPTION NOTE

The transcription system I have used is borrowed from *Conversational Dari: An Introductory Course in the Farsi (Persian) of Afghanistan*.¹ Consonants and consonant combinations should be read as in standard, written English, with the Persian letter "khe" written as "kh," "ghain" as "gh," and "qaf" as "q." The vowels should be pronounced as follows: "A" corresponds to the "a" sound in the word "call," "a" to the "o" in "cabin," "E" to "rain," "e" to "pit," "I" as in "police," "O" to "note," "U" to "rule," and "u" to "pull."

The most salient feature of my transcription system is the treatment of pauses. I have chosen a hybrid representation of pauses: some are omitted, some are represented as new paragraphs, and the remaining ones are written as new lines. I have transcribed each new breath segment as a new line. Each of the storyteller's breath segments is often a complete grammatical sentence or independent or dependent clause. Breaks between lines function as paragraph markers. These are often longer breath pauses and mark a transition and/or the introduction of a new story, character, chapter, or theme. I have not paid as much attention to the length of pauses, per se, but instead have attempted to represent pauses in relation to how they function in the narrator's thought sequence. Words or phrases especially emphasized by the storyteller are marked in boldface type, while abrupt changes in tempo or pitch are highlighted with crescendo and decrescendo marks. Bracketed items are implicit in the original Farsi text, but included for ease of comprehension in English. Lastly, I have set apart all remaining, relevant paralinguistic features in the text and noted the presence of unintelligible utterances with parentheses. As examples, I have embedded short transcriptions with their English equivalents in the paper itself. Longer passages are in the appendix at the end of the paper.

¹ Glassman, Eugene H. *Conversational Dari: An Introductory Course in the Dari (Persian) of Afghanistan*. (Peshawar: Interlit, 1972), 17-19.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This paper analyzes the dueling repertoires of two Afghan adolescent storytellers, paying particular attention to how they key their performances. In the spirit of Dell Hymes, this paper seeks to be an initial, "Systematic study of variation in performance,"² as it relates to several related storytelling events. Recognizing that performance often varies between the poles of authoritative, "full" performance and more perfunctory, report-like tones, I hope to offer some initial observations as to the nature and degree of responsibility to the audience the narrators each take.

The texts analyzed for this paper were recorded by Dr. Margaret Mills on June 3, June 10, and July 1, 1976 at her apartment in Kabul, Afghanistan, but this is the first analytic treatment they have received. The people present were Margaret Mills, Jalaludin, Mohammed Asef, and several other participants. During the first day, both Jalaludin and Mohammed Asef, high school students originally from Herat province, performed a variety of genres ranging from elaborate, framed narratives to ethnic one-liners for approximately two hours, and for the last two days Jalaludin was the sole performer. From conventional Mullah Nasruddin stories similar to those found across the Islamic world to obscene *afsAneh* or märchen, the boys' performance encompasses items across the spectrum of oral, Persian fictive genres. While the range of narrated genre types is broad, at times the "depth" of the performance is, on the contrary, shallow. That is, often the narrators slide into a machine-like tone reminiscent of report rather than any kind of authoritative, full-throttle performance.

To begin to examine variations in performance degree, in Chapter 2 I explore both narrators' use of frame as a boundary of the text to be considered "performance." The narrators situate their texts within these conversational frames like book ends, which also function as a form of metacommunication. This metanarration, as Barbara Babcock calls it,³ occurs both explicitly and implicitly. The narrators use conventional formulae, paralinguistic cues, and other more embedded devices to that end. But the presence of framing does not necessarily imply that the bounded texts always reach their full "performative" potential. Instead, both narrators' performances could more accurately be understood as movement between the poles of perfunctory and "full" performance.

²Hymes, Dell. "Breakthrough into Performance." in *In Vain I Tried to Tell You: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*. (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981),86.

³ Babcock, Barbara. "The Story in the Story: Metanarration in Folk Narrative." in *Verbal Art as Performance*. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1984), 67.

While Richard Bauman, among others, has noted that performance is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon and that verbal art may vary in intensity,⁴ this paper attempts to further build on those theories and illustrate movement towards greater "intensity" in a specific performance. To that end and as an extension of Bauman's idea, I imagine a kind of performance continuum with perfunctory, report-like tones on one end and a fuller, authoritative handling of the material on the other. Entire performances could stay located somewhere between the two extreme ends of the spectrum. Here, the boys' performance is not static, but instead moves between the two poles of the continuum. The distinction is not a valuation of relative performance quality, nor is it concerned with genre or thematic differentiation. Rather, in Bauman's words, the difference is between "the relative saturation of the performance frame attendant upon the more specific categories of ways of speaking within the community."⁵

In the cases analyzed here, initially, certain felicity conditions remain unsatisfied for "full" performance to occur, namely genre appropriateness. "Appropriateness" as a concept belies simple analysis. Here, I limit my investigation to the categories "age" and "sex." The performance situation described in this paper was anomalous for the two narrators; and thus gender, age, respect relations, "foreignness," and no doubt other factors demanded negotiation in performance. The boys could not rely on normal rules of conversational and performative interaction because the texts performed were usually limited to same sex and age performance environments. They, then, necessarily had to more thoroughly parse ideas of genre and audience through these contextual and textual negotiations, until they established a kind of generic equilibrium for the present storytelling events. Once this equilibrium is tentatively reached, the two storytellers encounter greater narrative freedom and move their stories further towards the pole of "full" performance.

Negotiation of generic appropriateness is not the only kind of meta-dialogue at work in the boys' storytelling performance. In chapter 3, I discuss discourses of identity that happen within a joke cycle. Here, when Asef narrates a joke text in which he derides "otherness," Jalaludin responds in turn critiquing the implications of Asef's joke and offers an opposite commentary in the form of his own joking sequence. Jalaludin's reinterpretation and elaboration of Asef's theme demonstrates the complicated and ambiguous relationship that both he and Asef have towards the joke cycle's object. Even more, when Asef is not present during the two later storytelling events, Jalaludin revives the theme again and continues with his reinterpretation. In short, Jalaludin uses several different strategies to mitigate Asef's verbal threats and offer contrary data to the foreign ethnographer: he participates himself in ethnic aggression, he clarifies what he sees are the "real" dynamics among inhabitants of urban and rural Afghanistan, he stresses the commonalities of all Afghans, and finally he asserts his own "otherness" in relation to the rural "other" who are often the butt of the jokes.

⁴ Bauman, Richard. "Verbal Art as Performance." in *Verbal Art as Performance*. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1984), 24.

⁵ Ibid.

CHAPTER 2

DEGREES OF PERFORMANCE

The most obvious and elementary, from an analytical perspective, of the framing devices employed during the story narrations is the use of opening formulae. In the majority of the cases analyzed here, at the beginning of each narrative segment the narrators introduce the story with a noun followed by the Farsi indefinite suffix. Rendered something akin to the article “a” or “an” in English, the phrases can be translated, “There was a (noun),” or “One time there was a (noun).” These opening narrative salvos often enumerate the protagonists of the story or work to locate the story temporally. Thus, the narrators begin with, “yak wakhtI...” or “One time...” “dar zamAn-e qadIm...” or “In an ancient time...” “bAz rOzI bUd...” or “Then there was a day...” or “nafarI bud, amrA-e zan-e khUd...” or “There was a man, with his wife...”

Functioning as the initial interpretative frame, these special formulae separate the story text from the conversational setting of the greater speech event. While on the surface, this device seems apparent and unworthy of any kind of detailed examination, this first, explicit metanarration is important because it situates the outer boundaries of the text to be considered as that “performed.” It is within this first frame that the narrators take special responsibility for performance and understand the text within it as worthy of different interpretative norms. Even more, the narrators themselves lend credence to an analysis of the opening formulae by strictly “policing,” as it were, the story introductions. Each time the opening to a story was interrupted by another participant for the sake of clarification, an audience member’s objection to the story theme, etc., the narrators always repeated the opening formulae when they again resumed their narration, while at the same time not necessarily repeating all the other components narrated prior to each interruption. (See Appendix, Story A)

On the surface the intent of this repetition may have been to reinforce the claims of fictiveness of the genres narrated. That is, by reiterating special formulae the narrators stress the importance of interpreting the text to follow differently from what precedes it. They highlight again that the text following the introduction must be interpreted in light of the genre rules of *mazAq* or joke, *qessa* or story, *afsAneh* or märchen, *durUgh* or lies etc., rather than by any rules of “normal” conversation. Also, the repetition of opening formulae demonstrates that each storyteller considered the texts narrated within these boundaries as complete units which should/could not be altered. Thus, when an interruption occurred, they necessarily started the story again from the beginning rather than continue from where they had left off. Dwight Reynolds observed a similar phenomenon among Egyptian singers of the *Sirāt Banī Hilāl* epic.⁶ If the performances were interrupted at an emotional highpoint, they resumed their narration at

⁶ Reynolds, Dwight Fletcher. *Heroic Poets, Poetic Heroes: The Ethnography of Performance in an Arabic Oral Epic Tradition*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 164.

the beginning rather than continuing where they had left off. Their emotional appeals could only occur after a set accrual of formal features in the text.

Interestingly, the concluding boundary of each individual story performance was not monitored with the same rigor; there were rarely any “happily-ever-after-like” formulaic endings to clue the audience to the end of a performance unit. But as should be obvious, the absence of similar concluding formulae did not necessarily create any kind of interpretative confusion for the audience. Rather, at the end of each story segment other kinds of contextual and paralinguistic cues, e.g. extended pauses, direct appeals to the audience, laughter, the opening formula of another story, etc., function as the final book end of the story performance and introduction to the next performance unit. Unlike some other fictive genres, for instance *märchen* or *dAstAn*, in the stories told here the ending is relatively “open.” That is, the narrators leave the audience a chance to comment or to assume responsibility for subsequent narrations once their performance concludes. The story endings provide ample opportunity for audience participation and evaluation.

For our storytellers the initial interpretative frame, which keys the performance and sets apart the portion of the text for which the narrator takes special responsibility towards the audience, is not limited to an itemization of the tale’s characters or to placing the story in an indefinite time and place. Besides opening formulae, other explicit kinds of metanarrative framing include reporting the source of the text to follow, similar to Richard Bauman’s notion of an “appeal to tradition,”⁷ stressing the genre of the performed text in opposition to the conversational context, and finally quoting proverbs and other proverb-like sayings.

Functioning similarly to quotation marks in written prose, the narrators often frame their performance by giving credit to the story’s source. That is, they may say, “InhA ma az yak pIr mard shunIdum...” or “I heard this from an old man...” (CCCXCII 29:30) and “padar-e ma mEga ke...” or “My father says that...” (CCCXCII 13:11) This assertion of an authoritative source acts to identify the text which follows as quoted speech and explicitly emphasizes it should be interpreted as such.

Likewise, the narrators key their performance by identifying the genre to which it belongs. Thus, they say, “O, I az I taraf-e naql bUd...” or “Yes, this was from [the category] of narrations...” (CCCXCII 25:10), “I estalAs...” or “This [is] an expression.” (CCCXCII 3:02), “chI durUghA-ye afghAnistAn... az I bekharI... ke afghAnistAn yAd dAra...” “What kind of Afghan lies are you buying from him?” (CCCXCII 1:55), or “mazAq as I, I mazAq...” or “This is a joke, a joke.” (CCCXCII 17:25) As with other kinds of explicit framing discussed before, by reinforcing the genre, the audience knows to interpret the “performed” text differently than the conversational interludes. Whether calling it *naql* or narration, *estalA* or expressions, or *durUgh* or lies, the requisite interpretative rules are readily apparent to the narrators’ Dari-speaking audience. As evidenced above, here, the narrators are especially conscious of genre markers. This explicit genre identification was unusual among the most narrators Mills recorded.⁸

⁷ Bauman, Richard. “Verbal Art as Performance.” in *Verbal Art as Performance*. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1984), 21.

⁸ Personal Communication, Mills, 2/2008.

The extra emphasis on genre perhaps was intended to facilitate the ethnographer's greater understanding of the material. But, it also worked to more explicitly excuse the boys for the content they narrated. That is, genre-labeling acts to highlight the fictiveness of the narrated text and to set apart the text from its greater conversational context. This genre-labeling illustrates the hesitancy and conservative impulses of the storytellers prior to the cycles of negotiations described later in the paper. For later in the two subsequent storytelling sessions, Jalaludin does not rely to the same degree on genre identifiers. Jalaludin may have dropped genre labels because he felt they were no longer necessary for Mills' comprehension, but it also demonstrates the greater performative freedom and greater assumption of performance responsibility which occurred during the later storytelling performances.

Similar to explicitly marking genres and appealing to the story's source, the two adolescent narrators gloss proverbs or proverb-like expressions with their stories. These proverbs can also work as a framing device for the story that follows. For example, "yak estelA dar bAin-e mA mardum rawAj dAra. ke gap shud yak nafar AmrA-ye yak nafar-e dEga zed bUd mEgan, 'sag dAnad O kaoshdUz ke dar am(b)An chIst. qessa az I..." or "There's a saying among our people that when people are opposed to each other and you don't know why, when they're against each other, they say, 'The dog and the cobbler know what's in the sack.' There's a story about this..." (8:40) These kinds of keying, as a type of contextual clue, operate to clearly separate the conversational from the heightened performance event.

One factor that complicates the boys' use of these kinds of metanarrative framing was Mills' own encouragements. Most storytellers, especially the more mature, rarely volunteered the sources of their narrated texts. The only exception was if the narrated stories had a literary provenance. Because of the prestige and rarity of formal education in this mainly non-literate society and Mills' own inquiries, some storytellers Mills encountered stressed the literary origins of certain texts in order to emphasize their own facilities with the written word.⁹

Interestingly, even when other kinds of metanarrative framing precede a story narration, like those described above, the narrators still continue to begin their tales with special, opening formulae. It is as if enumeration of the text's source, reiterating the text's genre, or using proverbs as the beginning of a text still does not suffice in adequately framing each individual performance segment. That is, while these kinds of metanarration may be part of a performance frame, at least in this performance they cannot stand on their own as a singular framing device. They, instead, must be coupled with opening formulae. In the case of special opening formulae and the other framing devices described above, the narrator's performance framing occurs explicitly. That is, the narrators verbally highlight a distinction between the conversational and story context using the above-mentioned devices. The narrators also frame the degrees of performance in more implicit and obscure ways, less easily identifiable, but analytically more interesting. The first "ramping up" of the performance occurs once the performed text is set apart by certain keying devices, but is not precipitated by it. The narrators' initial keying does not necessarily bring about any kind of "full" performance. In order for deeper performance to be realized, further negotiations must occur.

⁹ Personal communication, Mills, 2/2008.

MOVEMENT TOWARDS “FULL” PERFORMANCE

The portion of the text transcribed in the appendix as Story B possibly illustrates such a “breakthrough into performance,” to repeat Hymes’ term. Here, after and amid the other explicit frames of the story text already discussed, the “full” performance of the text still necessitates another conversational negotiation. Story B comes after the narrator, Mohammed Asef, has already told several other short stories of the sort found in popular Afghan literature. Mills suggests he tell something he has only recently learned, presumably outside the context of popular Mullah Nasrudin chapbooks. Explicitly identifying the text he has chosen for performance as a *mazAq* or joke, he proceeds with some of the generic conventions for Farsi narrative as outlined above: enumerating the protagonists and general setting of the story. (Appendix Story B, Line 1) Yet after the “once upon a times,” Asef seems to slide into a perfunctory “report” of the joke rather than any kind of authoritative performance.

In short, the texture of the report mimics the preceding normal conversation instead of offering any kind of heightened experience one would expect from "full" storytelling event. This stands in stark contrast to several of his earlier story performances in which he seems to enthusiastically assume greater responsibility towards his audience. One of the limiting factors becomes clear as he continues his narration: the referential content of the joke is incongruent with its normal generic setting. It is not until this apparent incongruity is resolved that Asef can make use of verbal and paralinguistic features typical of a more “full” joking performance.

The issue at play is that of “acceptability” or “appropriateness,” to put our discussion in Hymes’ terms.¹⁰ The sexual and scatological content required by the joke text is normally reserved for occasions with other teenage boys, not in the presence of an unfamiliar, foreign woman. He, thus, repeatedly stops his narration midstream and inserts numerous particles, portions of words, unnecessary repetition, etc., attempting to delay portions of questionable narration and excusing himself for any and all of the story’s offensive content. For example, in Story B, line 33, he says, “wakhte ke dami ke mEkhast ke bUra. Ami bAz, am InjA besyAr chat, chatI-ye dega! guftanesh khUb nEs.” or “When at that moment he wanted to go, he again. It’s really dirt, dirty here!” He concludes the performance of this same joke text with a final apology for the possibly offensive words he has just uttered. (Story B, Line 78) He says, “besyar bad chIz-e. mazAq as, I. I mazAq.” or “It’s a really bad thing. It’s a joke. This is a joke.” By again reassuring his listeners that the text performed is only a joke, he can excuse himself from the content it contains. This genre-naming works as another disclaimer. That is, he frames the authoritative section of his performance with a warning, excusing himself from offense and trying to supplant the seeming incongruities of the setting.

These kinds of hesitations begin early on in the performance event. When the boys initially introduced the notion of appropriateness, without prompting on the ethnographer’s part, Asef suggests that a subset of his repertoire includes tales inappropriate for narration in mixed company. He says, “ma zyAd yAd dArum. bAZI qessa as besyAr kharAb.” or “I know a lot. Some of the stories are really bad.” (CCCXCII 7:26) It is interesting that at the very beginning of the storytelling event, Asef implies that a large portion of his joking repertoire contains

¹⁰ Hymes, Dell. “Breakthrough into Performance.” in *In Vain I Tried to Tell You: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics*. (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981),83.

portions unavailable for performance in the given setting. While Jalaludin's ability lay in more extended discourse, Asef had a penchant for off-color humor. Jalaludin's repertoire and its incumbent performative norms were evidently more consistent with the general performance setting of Mills' apartment, the assembled audience, and the tape-recorded format. In contrast, Asef argues that he cannot demonstrate the full extent of his performance ability without a change in the performative status quo. He says that the larger component of his memorized texts cannot be performed. So it follows that the texts he has already told, and presumably the texts he will tell later in the performance event, are only a smaller, subset of his "real" storytelling competence, thus rendering the ethnographer's presumed judgment of his performance ability incomplete.

This general excuse works as one of the initial, performative negotiations for generic appropriateness, in addition to being another performance strategy and another type of metacommunicative frame. Richard Bauman argues, "A disclaimer of performance serves both as a moral gesture, to counterbalance the power of performance to focus heightened attention on the performer, and a key to performance itself."¹¹ So, disclaimers of performance, rather than operating to distance the narrator from the text he tells and abrogating all responsibility for performance, sometimes work as just the opposite: they can frame the entire performance text. Asef's disclaimers, too, function as more than a simple denial of performance responsibility. They also act to frame the texts he narrates and negotiate the context of the performance.

It is also here, transcribed in Appendix Story C, that Asef, as an observant storyteller, again broaches his earlier-mentioned transgressive theme and begins to gauge his audience response. Mills assures him of the "appropriateness" of the performance setting and she encourages his continued, unhindered narration. But despite these assurances of the stories' acceptability and having been further encouraged to divulge the more transgressive components of his oral oeuvre, Asef still demurs, deciding instead to continue with more conventional and seemingly inoffensive material. This "acceptable" story interlude includes items appropriate for a broad audience. He, thus, narrates several conventional, widely-circulated stories about two stock characters from Afghan folklore, Ganyboy and Mullah Nasrudin.

Though obscene and vulgar Ganyboy and Mullah Nasrudin story variants exist, Asef instead only narrates several tales found in an English printed story collection. Because when Mills asks about the joke's origins, Asef replies, "Awal ba lafs-e InghlIsI shunIdam." or "I heard (it) first in English." (CCCXCII 14:32) Even though Asef knows Mills is interested in traditional Afghan storytelling, he narrates a tale he first learned in English. In short, Asef takes the safe route. By not diverging from texts in open circulation and those compiled for pedagogical purposes and for an English speaking audience, he ensures that his performance will not contain any kind of performative incongruity of the type he has already anticipated in his earlier thwarted obscene narration. That is, by narrating from a book of which he is not the author, he distances himself from the joke's content and assumes little responsibility for its performance; his performance strategy abrogates any offense he may have caused. Even more, somewhat paradoxically, he likely assumes Mills would be more interested in stories selected by English

¹¹ Bauman, Richard. "The Keying of Performance." in *Verbal Art as Performance*. (Long Grove, IL: Waveland, 1984.), 22.

speakers than in more "Afghan" tales. Asef's stories include a short tale about a boy getting stuck in a tree and his rescue by Ganyboy, a similar story about Mullah Nasrudin and a well, a joke about Mullah Nasrudin's solution to a man's sleeping problems, and finally a story about Mullah Nasrudin stealing apples from his neighbor's tree. Because the printed story collection was compiled by English speakers, screened for content, and intended for a broad audience, he is ensured that its content is acceptable for his present foreign audience.

It is not until later in the storytelling session, no doubt after other contextual boundaries were also tested and cautiously resolved, that the possibility of a questionable theme again arises, namely the story transcribed in the appendix as Story B. But even here, the negotiation continues amid the same apologies, disclaimers, hesitations, and finally (re)assurances of immunity from Mills that Asef encountered earlier. The only thematic, character, or other simple intertextual connection between the stories described above and the obscene content to follow is in regards to theft. In the English story collection, the Mullah attempts to steal from his neighbors' orchard, and in the first obscene story the protagonists of the jokes are victims of highway robbery and violence. This simple intertextuality offers the only introduction to the story's inappropriate content. Because of the ease with which Asef begins the story, it seems he initially does not fully anticipate the rhetorical move he is about to take. Only a few moments into the story does his narrative style dramatically change. His words no longer flow as freely as they did in the previous stories and in this story's introduction. The entire narration to follow is full of hesitations, stuttered speech, and verbal insecurity.

While earlier the speech continued unabated, here, Asef stutters. He says:

bare ba I sedA kad. guft, guft
'payAn shO!' az zan-e khuda az Asp

payAn kad U.
mmm.. tufangchesh am gereft dega.

Ah, p...p... paisa-ra am gereft. (CCCXCII)
He called out to her. He said, said.
'Dismount!' from the horse. (he asked) from the woman.

She dismounted.
mmm... He took her handgun.

Ah, he took her m... m... money.

He repeats words unnecessarily and uncharacteristically in comparison to previous and later narrations. Further, he must frame the quote twice. He takes a long pause before continuing the story's exposition. And finally, he stutters the direct object of the last sentence, whereas earlier, the narration had flowed unhindered. Here, once he recognizes that the story requires content for which the setting may not easily allow, he hesitates.

Directly following this, he arrives at the first real point of questionable content: he must describe a sexual act. Later in the performance, both he and Jalaludin do not hesitate to describe sexual acts in almost extreme anatomical detail. They unabashedly narrate using local idiom and leave little coded in the performance. Indeed many of punch lines to follow hinge on a frank discussion of both male and female anatomy and sexual aggression. But here, Asef instead only refers to the sexual encounter euphemistically. He says "AmrAi-esh kAr-e bad (m) kad." or "He did the bad thing with her." Finally, when in order to continue the joke tale's exposition he can no longer avoid more questionable content, Asef flatly refuses to continue. He says:

MA: Wakhte ke dami ke mEkhast ke bUra.

Ami bAz,

am InjA >>> besyAr chat, chatI-ye dega !<<<

guftanesh khUb nEs.

MM: **bUgO!**

MA: besyAr bAd-e!

MM: khO shUro kadEn dega, **chI kAr kunEn?** (ko) bugo bUgO!

Agar shUro mEkanEn.

MA: kho fAmIdI?

M: ah, mEfamum.

MA: bad az U enamu bAz guftak ke mEkhast ke bUra amrA-e zan-e khUd. (CCCXCII)

In the middle of a sentence, he stops the narration midstream and emphasizes again that the story is especially "dirty." Mills, laughing, urges him to continue on with the tale. But he vehemently asserts, "It's really bad!" Mills impatiently replies, "Ok, now that you've started, what are you going to do? Tell it. Tell it! If you've started..." Caught in a performance trap and urged on by Mills' impatience, Asef finally relents and finishes the story. Here, Mills' impatience acted as the catalyst for movement towards deeper performance. It is unclear whether Asef intended to narrate obscene material from the onset of the performance and lost his nerve or had not figured out how to adequately euphemize the offensive content, or if Mills' impatience was the chief instigator. Likely, Asef had hoped to be able to narrate the texts he eventually told, but was unsure of their acceptability in the given setting. It took Mill's repeated provocations to push the performative negotiations further.

This conversational negotiation began to assure Asef, and later Jalaludin, of the acceptability of the narration of obscene content in Mills' presence. However, the hesitations, apologies, and negotiations do not stop here. Even after he starts into the story again, Asef still is hesitant. He stutters again when describing the thief's anatomy and later almost ends the narration altogether after an unintelligible humorous aside from someone in the audience, necessitating yet another round of assurances from Mills. Even after the story is complete and the tense mood has been punctuated by rounds of approving laughter from the audience, Asef

concludes with one final disclaimer. He stresses, yet again, that the text he has just narrated is a joke, thus attempting to excuse himself for his transgressive behavior for a fourth time and distance himself from the joke's content.

Following this, six of the eight joke tales Asef narrates include some degree of obscene content. Yet he offers no further apologies or disclaimers. When elucidating questionable details, he does not stutter or describe them euphemistically. In short, he performs them in "full." It is after Mills' final reassurances and Asef's last protest and attempt at excusing himself for the transgressive nature of the joke that the performance takes on the more committed tone, and Asef makes use of pitch, volume, and other paralinguistic emphases not realized in his earlier exposition. It takes Mills' reassuring him of the acceptability of the jokes' referential content for his narration to reach the greater depth and fullness requisite of a more authoritative joking performance. Then having tentatively negotiated and resolved the unique boundaries of gender identity associated with the presence of a foreign woman interlocutor, at least some generic requirements for obscene joke performance are satisfied and the narration continues unabated. After he has ensured himself this immunity, his perfunctory "report" becomes a more "full" performance. One could further map a "breakthrough into performance" at this point of departure.

PERFORMANCE COMPLICATIONS

One might question the above characterization by calling into play the abundance of evidence from joke-telling performances around the world that suggest joke performances, with their hesitations and apologies, always work to test boundaries.¹² But I would tentatively suggest that what is going on here is qualitatively different from other joking performances. What distinguishes this segment of the boys' performance from other portions of the storytelling event in which they make use of sexual humor is the degree of hesitation on the narrator's part. Though the data admittedly do not provide us with an appropriate sample with which to analyze the ways in which Farsi joke performances systematically vary across contexts, in the subset of performed texts examined here, we see that this joke text differs from other joking performances in significant ways.

At the point in the speech event when this obscene passage is narrated, the boys have already insisted that there are appropriate and inappropriate contexts for the performance of obscene material (Appendix, Story C). They agree that obscene stories are in circulation among women and men, and that their performance is reserved for same-sex gatherings. Asef says early on, "ma masalan dU sE rafIq jam mEsha (unintelligible) bekhandEm. InhA yak chIzA ast ke adabI nEst." or "For example, when two or three friends get together, we laugh. These are things that are not polite." And later he elaborates even more and says, "ba ma eqa farq namEkuna. ma AIE burEm dar ar jAi shUma khOsh mEshEn ke bekhanda. chera aga mA dah dUwOzdah nafar sheshta qessa mEkunEm." or "It doesn't make any difference to me. We could go now to anyplace you like and laugh because whenever ten or twelve people sit together we tell stories." Thus, Asef readily admits the currency of obscene stories among his own peer group and insists on his willingness to narrate an obscene tale in any gathering of a group of peers. Not to be

¹² Personal Communication Dr. Dorothy Noyes.

outdone as a cultural informant, likewise, Jalaludin asserts that women, too, share a penchant for telling transgressive tales in same-sex groupings. He similarly says, “da bar-e zanhA chlzhA chatI chatI mEgan.” or “between women they say some dirty, dirty things.”

Even more, the boys later suggest that the groupings for appropriateness go beyond the boundaries of male or female. After telling a particularly obscene story, Jalaludin says, “etau chlzhA nagIm? padAr-e ma mEga bAz lat mEkuna ma-ra. padAr-e bAz mEga gOsh-e ma mIgra etU.” or “Don't say these things! My father says [don't tell them], then he beats me. My father says that and pulls my ear like this.” (CCCXCII 29:25) As should not be surprising, Jalaludin's worry demonstrates that the boundaries of acceptability vary even among same-sex relationships. Jalaludin stresses he cannot tell these stories to his father. Such formality in the father-son relationship extends beyond acceptable and unacceptable speech topics. It also includes various other forms of respect behavior, e.g. body language, not smoking around elders, etc. Here, it is apparently not even a strict performative distinction between older and younger male listeners, but specifically between father and son. At another point in the first storytelling event, he states that he learned one of the obscene stories he narrates from an older, male acquaintance.

In order to delve further into the question of how this particular joke performance differs from others, the issue that needs to be resolved is how the ethnographer Mills, a foreign woman, fits into the gender constellation of this conservative society. Mills notes that during her time in Afghanistan her own informants' opinions differed on how her presence affected the degree and nature of obscene performance,¹³ though some still did express surprise at the sexual frankness of the storytellers. Moreover, as Western women were generally seen as “free,” the narrators likely assumed that the strict gender constraints and segregations of Afghan society did not apply in the same way they would with Afghan women. Just because Mills did not conform to the boys' preconceived notions of the Afghan female and its incumbent cultural norms, does not necessarily imply that the narrators treated her as they would a male peer. By performing to a foreign woman who occupies a kind of gendered “liminal” space in Afghan society, who neither conformed to nor performed all of the Afghan male or female roles, the narrators necessarily had to negotiate the boundaries of thematic and interactional acceptability in order for their performances to be fully realized. The example already given illustrates such a negotiation taking place.

Once this hurdle of “appropriateness” is surmounted, the boys enthusiastically barrage Mills with more of what could generously be termed off-color narration and the implicit key of the performance changes with this thematic adjustment. As argued earlier, it is at this point that the “perfunctory” slides more towards the pole of “authoritative” on a performance continuum. The stories that have obscene content, which are narrated following the tale transcribed as Story B, do not exhibit the same kind of hesitancy and or invite the reassurances detailed above. While the narrators continue stressing the genres of their collective performance in order to mitigate perceived offense and highlight their fictiveness, they seem to no longer question the appropriateness of the joke genre to the setting and audience. Even more, on following days,

¹³ Mills, Margaret A. *Rhetorics and Politics in Traditional Afghan Storytelling*. (Philadelphia: The University of Pennsylvania Press, 1991), 69.

during the two other storytelling events, there are still no apologies and hesitations like the one Mills encountered during the first day of the boys' narration.

If the level of boundary testing at the beginning of the first storytelling event were characteristic of all Afghan obscene joke performances, then one could presume to find similar boundary-testing at the instigation of all the narrators' subsequent obscene narrations. However, the opposite seems to occur. At the beginning of the immediately-following storytelling event with Jalaludin that Mills taped on June 10, 1976, Jalaludin unapologetically launches into the performance of an obscene story. (Mills' Tape CCCXCVI) He offers no excuse before or after the story, nor does he even hint at the possible inappropriateness or offensiveness of the story's content. It is not until his audience laughs at the conclusion of his first story that he even acknowledges the possible humor, or as Oring terms it the "appropriate incongruity,"¹⁴ present in the obscene joke. The narration of questionable content does not end with the first story, rather, again, like the stories told on June 3, 1976, the texts narrated on June 10th include numerous references to obscene material told in genres ranging from short joke to elaborate tale.

In contrast, during the third and final occasion Jalaludin narrated to Mills, recorded on July 1, 1976, he offers no obscene or questionable material. (See Appendix, Story D) Because he had a reputation as a teller of *afsAneh*, Jalaludin had been recommended to Mills on the advice of Rick O'Conner, a Peace Corps volunteer serving in Afghanistan. Jalaludin's talents were unusual for educated youth in that at this time in Afghanistan *afsAneh* seemed to be out of currency among the younger generation.¹⁵ Most had heard the stories as children, but whether they were active bearers of the tradition is less clear. In contrast, Asef did not share Jalaludin's proclivity for longer narration and was more accomplished in the shorter, humorous genres at play among his peers. For this reason, Mills encouraged Jalaludin to narrate the texts in which he was more accomplished in the subsequent storytelling sessions. While Asef was not "uninvited" to the following two storytelling events, presumably because his faculty in *afsAneh* narration was limited, he did not attend. In addition to Mills' urgings, a change in composition of the audience between June 10 and July 1 may just as likely have caused Jalaludin to eliminate any obscene content in his narration. As outlined above, after the negotiation of acceptability that took place on June 3, the narrators did not hesitate to tell obscene material that same day, nor was there any negotiated generic territory prior to the second storytelling session. Presumably because of that first negotiation, Jalaludin was willing to narrate similar obscene content during the second storytelling occasion. Thus, if Jalaludin had again wanted to narrate any questionable or obscene material, one would presume the negotiation would still have been valid for the third and final session, as long as the composition of his audience had not changed to the point of invalidating it.

The appropriateness negotiated during the first storytelling session, then, seems to be a kind of group appropriateness. As long as the audience remained similarly constituted, the first negotiations would hold some validity. Undoubtedly, there were also appropriateness and contextual negotiations limited to each singular performance event. While the initial gender/genre negotiation holds true for the two subsequent storytelling sessions, each session

¹⁴ Oring, Elliot. *Jokes and Their Relations*. (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1992), 1-15.

¹⁵ Personal Communication, Mills, 2/2008

likely includes its own smaller, micro-negotiations of appropriateness, context, and other kinds of intertextualities.

The presence of his friend Asef, no doubt, was also an important factor in the competitive nature of the performance and the introduction of the questionable content in the first place. After Asef introduces a questionable motif for the first time, not to be outdone, Jalaludin perhaps felt obliged to respond with his own texts pertaining to similarly obscene themes. Once Asef is no longer present, Jalaludin no longer feels the same urgency to continue with his friend's thematic focus and thus can broaden the entire generic and thematic scope of storytelling event. The requirements of competition necessitated Jalaludin become complicit in whatever performative aggression Asef displayed. So because of the competitive, duel-like nature of the performance event, Jalaludin had to play according to the rules first negotiated by Asef and match Asef's verbal indiscretions with his own. Jalaludin, though he did not introduce the theme, tacitly agreed to compete in Asef's restricted semiotic frame by narrating his own similarly-structured stories. The competitive nature of the storytelling event required Jalaludin become complicit in Asef's transgressions. Once Asef is gone, Jalaludin had the freedom to widen the purview of items narrated and to more easily accommodate Mills' preference for longer discourse.

While Jalaludin could have been forced to change his thematic focus because of a change in the audience, his simple shift in genre may just as likely have been the culprit. During the last taped performance event, Jalaludin limits his narration exclusively to detailed *afsAneh*, rather than including any short jokes, proverbs, etc. like in his previous two narrations. In the first few tapes of his performance, recorded on the first day, no one performance segment lasted beyond several minutes. In contrast, each individual story during his last performance spanned at least fifteen minutes. While on the previous two occasions, each thirty-minute tape may have included between eighteen and thirty discrete performance units, during the last recording session Jalaludin narrated four *afsAneh* spread out over three tapes lasting approximately one and a half hours.

It should not be implied that some genres open up more space for transgressive behavior than others.¹⁶ Jokes, as a genre, do not necessarily allow more obscene content than *afsAneh*. *dAstAn* or *afsAneh* are not inherently always appropriate and jokes not. However, the degree and type of coding may vary. While in the jokes transcribed here transgressive behavior is explicit and crucial to a referential understanding of the performed text, in other genres transgressive content can be further below the surface features of the text. Euphemisms, implied situations, and a certain interpretative ambiguity allows the hearers to imagine the inappropriate connotations of the texts narrated in many *dAstAn* and *afsAneh*, but often in jokes such content is denoted. The important distinction catalogued here is not between variations in transgressive behavior between genres, but instead between degrees of perfunctory and full performance. Transgressiveness becomes important as it relates to the systematic variation in performance. Here, it is apparent that report is one more distanced way to present transgressive behavior, while a "fuller" performance of joking texts would perhaps have the freedom to deal with obscene and vulgar material more directly.

¹⁶ Personal communication, Mills, 2/2008

DEGREES OF PERFORMANCE CONCLUSION

By looking at the devices and methods by which the narrators key their performance, this study preliminarily attempts to illustrate movement along a performance continuum, from “report” to “authoritative.” In order to begin to answer the questions that I have posed here and provide a fuller study of the systematic variation in Afghan joking performance, one would need a much larger comparative sample from which to draw. Besides limiting the discussion here to one factor, appropriateness, the scope and breadth of the material examined cannot sustain a more holistic analysis, taking into account the multitude of ways that Afghan joke performance varies across different performance settings. Admittedly, like Asef and Jalaludin, writers of M.A. theses also build in their own disclaimers. Regardless, this paper’s observations suggest that one factor of many that influences and accounts for variation in degree of performance is that of negotiated appropriateness.

Even as the narrators set up their first metacommunicative, interpretative frames using conventional opening formulae, genre identification, appeals to tradition, and story glosses, the initial responsibility taken towards the audience does not necessarily entail any kind of assumption of responsibility for “full” performance. Rather, once certain felicity conditions are satisfied, the narrators’ story sequence can more easily move along a continuum of performance degrees. Here, the general setting and audience of the speech event initially did not provide the conditions necessary for the “full,” realized performance of obscene material. But after multiple negotiations between the storytellers and their audience, the appropriate conditions are satisfied and a deeper performance is realized. Thus, the text examined illustrates a negotiation of the performance boundary and movement towards the pole of authoritative performance.

CHAPTER 3

DISCOURSES ON “OTHERNESS” THROUGH A JOKE CYCLE

Though Jalaludin later does move into other kinds of narrative, the first two recording sessions largely consisted of different varieties of joking discourse, including long humorous tales, comedic personal experience narratives, and other shorter kinds of jokes. Indeed, the first storytelling event in which both Jalaludin and Asef narrated portions stayed almost exclusively inside the wide generic boundaries of what could be considered humor. As apart from one longer non-humorous tale, which Jalaludin used to conclude the first storytelling session, all the individual performance units were intended to elicit some kind of humorous response from the narrators' assembled audience. Likewise, during the second session Jalaludin, this time without the added impetus of his friend and opponent Asef, continued his joking performance interspersed with other fictive genres both humorous and not. With the change in genre to *afsAneh* during the third storytelling session, the joking discourse concludes, and he later does not revive any of his earlier narrated humorous themes and motifs.

Unlike proverbs and other kinds of folklore genres in which a given text's performance is formulated with a certain situation or object in mind, jokes oftentimes are not employed to comment on specific, concurrent social situations. But while jokes can be performed for their own sake, as humor theorist Elliot Oring and others have argued,¹⁷ my investigation here maintains that joking discourse still has some extra-textual meaning(s). Jokes and other humorous discourse also serve a function in both conversation and interaction. Here, among other purposes, the performance of one cycle of jokes works as a kind of gloss on the relationship of the performers and audience at large. Some of the humor helps position Jalaludin, especially, outside of his rural origins and locate him in a more urban, educated center. The joke cycle acts as a commentary on “otherness” from both the perspectives of Asef and Jalaludin. This relationship, though highly ambiguous in both the performance and in reality, both is articulated through the verbal, folkloric competition or “play” of the two narrators and helps to constitute it. Even more, Jalaludin's subsequent narrations on June 10, 1976 and July 1, 1976 demonstrate that the competitive dynamics have a real social impact. Because the competition acts to question his social position, Jalaludin reintroduces and revives the theme of “otherness” during his next, recorded storytelling performance.

JOKE AS GLOSS: ASEF'S INTRODUCTION

One factor of the joking performance that cannot be underestimated is the presence of Asef. While Jalaludin had been recommended to Mills as a teller of *afsAneh*, his friend did not share his proclivity for such longer, detailed discourse.¹⁸ Instead, Asef's repertoire as performed on June 3, 1976 included exclusively shorter objects of off-color humor. In addition, Asef was

¹⁷ Oring, Elliot. *Engaging Humor*. (University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 2003), 146.

¹⁸ Personal Communication, Mills 1/2008

not specifically invited to the storytelling event. While Jalaludin had been recommended to Mills, Asef seemingly came along as his support. Thus situated, the boys' beginning salvos of narration remain strikingly similar. That is, they perform the same type of material. In addition, they both interject into the other's performance to "correct" and "clarify" that being said to such an extent that in several occasions it is difficult to delineate the individual provenance of a given narrative because they both elaborate on the same theme. But this elaboration is not the same as collaboration. The competitive dynamics of the performance exist from the outset. While they may interject comments, clarifications, and elaborations into each other's stories, it does not seem that it is purely for altruistic purposes. Instead, each storyteller at times seems to subvert and take over the narrative stream.

The almost duel-like qualities of the first storytelling session highlight the competitive nature of the boys' performance. Further, this verbal competition could be categorized as what Gregory Bateson has termed "play."¹⁹ The competitors work to outdo their fellow narrator in theme, delivery, and style. Thus when one of the storytellers introduces a theme, the other necessarily elaborates and offers his own interpretation of the text. This use of humorous material continued, for likely no other reason than competition's sake, until Asef introduces a common theme from oral parlance in Afghanistan, the city boy and the bumbling provincial (*shahrII O dehl*). While there, no doubt, were other previous influences on the context of the joke texts, it is at this point that the joke texts move more closely to the role of a gloss on the situation at large. Here, the bumbling provincial acts as a commentary of the ongoing ambiguous relationship between Jalaludin, Asef, and their place in the Afghan urban/rural hierarchy. Further, it is at this juncture that the competitive play perhaps becomes more directed aggression and a deflection of perceived difference.

In addition, their use of humor acts as a kind of social grease. Humor is often a vehicle with which to negotiate unfamiliar situations.²⁰ The event was an unprecedented social event for the boys, and they, no doubt, encountered a certain level of uncertainty in the performance setting. One such uncertainty, appropriateness, was tentatively resolved through conversational negotiation, as outlined above. Other such uncertainties, e.g. gender, age, respect relations, etc., likely remain throughout the three performances. Though humor is often a general resource to help resolve insecurities and a tool adolescents use to deal with the different social issues they face as they transition into adulthood, here, it is also a device the boys use to create a discourse on "otherness."

According to his own narrated biographical sketch, Jalaludin's family lived almost 50 kilometers outside the center of Herat province in a Turkish-speaking village of almost 1000 persons. According to their own narrative of origin and the perception of the population at-large, they were perceived as immigrants from Merv, in present-day Turkmenistan. In contrast, Asef's home was inside the municipal boundaries of the provincial capital and he belonged to the majority Farsi-speaking population. Though they both were to some extent outsiders in that at the time of Mills' recordings and they both lived in dormitories while they finished their

¹⁹ Bateson, Gregory. "A Theory of Play and Fantasy." in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. (New York: Ballantine, 1972), 177-193.

²⁰ Personal communication, Mills, 2/2008.

secondary education in Kabul, Jalaludin, as a member of an ethnic minority and on account of his more humble village origins, already occupied a lower position on the social hierarchy. But because they both hailed from the provinces and lived as students in cosmopolitan Kabul, the meanings of the bumbling provincial in their narratives are all the more ambiguous.

Interestingly, it is Asef, as a Persian speaker and the more urban of the two, who introduces the *shahrI/dehI* theme with a story about an ignorant villager and his wife. He quickly follows on with a two short jokes about men from Wardak, a rural province not far from Kabul inhabited chiefly by ethnic Pashtuns, which was frequently the butt of rural stereotype humor in Kabul. Not to be outdone, when it is Jalaludin's turn, he elaborates on the theme by mining his own repertoire of Wardak jokes and telling five derogatory jokes in quick succession. When Asef is absent during the second storytelling session, Jalaludin revives the motif by narrating several short jokes highlighting ethnic differences in Afghanistan, two short humorous stories about a Kabuli in the provinces and one about an Afghan living in Iran, and lastly he narrates a personal anecdote in which he distinguishes himself from the non-literacy and "ignorance" in his own village, which seemingly is the model for some of the bumbling provincial humor in both narrators' earlier stories.

In Asef's first introduction to the *shahrI/dehI* theme (Appendix, Story E), he does not portray the *dehI* in a completely negative light. Instead, he repeatedly refers to the female protagonist as *kharAb* or bad. While he highlights the promiscuous fiancé's moral shortcomings and that of her trickster mother, the *dehI's* chief failing is his ignorance. He fails to recognize that the attractive girl he married is not a virgin and is duped by a trick suggested by the girl's mother. Even more, the punch line of the tale has nothing to do with the *dehI*, but rather in parallel to the initial frame of the story, it refers to an even greater moral deficiency on the part of the girl's mother and the even greater stupidity of her now deceased father. The text belongs more closely to the literature of female tricksters than to that of *shahrI/dehI* humor. However, with Asef's narrative about an *atrafi* or *dehI*, the character of an ignorant villager has been introduced.

Much later during the first storytelling event, Asef reintroduces the *shahrII/dehI* motif with two quick jokes about people from Wardak province in Afghanistan (Appendix Story F). To urban Kabulis, Wardak humor functions as a *blason populaire*, much like blond or Polack jokes do in contemporary America. Oring argues that blond jokes are often not about blonds. But rather, "The blond is merely a 'placeholder' for joking about a particular set of values for which the blond is regarded as a symbolically appropriate – though not a sociologically accurate – representation."²¹ In the case of blond jokes, as women moved into positions in the public sphere outside of the home, the female stereotypes that were antithetical to this social movement were ridiculed. Thus, Oring argues that blond jokes encourage women to embrace the values classically associated with the brunette, competence and intelligence, and shun a set of conservative values no longer workable in the much-changed world. Thus, blonds work as an appropriate identifier and placeholder for stereotypes of female stupidity, in general. If blond jokes are not necessarily about blonds, so too, Wardak jokes are not necessarily about Wardak. They, instead, chide a set of rural values and stereotypes out of current in the more urban,

²¹ Oring, Elliot. *Engaging Humor*. (University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 2003), 66.

educated centers of Afghanistan. What becomes interesting, then, is how Wardak is ridiculed in Asef and Jalaludin's jokes.

In the modernizing Afghanistan of the 1970s, ignorance about the means and methods of modernity are ridiculed in Wardak jokes just as stereotyped, female stupidity is in American blond jokes. Social backwardness is derided and people are encouraged to throw off past traditions and embrace the tools of modernity. Here, the Wardaki protagonist of Asef's jokes cannot properly utilize two common objects in urban Afghanistan – a mirror and a car. When he picks up the mirror and sees his reflection, because he has never seen his own reflection, he confuses the image for that of another person. Likewise, being more accustomed to conveyance via pack animals, he misunderstands the proper functioning of an automobile. If Oring's theory holds true for Afghanistan, the Wardaki is a placeholder for rural backwardness and an encouragement for rural Afghans to catch up with their urban countrymen. While the Wardaki stands in for a set of societal values no longer in step with urbanizing Afghanistan, the ethnic dimension should not be underestimated. In their telling, the joke's butt becomes conflated with certain understandings of an ethnic other. Both of the punch lines Asef tells involve a statement in Pashto (or at least in Persian with a contrived Pashto accent), though both jokes were told in Persian. Because both Asef and Jalaludin do not belong to the majority, Pashto-speaking population, their jokes also work as a commentary on Pashtun status. When strictly told by Pashtuns the jokes take on the attributes of an attack on rural backwardness, but when told among Persian-speaking Afghans ethnic stereotypes also come to the fore. So in addition, to the values of urban, Persian-speaking Afghanistan being lauded and the ignorance of an ethnic "other" being derided, there also is an ethnic dimension to Asef and Jalaludin's jokes. Because this ethnic "other" is also representative of the politically dominant faction and by some accounts the majority linguistic group in the country, issues of dominance also should not be discounted. Even more, Pashtun nationalists in Afghanistan idealize the very "tribal" form of "Pashtunness" that the jokes deride, and consider them more authentic Pashtuns.²² When told by Asef and Jalaludin, the jokes take on an anti-Pashtun dynamic, and both rural backwardness and Pashtun dominance are simultaneously ridiculed.

Whether intentional or not, Asef's mention of a dichotomy between the rural and urban inhabitants of Afghanistan, in addition to his mention of the differences between linguistic groups, emphasizes in a playful form a real threat to Jalaludin's social position. While Asef's biography conforms more closely to the urban pole implicit in his jokes, Jalaludin, on at least some levels, resembles the butt. Jalaludin's family both lives in rural Afghanistan and belongs to an ethnic and linguistic minority. In contrast, Asef is a representative of the modern, urban majority. The historic claims are between the "high culture" and urbanity of the Farsi-speaking cities and mostly Pashtun "tribalness." The joke cycle, introduced by Asef, works as a gloss on each of their positions within the Afghan social hierarchy. Even though Asef was not the one initially invited to the storytelling event, nor did he possess the skills in *afsAneh* that the ethnographer expected, he still engaged in a competition of verbal facility with Jalaludin. Interestingly, one could argue that the genre of *afsAneh*, of which Jalaludin is an active bearer,

²² Personal Communication, Mills, 5/2008.

by this point in time is now at least partially subsumed to the *dehI* category of culture.²³ Asef is likely no more than a passive bearer of the tradition. It is, thus, outmoded values, e.g. *afsAneh* narration, that is partially being derided in Asef and Jalaludin's joke cycle.

Bateson argues that these kinds of threats are an integral part of competitive play.²⁴ Asef's verbal, thematic threats, though not open combat towards Jalaludin, work as a map of possible, future behavior. That is, play and actual conflict have a map/territory relationship with each other. In open conflict, the map and territory are equated, while in play, Bateson argues that the two are both equated and distinguished.²⁵ It is in this discrimination that the ambivalent intents of Asef's verbal jabs are negotiated. In one sense the threats which occur in play are not meant, and on the other, those same threats denote the possibility of real and future combat. Threatening behavior, like that evident here from Asef's story introduction and while different from other actions, still hints at a possible future outcome. Though Asef's intentions cannot be fully parsed, the *shahrI/dehI* theme, which he introduces, is at some level a gloss on Jalaludin's social position in relation to Asef's. Jalaludin, then, must respond to the threats, both real and imagined. His subsequent narrations demonstrate that he recognized the challenge implied by Asef's story and jokes and understands the relationship of the *shahrII* and *dehI* differently.

If the *shahrII/dehI* joke cycle introduced by Asef acts as a gloss on both Jalaludin and Asef's position in the Afghan social hierarchy, to what extent was Jalaludin complicit in this characterization? Or rather, how does Jalaludin position himself in relation to the jokes told? In short, his participation in and reinterpretation of the theme highlights the ambiguity of his relationship to the categories named. Jalaludin wastes no time in joining in the bashing of ignorant, "backward" villagers. Though he no doubt recognizes the threat posed by Asef's narrations, the stories he tells later demonstrate that he imagines himself decidedly different from their *dehI* protagonists. He uses several strategies to accomplish this positioning: co-participation in the *shahrI/dehI* narration, clarification of the "real" dynamics among inhabitants of urban and rural Afghanistan, stressing the common bond between all Afghans, and asserting his own "otherness" in regards to the people of his village.

JALALUDIN'S JOKING RESPONSE

At the onset of Asef's verbal aggression towards rural Afghanistan, Jalaludin quickly becomes complicit. Still in a competitive mode and attempting to outdo Asef's tales, Jalaludin interjects his own interpretation into Asef's first Wardak joke. (Appendix Story F) He says, "UnhA be aqlan." His comments have a double valance: both to clarify the meanings of Wardak jokes to the ethnographer Mills and to render his tacit approval to the joke's theme. He, no doubt, wanted to ensure Mills understood the humor of Wardak jokes, but by stressing the stupidity of Wardakis he, too, becomes complicit in Asef's folkloric aggression. If he interpreted the joke as directed at him, he could have interjected to prevent further aggression or he may

²³ Personal Communication, Mills, 2/2008

²⁴ Bateson, Gregory. "A Theory of Play and Fantasy." in *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. (New York: Ballantine, 1972), 181.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 185.

have retreated into silence, but instead here he becomes an active participant. His reasons are likely varied and ambiguous. His continued participation ensured he could still “top” Asef and “win” the storytelling duel. But it also worked to distinguish him from the characters named, whether he at this point recognized the implications of Asef’s threat or not. It is unclear to what extent Jalaludin saw Asef’s first *shahrI/dehI* narrations as commenting indirectly or directly on his own place in the Afghan social hierarchy. His first collaboration in the joke cycle may be evidence of narration for competition’s sake rather than any indication of creative improvisation and consciousness of Asef’s aggression. Because only later during the second storytelling event does Jalaludin complicate Asef’s characterization of the *dehI*.

When it is Jalaludin’s turn to narrate, he brings out five Wardak jokes from his own repertoire; where Asef narrated two, Jalaludin triumphs in number again. Jalaludin shows that even when he competes on Asef’s territory, obscene jokes, he can win. He elaborates on the theme and tells a joke about a Wardaki’s ineptitude in hunting. Rather than catching his prey, the hunted tricks the hunter. (CCCXCIV) Next, the humor turns scatological, as the joke rests on a Wardaki’s nightly urinating habits. The following Wardaki protagonists attempt to steal fodder for their animals and are outwitted by their intended female victims. Jalaludin’s Wardaki joke cycle ends when two Wardakis are confused and outguiled by their own camel. Jalaludin’s Wardak jokes demonstrate his own superior command of the genre in comparison to Asef and further distances his own situation from the characters they ridicule.

Something thematically interesting happens when Asef is not present. At the next storytelling event on June 10, 1976 when Jalaludin is the only performer, he revives the *shahrI/dehI* theme, but with a twist. This time, instead of picking up where he left off on June 3, he modifies the values derided in his ethnic humor. He further clarifies and reinterprets the social dynamics of the *shahrI/dehI* relationship. Rather than being purely the object of urban scorn, the *dehI* character is more fully developed and some negative attributes of the *shahrI* are emphasized. While in Asef’s story and in the Wardak jokes, the *dehI* has little agency, in Jalaludin’s narration the *dehI* has increased power over his situation.

The first hint of *shahrI/dehI* humor comes near the onset of Jalaludin’s second-day narration. (CCCXCVI) In contrast to Asef’s story which he narrated on the first day in which a villager unwittingly married a promiscuous girl and never discovered the nature of her infidelity, here, Jalaludin’s village protagonist similarly is the victim of female *nafs* or earthly appetites, but through his own wiles he is ostensibly able to ascertain the full spectrum of her perceived sexual deviance. (Appendix Story J) He, still, is a *dehI* and seemingly derided for his ignorance and all the other encompassing attributes of an Afghan villager, but here he acts to remedy his own situation and has the wherewithal to outwit his cheating wife. In Asef’s telling, the villager is little more than emasculated and oblivious to his true state. Jalaludin’s tale uses the same trope and increases the *dehI*’s agency. However, Jalaludin does not completely absolve the *dehI* of all stereotypes. Jalaludin’s protagonist does have much more agency than the parallel story from Asef’s repertoire, but he still is inappropriately jealous. The fact that the industrious woman spent her day in keeping house demonstrates her fidelity. In popular conception in Afghanistan, chaste women engage in the duties of housework while their licentious counterparts ignore more

domestic responsibilities.²⁶ The villager's notion of evidence is likewise ludicrous. His idea that wheat would turn to flour as a result of her actions confirms he still possesses some *dehI* foolishness. Though Jalaludin makes a value judgment about the villager's unfounded paranoia and his absurd notion of appropriate evidence, he no longer is only the ignorant, unwitting victim of *makr-e zan* or women's tricks. Here, he still possesses some *dehI* stereotypes, but his character also becomes more complex.

Continuing his theme of “otherness,” Jalaludin follows his first *shahrI/dehI* story with a short joke about the different faculties of Iranians, Pakistani’s, and Afghans. (Appendix Story I) Because of his cleverness and implied sexual prowess, the Afghan triumphs over his Iranian and Pakistani co-laborers. While working in common as day-laborers, the three are asked how many jugs of water they can each carry. The Iranian replies that he can carry two, one in each hand. The Pakistani answers three, one on his head and one in each hand. The clever Afghan says five; he will carry the Pakistani by his genitalia and hold one in each hand. Not only does this joke highlight the commonality of all Afghans in contrast to people from neighboring countries and thus level the playing field between the *shahrI* and *dehI* that the other jokes emphasized, but also Jalaludin makes an interesting linguistic move that perhaps demonstrates his own unique understanding of “Afghanness.” He first says, “*ba IrAnI guftan ke tU chand kuza ba AfghAnI guftan ba IrAnI guftan tU chand kuza mEbarI?*” or rather, “(Appendix Story I) or “They said to the Iranian, ‘How many jugs...’ They said to the Afghan, they said to the Iranian, ‘How many jugs can you carry?’” Jalaludin hesitates as he describes the first character in the joke. If it is the Iranian, his point is valid. If it is the Afghan, then he would have to ascribe cleverness to the Iranian or to the Pakistani. Jalaludin’s “slip” questions how he may have originally heard the joke. In the first hearing, the teller may have emphasized the cleverness of Iranians, not Afghans. Jalaludin, then, switches the order of the characters to stress to Mills the point he implicitly makes: “we” (and more importantly, “I”) are (all) Afghans. Even if this slip does not indicate a shifting characterization of Afghan intelligence and commonality, the jokes’ substantive meaning remains the same; while Asef stressed difference and highlighted “otherness,” Jalaludin’s joke emphasizes commonality and similitude.

He, next, continues narrating on the theme of ethnic difference by telling a joke about Pashtuns and HhazAras, two ethnic groups in Afghanistan. (Appendix Story I). The intertextual connection between this joke the story of the Afghan, Iranian, and Pakistani narrated previously, is sexual violence. However, Jalaludin more strongly emphasizes ethnic identifiers in this joke. Where in the previous joke, the hero was *afghAnistanI*, a label wide enough to include all inhabitants of Afghanistan regardless of ethnic or linguistic group, here the verbal violence is perpetrated by an *aoghan* or a Pashtun. So, *Afghan, aoghan, or afghAnistanI* is a floating signifier. In each story, it can take on different attributes and refer to different groups within Afghan society. In the previous story, Jalaludin celebrates the Afghan's sexual mastery of his Iranian and Pakistani co-laborers. Here, the character qualities of the "victor" are more ambiguously evaluated. Also, this time Jalaludin’s own social position is outside the social constellation commented on in the joke. Again, his joke recognizes the presence of “otherness,” linguistic, religious, and ethnic, but it is difficult to represent his own relationship to it.

²⁶ Personal Communication, Mills, 5/2008.

He, here, revives obscene symbolism again and uses ethnicities as placeholders for certain values. But interestingly, the joke's butt is the Pashtun, the representative of the dominant linguistic, religious, and ethnic group in Afghanistan. He portrays the religious minority in an uncharacteristic, positive light. A Pashtun and HhazAra wager on who could create the best statue. On the appointed day, the two gather to unveil their creations. The HhazAra's statue is holding a copy of the Qur'an. The Pashtun's statue is holding a piece of bread with one hand and holding his penis with the other. When the HhazAra crowd inquires as to the reasons behind the Pashtun's creation, the Pashtun replies that even if a HhazAra asked for a piece of bread, he would instead offer him his penis. The sexual violence is the only continuity with the stories narrated to this point in the session. No other generic intertextuality is clear. The story represents a departure on the theme of "otherness" Jalaludin is developing. Further, it is unclear which character is portrayed in the more positive light. If this tale were to be told among Pashtuns, no doubt, the HhazAra could be understood as an appropriate victim of Pashtun aggression. If the narrator were HhazAra, the religious piety of the HhazAra would be celebrated and the aggression of the Pashtun maligned. But here, Jalaludin is neither. Even more, there is a subtext of idolatry present. While Sunnis generally shunned portraying religious figures, Shias developed visual representations of Islamic figures. Also, because the most well-known icons of the capital of the HhazAra were two giant statues of Buddha, in the Pashtun mind there was a connection between idol worship and HhazAra ethnicity.

But if indeed Jalaludin seems to identify more with the oppressed, *dehl* victim in the stories, as a Sunni like the Pashtuns, it is unusual that Jalaludin would raise the "heretical" Shi'a above his own co-religionist, except that as Oring has argued, "When jokes are used to convey a message, they are concerned with more abstract categories of relationship, not with the surface features of the joke text."²⁷ That is, for Jalaludin the joke must not be "about" religious difference and the comparative value of different religious practice. Instead, the abstract category of a minority "other" is potentially approved above that of the majority. Because of the categories named and the complicated nature of religious, ethnic, and linguistic divisions in Afghanistan, the issue of empathy and identification becomes problematic. But it is just this rhetorical move that Jalaludin is making in his entire joking discourse about "otherness." Here, as in the material before and in the jokes to follow, Jalaludin is clarifying and reinterpreting the data Asef introduced during the first storytelling session and problematizing it. Thus, again here, Jalaludin may imagine the *dehl* and his own position in relation to the "other" differently than Asef's texts would indicate.

Even more, much later in the same performance, the roles are reversed again. Instead of the *dehl* coming up against the more urban educated *shahrI*, Jalaludin narrates a story in which the *shahrI* is a guest in a *dehl*'s home. (Appendix Story G) Jalaludin keeps the stereotype of villager ignorance about the objects of modernity, but it is the Kabuli who perhaps transgresses the most. After the Kabuli has eaten the meal served to him by his *dehl* host, he inquires as to the location of the bathroom. But instead of using the common village word for "bathroom," the Kabuli uses a word related to indoor plumbing, a modern luxury not familiar to village life. Because all the food prepared has already been consumed and worried that his Kabuli guest was

²⁷ Oring, Elliot. *Engaging Humor*. (University of Illinois Press: Urbana, 2003), 96.

still hungry, the *dehl* tells his guest that his children have already eaten the “bathroom.” The Afghan villager is justly ignorant of the modern conveniences present in Kabul, but it is the Kabuli who seems to violate the norms of host/guest relations. The villager perceives that the Kabuli requested more than he had provided, thus erring in the rules of host/guest relations. The villager may be ignorant and “backward,” but he retains the manners of good taste which the Kabuli in his modernization has seemingly abandoned. Jalaludin widens his critique to include not just the “city” or the “country” but also the “modern.” Here, Jalaludin’s joke maintains the characterization of *dehl* ignorance introduced by Asef, but refines it to include a valuation of *dehl* proper behavior. If here the *dehl* is a placeholder for values inconsistent with modern, Afghan life, similar to the role of the Wardaki in Wardak jokes, then Jalaludin complicates that characterization. His joke emphasizes the tradeoffs involved in an embrace of modernity. The Kabuli may possess material goods unfamiliar to the *dehl*, but the *dehl* possesses superior manners.

Keeping with the theme of a traveler in an unfamiliar locale, Jalaludin follows the story about a Kabuli from the provinces with a story about an Afghan in Iran. (Appendix Story G) When eating at a hotel, the Afghan is served a questionable meal by an Iranian hotelier. When he asks why his soup has flies in it, the Iranian replies that flies are the only entertainment you get when you pay for a meal as cheap as this. If he had paid more, he might have been entitled to dancing girls. Again here, as in the case of the joke about the three porters, Jalaludin’s joke illustrates Afghan similitude in contrast to a hostile “other,” in this case Iranian. Differences between Afghans, religious, ethnic, urban/rural, etc. are collapsed and a distinction is drawn between Afghans and the “other.” In Jalaludin’s telling, the Afghan may be the victim of a hostile other, but he is not stupid.

Following this, Jalaludin tells his own personal experience narrative, equating the experience of the Afghan in Iran to his own while a traveler in Afghanistan. (Appendix Story G) At a bus stop between Kabul and Herat, a waiter serves Jalaludin rice with a small strand of carpet hidden inside. When Jalaludin objects, the waiter argues that for the cheap meal he received he was not entitled to an entire rug and should make do with a small piece. Jalaludin’s recycled punch line illustrates his own identification with the experience of the Afghan in Iran. Now in the form of a humorous personal experience narrative, Jalaludin identifies with the experience of a traveling “other.” The values, experiences, and behaviors are his own. His change of genre from joke to personal experience narrative further clarifies the position of *dehl* and how he perceives himself in relation to it.

Jalaludin’s next story further complicates his earlier characterization of “otherness.” (Appendix Story G) He narrates a story in which an Afghan is in Iran, keeping with the theme developed earlier. Yet this time there is a decisive difference: instead of the Afghan triumphing, he is duped by a young, Iranian girl. The Afghan sees a small girl playing with a golden coin. Thinking she does not know the value of the coin, the Afghan offers to change it for a few paper notes of money. The girl initially refuses, but she relents on the condition that the Afghan brays like a donkey. The Afghan complies, but the girl does not fulfill her side of the bargain. The punch line demonstrates that the girl knew all along the value of the coin and only desired to humiliate the Afghan. At the onset Jalaludin questioned Asef’s characterization of the *dehl*. He,

then, asserted the commonality of all Afghans and even went as far as portraying them as superior to their neighbors in Iran and Pakistan. But here, Jalaludin is once again complicit in some kind of folkloric aggression towards Afghans. Highlighting the ambiguity in his relationship towards the *shahrI/dehI* dichotomy and his place in the constellation of Afghan society, the story, in some regards, seems to be a step back in his earlier, rhetorical assertions. He, thus, sees Afghans as a symbolically-appropriate placeholder for ignorance. Though he recognizes the nuances of *shahrI/dehI* interaction which Asef failed to include, the characterization of Afghan ignorance still seems to resonate with him.

In addition, in this story the Afghan trickster is himself tricked. In many *shahrI/dehI* stories in Afghanistan, the *shahrI* is portrayed as the trickster and is tricked by the wiles of his *dehI* opponent.²⁸ The trickster, then, is often the underdog. However, here, the roles are reversed. The urban child outwits the deceits of the rural Afghan. If the *shahrI/dehI* dynamic holds, the *dehI* attempts to trick the *shahrI*, but is tricked instead by the *shahrI*. In the end, the *dehI* is outwitted at the behest of *shahrI* deceit. This is not the first time that Jalaludin or Asef have introduced the female (or male) trickster theme. Earlier in Asef's story of the promiscuous wife, the Afghan villager is the victim of female manipulation and guile. Later in Jalaludin's reinterpretation of the same theme, the villager views his wife as a kind of trickster, but in reality she is not. Mills cautions against a strict misogynist reading of tales which include *makr-e zan* or women's tricks and are narrated by male storytellers.²⁹ Instead, male narrators can identify with the female trickster who uses her *makr* to out-guile the maneuvering of a socially-superior actor and to fight against injustices. Mills says,

"In these stories the victorious trickster is always the one who manages to use the opponent's own desire against him- or herself so that the loser is entrapped and defeated by his or her own desires. Furthermore, guile is a weapon of the weak: the victor is always inferior in power."³⁰

Rhetorically, then, the trickster frame in Jalaludin's stories may function again to complicate a simple portrayal of Afghan power dynamics. If Jalaludin in some stories seems to identify with the socially-weak actor, then his trickster portrayal may not altogether be negative. Like the other storytellers Mills observed, Jalaludin may at times be celebrating the underdog's victory over the dominant class. Just as Jalaludin's stories problematize Asef's simple notion of *shahrI* superiority, they too glide between different understandings of female tricks and tricksters.

At the end of his second storytelling performance and following all of his other stories, Jalaludin narrates the text most explicitly clarifying his position in regards to an urban or rural

²⁸ Personal Communication, Mills, 5/2008.

²⁹ Mills, Margaret A. "The Gender of the Trick: Female Tricksters and Male Narrators." In *Asian Folklore Studies*, 60(2001), 240.

³⁰ Mills, Margaret A. "Whose best tricks? *Makr-i Zan* as a topos in Persian oral literature." In *Iranian Studies*, 32(1999), 263.

“other” and tells the most complex of all of his stories on this theme. (Appendix Story H) This time, again in the form of a personal experience narrative, Jalaludin asserts his own uniqueness from the general non-literacy and ignorance present in his village. Jalaludin says that a seller of unbreakable glass came to his village to sell his wares. Because he was literate, Jalaludin recognized the merchant’s deception. From the outset, he confronted the lying merchant, called his bluff, and forced him out of the village in humiliation. Jalaludin’s story takes village ignorance as fact. It is the case that the *dehl* is often duped by the cleverer *shahrI*, as substantiated in Jalaludin’s story. But Jalaludin is not representative of the majority of the village’s inhabitants. His education, his travels beyond the village milieu, and his exposure to urban Afghanistan seemingly separate him from his extended community. Even though he is still a *dehl*, he cannot be easily outwitted by the *shahrI*.

JOKE CYCLE CONCLUSIONS

Taken holistically, the entire *shahrI/dehl* joke cycle narrated by Asef and Jalaludin on June 3, 1976 and June 10, 1976 represents a discourse on “otherness.” Through the lens of humor and in the frame of competitive “play,” Asef’s first narrations on the theme act as a gloss on the storytellers’ positions in the Afghan social hierarchy. Asef, as a Persian-speaking city dweller, resembles the aggressor in his tales, and Jalaludin, as a provincial and speaking a minority tongue, more closely resembles the jokes’ butt. But Asef’s intentionality is impossible to gauge and irrelevant for the discussion here. It does not matter whether Asef’s threats in the form of jokes were intended to jockey for his position and/or as a direct assault on Jalaludin, the one more conversant in the genres hoped for by the ethnographer and the one initially invited to perform for the tape recorder.

What matters is that on the second day, Jalaludin evidently felt the need to reinterpret the stories which he and Asef had told earlier. He no longer remained exclusively complicit in the ethnic aggression. But just because he altered the implications of the *shahrI/dehl* theme on the second day, does not mean that his Wardak jokes during the first performance should be interpreted as self-deprecatory. Because of the ambiguous and complicated nature of his own social position in relation to Asef, his transition from *dehl* to *shahrI*-educated, and his understanding of “other,” his narration of Wardak jokes are not necessarily self-degrading. As Oring argues, “The degree of identification between tellers and tale protagonists needs to be ascertained before terms such as self-degrading, self-defeat, or self-hatred can be profitably employed.”³¹

Though, he undoubtedly saw himself as related to the protagonists of Asef’s stories, as evidenced by his later narrations, he also reinterpreted *dehl* characterization and articulated a more complex relationship. To this end, he employed several strategies: co-participation in the *shahrI/dehl* narration, clarification of the “real” dynamics among inhabitants of urban and rural Afghanistan, stressing the common bond between all Afghans, and asserting his own “otherness” in regards to the people of his village. Through these verbal “moves,” Jalaludin articulates to Mills a more complex and nuanced world of interaction between the *dehl* and *shahrI* and at times

³¹ Oring, Elliot. *Jokes and Their Relations*. (Lexington, KY: University of Kentucky Press, 1992), 129.

identifies with the *dehI* and at other times categorically denies his common origins. In sum, Jalaludin's ambiguous and ambivalent storytelling runs parallel to the highly complicated relationship he has in real life with his village, greater Afghanistan, and his place in it.

In addition to it being a kind of competitive play and discourse on "otherness," the joking performance also raises questions of with whom one could perform *afsAneh*, or rather the generic appropriateness of *afsAneh* for different audiences. As *afsAneh* fell out of currency with the younger, educated generation living in a more urban environment, their narration was limited to older storytellers, often non-literate and rural. It was just in this milieu that Jalaludin learned his storytelling craft. By personal account, his largely non-literate village community, comprised of his extended family network all living within close proximity to each other, offered many opportunities for learning these types of complicated tales. In contrast, Asef hailed from the more urban environs of Herat city in which the performance of *afsAneh* among the younger generation was less in fashion. For that reason, Jalaludin may have tempered his facility in *afsAneh* narration to conform to Asef's more "modern" notion of what constituted appropriate folktale performance and limited himself to the genres which held greater currency among his own peer group in Kabul, namely jokes, both obscene and not.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

In the late spring and early summer of 1976, Jalaludin and Asef regaled the ethnographer Mills with almost eight hours of folkloric material. Asef stayed within the bounds of relatively short genres, mainly brief jokes and joking tales. Jalaludin began his narrations with similar material, but later expanded his performance to include the detailed discourse Mills had first expected from the young storyteller. But during those first storytelling events in which the narrators' candor and thematic range was still tentative, both boys negotiated the generic "appropriateness" of obscene performance and later commented on, jockeyed for, and staked out their own relative social positions via the forum of the storytelling event.

The case study offered here illustrates the kind of systematic variation in performance that Hymes' work anticipated. In the beginning, the anomalous qualities of gender, age, and respect relations brought on by the presence of a foreign, female researcher prevented "full" joke tale performance on the part of the two boys. The performance, thus, began situated somewhere closer to the pole of "perfunctory" on the performance continuum. It was not until certain felicity conditions had been met, through conversational and other kinds of negotiations of "appropriateness," that a "breakthrough into performance" occurred. This hurdle of appropriateness having been surmounted, the boys moved their performance along the continuum towards the pole of "authoritative" joke tale performance. Then, like Bauman argues, performance is not an all-or-nothing phenomenon. Instead, it is a matter of degrees.

Even after this thematic equilibrium is negotiated, the boys' performance still entails other negotiations. Whether intentional or not, Asef introduces the theme of rural backwardness, and Jalaludin quickly becomes complicit in same kind of narrative aggression. However, on the second day and after Asef had left, Jalaludin reinterprets Asef's theme. The "hick" no longer had the same attributes he possessed earlier. Now, he takes on increased agency and complexity. Because Jalaludin's origins were firmly within the camp that was the object of the joke, his reinterpretation demonstrates that he perceived some kind of social threat from the previous day's narration. At the least, it shows he thought Mills deserved a more complex portrayal of rural/urban dynamics in Afghanistan. In the end, Jalaludin's purposes and meanings are ambiguous paralleling his own ambiguous position in relation to the categories named. He simultaneously derides rural backwardness, complicates rural stereotypes, and both positions himself in opposition to and in concert with his rural protagonists. So then, what is Jalaludin's level of identification with the characters he narrates? Or even, does the storyteller need a nexus of identification? Perhaps, Jalaludin's comparison of self/other is all the more complex because of the vast quantity of his story repertoire. Because he has so many texts in his memory from which to choose, they take on multivalent meanings. Just as his *makr-e zan* stories may not just be misogynist interpretations at the hands of an inexperienced teenager and instead contain

vibrant commentaries on desired social action, then, too, he paints an intricate and conflicting picture of the Afghan social hierarchy and his relation to it. In short, the variety, texture, and depth of his *shahrI/dehI* stories seem to reflect the multifaceted negotiations he, no doubt, engaged in daily as a rural, minority student living in urban Kabul.

Where both narrators are today is unknown. One hopes that both boys survived the Afghan political and social upheavals of the past twenty five years and continue to proffer the kind of verbal art that Mills observed in 1976.

APPENDIX

Text A – 00:00-01:12 CCCXCII

<p>MM: khO, bUgO shIr. MA: JalAl, bUgO yak chIz!</p> <p>MM: bUgO bacha, ganI boy. J: GanIboy nEst, hEch ma dega nE MA: shumA khUdeshumA J: yak wahktI khO M: Ah. J: tU maraflI nakun? M: khO bUgo MA: Ladies and Gentlemen, mardum, I want to... M: Ech shukhI nagu (Laughs) J: ma gentlemen nE, ham mard-e gharIb A: bufarmayen J: Isme-ma jalaludIn, az karye shekibAn-e marvI weliyAt-e Herat, khO? M: khO</p> <p>J: yak wakhtI, yak mulalI ba Ao uftAdeh bUd.</p> <p>MM: khO</p> <p>J: yak nafar guft, raft I-r(a) Az Ab begIra Az daryA bekaSh I taraf guft, “mula sAeb bede dast-e khur ba ma bedIh. Dast-e khur ke tUr bekaShum az daryA. mula dast-e khur nadAd. martaka dEga AmAd guft, “O brAdar.” guft, “chi mEgI?” guft, “ba mula nAgO bedIh dast-e khur. U fikir mEkuna ke tU Albat chIz-e mAyI i Az U.” bUgO, “mula sAeb, bigIr!”</p>	<p>MM: Ok, recite a poem. MA: Jalal, tell one!</p> <p>MM: Boy, tell about Ganyboy J: There are no Ganyboy [stories], I don't have anymore MA: Tell one yourself J: One time, ok MM: ok J: You're not going to introduce [me]? MM: ok, say it. MA: Ladies and Gentlemen, people, I want to... MM: Don't joke around 10 (Laughs) J: I'm not a gentlemen, I'm a poor man. MA: Go ahead. J: My name is Jalaludin. I'm from Shekiban of Marv in Herat province, ok? 15 MM: Good. J: One time there was a mullah who fell into some water. MM: ok. J: One guy said, went to get him from the 20 water, to pull him out of the river in this direction. He said, “Mullah, sir, go ahead. Give me your hand so that I can pull you out of the water. 25 The mullah didn't give his hand. Another guy came and said, “Oh, brother!”</p>
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<p>guft, “mula sAeb, bigIr!”</p> <p>mula fAorI dU dastakA chelAft U begereft.</p> <p>KhalAs, mular Az Ao kAshId.</p> <p>MA: mAbAin-e maqsad Az I. chera mula AmEsha Az mardum pUl mEkhAya?</p> <p><<< agar masal-e gereftan (eqA badem) myAya,>>> agar gufti blgIr!!</p> <p>U mega war dAr, yak chIzI mIzI (garbled)</p>	<p>He said, “What are you saying?”</p> <p>He said, “Don’t tell the mullah to give you his hand. He’ll think you want to take something from him. Tell him, ‘Mullah, take [the hand]!’”</p> <p>He said, “Mullah, sir, take [the hand]!”</p> <p>The mullah immediately raised his two hands and got out. 35</p> <p>So, in the end, the man pulled the mullah from the water.</p> <p>MA: You get the point of this [story]... Why is it that mullahs always want money from people? 40</p> <p><<<It’s so bad that>>> if you say, “Take!” He [the mullah] says (garbled)</p>
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Text B - 15:10-17:30 CCCXCII

<p>MA: bAz nafar bUd. amrA-ye zan-e khUd, khO.</p> <p>MM: ah</p> <p>MA: amrA-e zan-e khUd mEraft ba yak jAi, ba safar.</p> <p>MM: ah</p> <p>MA: “I chIzI paisa, pUl - mEfamEn paisa?”</p> <p>MM: ah</p> <p>MA: paisa gereft. ah, chIzI gereft. tufangcha gereft.</p> <p>tufang, nE? amrAi-e khud</p> <p>I baz zan Az I pUrsAn kad ke, “Inha-ra chl mEkunI?”</p> <p>“AmEsha dar bAin-e rA dOzd.” dOzd-a ke mEfamEn, nE?</p> <p>“yak dOzDI bAin-e rA mA O tUra begIra? bAz khUr khalAs kunEm ba chang-e dOzd.</p> <p>Wa bAIE am asp sawAr kadan AmAdam rA.</p>	<p>MA: Then there was a guy, with his wife, ok.</p> <p>MM: yes.</p> <p>MA: He went off with his wife to a place on trip.</p> <p>MM: yes. 5</p> <p>MA: Some kind of currency, money. Do you understand? Currency?</p> <p>MM: yes.</p> <p>MA: He took it [the money]. Yep, he took some. 10</p> <p>He took a handgun.</p> <p>A gun, no?</p> <p>He asked his wife, “Do you know what this is about?”</p> <p>“There are always thieves along the road.” 15</p> <p>Do you understand, thieves?</p> <p>“A thief in the middle of our trip will take [us] like this. Then we’ll get ourselves away</p>
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<p>AmAd am, dId, yak nafar-e dOzd am UnjA s. yak nafar-e dOzd bAin-e rA estAda. Bare Ba I sAida kad. guft, guft “payAn shawEm! Az Zan-e khUr Az Asp pAyAn kO. Zan-e khur pAyAn kard. mm.. tufangchesh am gereft dega. Ah, p...p... paisa-ra am gereft.</p> <p>bad az U amI zan Az Ir am payAn kad. AmrAi-esh kar-e bad kard. mEgereft U, nE? MM: ah MA: am etU blkhI zad ka(r)d.</p> <p>Wakhte ke dami ke mEkhast ke bUra. Ami bAz, am InjA >>> besyAr chat, chatI-ye dega !<<<< guftanesh khUb nEs.</p> <p>MM: bUgO! MA: besyAr bad-e! MM: khO shUro kardEn dega, chI kAr kunEn? (ko) Bugo bUgO! Agar shUro mEkanEn.</p> <p>MA: kho fAmIdI?</p> <p>MM: ah, mEfamum. MA: bad az U enamu bAz guftak ke mEkhast ke bUra amrA-e zan-e khUd. Amu nafar sadA kad, bya inja. MM: ah (in response to inaudible comment from unnamed listener)</p> <p>MA: chI bUd? chI guft? J: (mumbles under his breath) MM: (laughs) J: (unintelligible) shunidum (laughs)</p>	<p>out of his clutches.” And they mounted the horse and came to the road. And they saw a thief there. 20</p> <p>The thief was standing in the road. He called to them, “Dismount! Get your wife off the horse!” The man’s wife got down from the horse. [the thief] took the man’s handgun from there. Ah, he also took the m...m... money. 25</p> <p>After that, he took down the man’s wife and did the bad thing on her. Do you understand? MM: yes MA: And he did it like that a lot of times. 30 Suddenly when he wanted to go, Then, From here >>> it’s really dirt... dirty!<<<<</p> <p>It’s not good to tell it.</p> <p>MM: Tell [it]! 35 MA: it’s really bad! MM: Ok, now that you’ve started, what are you going to do? Tell [it]! If you’re going to start.</p> <p>40 MA: Do you understand [it]?</p> <p>MM: Yes, I understand. MA: After that, he then said that he wanted to go with his wife. That guy called, “Come here!” 45</p> <p>MM: ah (in response to inaudible comment from unnamed listener) MA: What was it? What did he say?</p>
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<p>MA: ba khUda bade! MM: khO! bUgO degah! MA: khO, khAir As. bUgO! khUda ma mEfamum.</p> <p>MA: Az InjI ke AmAd. (laughing) gU bIgl, kh, khol! khoIA-ye mar wazn kO! J: dOzd guft. MM: (laughs)</p> <p>MA: Ah, dOzd guft, “khoIA-ye ma-ra wazn kO! I guftak, “bUro!”</p> <p>Yak panj sEr. Panj sEr mEfami? Panj sEr-e Erat-a mEfamEn? MM: ah, sEr-e herat mEfamum. MA: panj sEr kashesh As. Panj sEr wazn dAra.</p> <p>I bAd Az U ke raft. bain-e rA zan az U guft, “dIdI tufangcha-ra gereft az ma dOzd gereft. Paisa-ra am az mA gereft. I chl-raqam!” gU “nA pUrs zan!” ma yak kArI mardam ke U qadar namEfami.</p> <p>guft, “chl kadi?” guft, “khoIA-ye Az U,>>> bIst sEr myAmAd, ma guftum. sE Ser.<<<< MM: (laughs)</p> <p>MA: aslan besyAr raqam ametU khanda mEkuna. besyar bad chIz-e. mazAq as, I mazAq.</p> <p>J: I mEshnawIm. tA sOba mEkhanIm. MM: (laughs)</p>	<p>J: (mumbles under his breath) MM: (laughs) J: (unintelligible) I heard. (laughs)</p> <p>MA: By God it’s bad! MM: ok! 55 Ok, it’s alright. Tell it, by God.</p> <p>MA: from there he came. (laughing) “Take the test... testicles! Weigh my testicles!” J: The thief said. MM: (laughs) 60 MA: the thief said, “Weigh my testicles!”</p> <p>He said, “Go ahead!”</p> <p>Five ser. Do you know what five Herat ser are? [about 1 lb.] MM: Yes, I know. 65 MA: Its weight was five ser. It was five ser.</p> <p>After that he [the thief] left. Along the road, the man’s wife said, “Did you see he took our handgun? He took the money too. What kind of business is that?!” “Don’t ask, woman! I’ve done something that you don’t know about.”</p> <p>The guy said, “What did you do?” She said, “His testicles, >>>>came to 20 ser, 75 but I said it was 3<<<<. MM: (laughs)</p> <p>MA: Again, she’s laughing a lot like this. It’s a really bad story. It’s a joke. 80 A joke.</p> <p>J: We listen to a lot like this</p>
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	And are laughing until morning. MM: (laughs)
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Text C 7:26-8:40 CCCXCII

<p>MA: Ale ma qesseh zyAd yAd dArum. yak bAZI qessAs ke besyAr kharAb.</p> <p>MM: kho bugo. MA: nE! J: UnhA kharAba! Bi adab asta dEga!.</p> <p>MM: ba ma farq namikonah, ba Ech kas neshAn nAmEtam. MA: nE akheh neshan bEtu. mabaIn-e khud-O kho mEgum.</p> <p>J: ma masAlan dU sE raffiq jam mEshEm, chatIyAt...</p> <p>MA: chatIyAt mEgEm bekhandEm. InhA yak chIzA ast ke adabI nEst. MM: nE, bABeh! J: darbAr-e zanhA chIzhA chatI chatI mEgan. MM: mEfamum, mEfamum. ma zanAhA chatI, ham az mardA... J: nE!</p> <p>MM: agar mEfamEn, gOsh kunEn besyAr kharAb chIzA. J: <<<ma chI megum?>>></p> <p>MM: mAm zyAd yAd dArIm IngllsI. J: IngllsI masalan kasI zanI khOsh dAra mEra. mA etu qessa mEgEm ke (interrupting) MA: maqsad mA In Ast. J: martaka rad-e yak dU zana dAsht. Etao shud. Etao shud. Etur chIzI ke... MM: besyAr as. mA am besyAr zyAd dArIm. MA: Men who like women – Do you like it? MM: Yes!</p>	<p>MA: I know a lot [of stories]. Some of them are extremely dirty.</p> <p>MM: Ok, tell [them]. MA: No! J: They're dirty! They're not polite. 5 No, they're bad!</p> <p>MM: It doesn't make any difference to me. I won't ever show them [the tapes] to anybody. MA: No, show them. We tell them among ourselves. 10</p> <p>J: For instance, when two or three friends get together [we tell] dirty things. MA: We all laugh. They're some things that aren't polite. MM: No. 15 J: Between women they also tell some dirty, dirty things. MM: I know. Women tell them, men tell them. J: No!</p> <p>MM: If you can understand, you hear some really²⁰ dirty ones. J: <<<What should I tell?>>></p> <p>MM: I know a lot of them in English. J: In English a person that likes a woman and goes. We tell these kinds of stories. (interrupting) MA: our point is that... J: [imitating an obscene story beginning] There was a guy that had a couple of wives. Such and such happened. These things... MM: There are a lot [of stories like this].</p>
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<p>(laughs)</p> <p>chIz ke yAd darI khush darum MA: ba mA eqA fArq nAmEkuna. ma AIE bugzArI, degeh, Aleh shumA dar ar jAi shumA khOsh mEshEm ke bekhAndEm. chera Aga mA dah dUwOzda nafar sheshta ba ham qessa mEkunEm.</p>	<p>MA: Men who like women – Do you like it? 30 YES! (laughs)</p> <p>I like the stories you know. MA: To me it doesn't make any difference. I'll go now to any place that you like 35 and laugh. That's because when ten or twelve people get together we tell stories.</p>
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Text D 00:00-02:47 Tape CCCXCVI

<p>J: ma ye qesa bugum, ma. MM: khO.</p> <p>J: I qesa az I qarAre ke yak kAle bud. MM: khO. J: I kal hEchi kAr namEkad.</p> <p>yak rOzI zan az I guft, “khO, tU chi kAr mEkunI, Akhe? kAr kO dEga! I taraf, U taraf burO!” guft, “chi kAr kunun? mardum pUl dAra. paisa dAra. mEra kAr mEkuna. MM: khO.</p> <p>J: ma nE pUl dArum. nE hIchI. chi kAr konum ma?”</p> <p>khO, zan az I HazAr rupIeh dAd bar-e I. Guft, “enI, tU burO AmI tujarat kun.”</p> <p>guft. “khO mErum.”</p> <p>U rA mEraft. yak sufi dId.</p> <p>sufi guft, “ah, kal kujA mErI?” guft, “wa rA mErum ba tujarat.” Guft, “pUl am dArI?”</p>	<p>J: Should I tell a story, me? MM: ok.</p> <p>I have a good story that There was a bald (sickly) guy. MM: ok J: This guy didn't work at all.</p> <p>One day his wife said, “‘What kind of work are you doing? Go [do some] work! Go that way or this way!’” He replied, “‘What work should I do? People have money. They have money and go and work. MM: ok.</p> <p>J: I don't have any money or anything. What work should I do?”</p> <p>His wife gave him a thousand rupis. “‘Here, go and with this do some trading[be a merchant].”</p> <p>He said, “‘Ok, I'll go.”</p> <p>He went on his way and saw a Sufi. The Sufi said, “‘Where are you going?”</p>
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<p>guft, “ah, enI HazAr rupIeh pUl dArum.” guft ke bIgr HazAr rupIeh-e am ma mEtum. Burodega tujArat kO. guft, “khUb.” HazAr rupIeh sufl dAd.</p> <p>Ustartar raft. dId ke yak Akhund bIrun shude Az masjid. guft, “ah, kal, kujA mErI? tU tA am(b)Ale bIrun nameshudi. tU Ale bIrun shudI. kujA mErI?”</p> <p>guft, “mErum ba tujarat.”</p> <p>guft, “pUl dArI?” guft, “ah, yak dU HazAr rupIeh pUl dArum.” guft, “ke ye(k) HazAr rupIeh-e am az ma. az tU sE HazAr rupIeh.” Kho raft, brAdar. bAzArA chakar zad. dar-e yek dekuni, neweshte-ye ke yak dukhtArI estada As amUnjA, yak mordegao khuneh dEga, ba estela.</p> <p>UnjA neweshte-ye ke kase ke U dukhtArI mazI pesh-e, darmAlI kuna, panj sad rupIeh. O kasI ke dAkhel kuna, hazAr AfghAnI. MM: (Laughs) chI-ye? UnjI dId, brAdar, guft ke khUb bAsh dega kAr Az Ir jOr mEkunom.</p> <p>raft ba dukhtAr. guft ke enamI panj sada bIgl. khub panj sada dAd. amrA-e az U pesh shud. maqsad dAkhel nakard. rOz-e dEga dAd. Maqsad shesh ta panj sadI desht. panj rOz panj shesh tA sadI dAd. brAdar, bar-e Az I LabeshAbAnI kad. enI rOz-e Akher, brAdar, U dukhtAr maz-e dAkhel kad.</p>	<p>He said, “I’m going to do some trading.” He said, “Do you have any money?” He said, “Yes, I’ve got 1000 rupis.” He told him, “Take the 1000 rupis that I’m giving you and go do business.” He said, “Good.” The Sufi gave him 1000 rupis.</p> <p>He went along further. He saw a mullah coming out of the mosque. The mullah said, “Hey, bald guy, where are you going? You up to now haven’t gone outside. Outside where are you going?”</p> <p>He said, “I’m going on business.”</p> <p>He said, “Do you have money?” He said, “Yes, I’ve got 2000 rupis.” He said, “Here’s 1000 for me too. Now, you’ve got 3000.” So he left, brother. He walked around the bazaar. On the door of a shop, it was written that there was a girl waiting in there. A whorehouse, [we say] colloquially.</p> <p>There it was written that anyone who had a desire for it, it was 500 rupis to touch and for the person that wanted to go inside it was 1000. MM: (Laughs) what? There he saw, brother, he said, “this would be good. I’ll make some business out of this.”</p> <p>He went to the girl. He said, “Take this 500 rupis.” So he gave the 500. He got next to her. But he didn’t go inside. Another day he gave (500). He had 6 500 rupi notes. For five days he gave five 500 rupi notes.</p>
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<p>dukhtara guft, kO, guft, “U-r dAkhel kO gU. ma HazAr rupleh ma metum bar-e etU.”</p> <p>guft, “nE.”</p> <p>dukhtAra Ale guft, “yak lak rupleh.”</p> <p>guft, “dU lak rupleh.”</p> <p>dU lak rupleh dukht...</p> <p>yak O nIm lak rupleh shuda bUd.</p> <p>yak dafe I Akhund rad az I desht. I arAmzada guft,</p> <p>“be kujA mEra netujarat, nesaoda mamAle-i. pUl-e ma gereft. (Fakht)-e I kuja kad. az rad az I ta ke dIdum. ImrOz myAya.”</p> <p>dar az khane ke mErasa,</p> <p>dukhtAr mEga, “yak lak telA kO, ke bura.” mega, “nE.” mega, “dU lak.”</p> <p>yak O nIm lak shuda akherI.</p> <p>MM: (Laughs)</p> <p>yak O nIm lak rupleh ke sE lak bAsha.</p> <p>AmI martaka, Akhunda, dara wA kad.</p> <p>amrA-e lakat zad, brAdar. I Asp o wAzI raft bAin-e dukhtAr.</p> <p>khEst, brAdar. sE lak rupleh-r az I gereft.</p> <p>HazAr rupleh ba Akhund dAd.</p> <p>MM: Ah.</p> <p>dU lak ba khUd gereft. yak laka ba U martaka dAd.</p> <p>MM: khO.</p> <p>Akhund mEga, “O brAdar, ba ma cherI kam mEtEm? khO, mam bar tU bar O bar. shumA pUl dAda budum.”</p> <p>guft, “buro khar kus tU tujarat lakAt zadI!”</p> <p>mEga, “khUb tujAratI bUd, ah”</p> <p>MM: (Laughs)</p> <p>J: Oh.</p> <p>MM: (Laughs)</p>	<p>(Unclear)</p> <p>The last day, brother, the girl had a taste for going inside.</p> <p>The girl said, she said, “Put it inside. I’ll give you 1000 rupis for you.”</p> <p>He said, “No.”</p> <p>She now said, “100,000 rupis.”</p> <p>He said, “200,000 rupis.”</p> <p>200,000 rupis the girl...</p> <p>150,000 rupis were settled.</p> <p>Right then this mullah came after him and said about the bastard [to himself]</p> <p>“You’re not going on business, on selling goods. You took my money. It went somewhere. I’m going to follow him. He’s coming by today.”</p> <p>He reached the door of the house. The girl was saying, “100,000 to push and go.” He says, “No.” He says, “200,000.” 150,000 they came to in the end.</p> <p>MM: (Laughs)</p> <p>150,000, 300,000</p> <p>That guy, the mullah, opened the door. He did it, brother. His horse and saddle went into the girl.</p> <p>The guy got up, took 300,000 from the girl. He gave 1000 rupis to the mullah.</p> <p>MM: Ah.</p> <p>He kept 200,000 rupis for himself. He gave 100,000 to the guy.</p> <p>MM: ok.</p> <p>The mullah said, “O brother, why’d you give me so little? Ok, I also equal to you. I had given you money.”</p> <p>He said, “Go you go make some business with a donkey!”</p> <p>He says, “It was a good business, yes.”</p> <p>MM: (Laughs)</p> <p>J: yes.</p>
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MM: (Laughs)

Text E CCCXCII 31:21- 32:16 and CCCXCIII 00:00-01:13

MA: bAz yek
yek dUkhtar bUd. I besyAr (unintelligible)
da yek dUkhtar-e kharAb bUd I.
yak atrafl AmAd.
khUsh Az I atrafl az I AmAd.
Guft, “ma hatman AmI dUkhtar-a
begIrum.”
zan-e khUd, nE?
AmrA-e U zan O showAr shud.
MM: Ah
I dUkhtar am kharAb bUd.
InjA gA AmAd ba’am khAstagarI AmAd.
I dUkhtara gereft.
AmrA-e Az I esdawAj kad.
MM: ah, ah
bAz AmI dUkhtar ba mAdar-e khud guft,
“Aga ma-r I shu ba pesh-e ma byAya O U
bIbIna ke
ke ma AmetU chIzam kAra ma- wAye
dega bade myAya.”
MM: ah.
MA: ah, ah
MM: khO, bUgO.
MA: khO ba bad Az U ke khud Az I sh... I
khAstgarI kad.
guft ba mAdar-e khu guft,
“ma ameqa kharAbam ke chI kunum?”
Guft, “khAir bUrO bachem baz i-r yAd
dArum.”

Guft, “wakht-e pesh-e myAya sEba
dAkhel-e U (pas marg-e) khud.”
mEfamI Az UnjA-ra?
MM: ah

Guft, “sEb amUnjA dAkhel kO.”
shAo ke atrafl AmAd ke khud Az I
esdawAj kuna.
Kamar Az U

MA: Then, a...
there was a, a girl. She was a very bad girl.
A guy from the country came by.
He liked what he saw.
He said, “I’m going to marry this girl for
sure.”
As his own wife, no?
He became the husband of this woman.
MM: Ah.
MA: and the girl was bad.
He came here to propose the terms of
marriage.
And he took the girl.
He married her.
MM: yes, yes.
Then, this here girl said to her mother, “If
I, he comes to me tonight and sees that,
That my business is open, he’ll get mad.”
MM: yes.

MA: yes, yes.
MM: good, tell it.
MA: Ok, after this, that he husb... had
proposed marriage.
She said to her mother, she said,
“I’ve done all these bad things that what
can I do?
She replied, “It’s ok, go my child I know a
few tricks.”

She said, “when he comes to you, put an
apple inside you.”
Do you understand, there?
MM: yes.

She said, “Put an apple inside.”
When the night came and the country boy
came to marry her.
Her belt,

<p>mAj kada. natAnest parda-ye esmAt-e, ma mardum megem U pAra kuna. Besyar taklIf shud. Martake bIrun shud, Az UnjA varkhEst AmU sEb-e U mAkhkam dAkhel-e chIz kashIda budesh wakht-e ke U ruI mEz gudesht, bad Az U AmU martake ke rUi khu-r gashtAnd ke sEb qarAr sar-e mEz.</p> <p>Guft, “basha ke sEb bukhOrum ke kaml enerjI bIgrum. kam-e enerjI bIgrum ke I dafa ke khud Az I dega kAr betum.” I dafa ke khud az I shurO kad ba kar I guft, “albat lAlA, az awAlem parda dast shuda dega.” pAra shuda khair</p> <p>bad az U ami sOb ke shud dUkhtarak pesh-e madar-e khud AmAd guft, guft, “mAdar, akhi tU chI be (taqidi)?” Guft, “sEb-e arAm-a khOrd.” Guft, “chatAl bud. gU khOrd.” Guft, “parwA nadAra. gU padar-e khudA beamorze kharbuza-ra khOrd.” yane zanaka-e kharAb O (bud) dega. J: zan O mAdar am etau</p> <p>MA: kharbuza jA mEshuda dar bainesht (Laughs)</p>	<p>He kissed. He couldn't break her hymen, we say here. It was a lot of trouble. He got it out. And got up from there. That apple that she had put inside. When he turned [his head] she put the apple on the table He turned (his face) around and [saw] the apple on the table.</p> <p>He said, “Let's eat the apple and get a little energy. I'll get a little energy so that this time I can give some more work.” This time that he started to work he said, “the was the first time it was done. someone's touched her hymen.” It was torn. That's good.</p> <p>After that when morning came The girl told her mother, She said, “Mom, what did you do in the end?” She said, “He ate an unclean thing.” She said, “it was dirty.” She said, “He ate it.” She said, “It doesn't matter. Your departed father ate a melon.” That little woman was bad too. J: The woman and her mother [were] like that.</p> <p>MA: She put a melon inside (her). (Laughs)</p>
Text F CCCXCIII 17:41-19:01	
<p>MA: yak rozI MM: dega chl?</p>	<p>MA: one day. MM: what else?</p>

<p>MA: ah? MM: dega chI? MA: bAz yak estalAI dArEm ke baine khud. MM: ah MA: yak rozI Ena, Ah, chI bugum, me?</p> <p>yak wardakI, nE? estala dAra MM: ah yak wardak am amrA amEtU myAmAd. dId yak aIne aIne ba(r) zamIn partau-e.</p> <p>I AIner wardesht, dId, aks-e khur ba mAbain-e AIne dId. Guft, “khaira I Az shUma-re dega a-mA khOdAhAfez.” I ba rad dar baIne U am Aks-khu-r dId guft, “albat nafari.” khabar nadAra ke Aks-khuda. Khaire I...</p> <p>I, I aIne Az shUmAs khOdahafez I aine a-tUs Aonar-e U sAyeB az I tU khOdahafez.</p> <p>bAz yak rOzI wardakI chlZ myAmAd. MM: wardak MA: wardakI Mardum-e wardak MM: ah MA: eh? wardak InjA welayatI MM: jAi as MA: jAi. welAyat jA ye. MM: ma dIdum. MA: U mardum amuzar estala dAra.</p> <p>bAz yak rOz wardakam ba-am mOtar</p>	<p>MA: ah? MM: what else? MA: There’s an expression we have among ourselves. MM: yes. MA: one day Here, yes, what should I say?</p> <p>A guy from wardak, no? They have a saying. MM: yes. A guy from wardak was going along the road. He saw a mirror. The mirror had been thrown on the ground.</p> <p>He picked up the mirror, looked, and saw his own reflection inside it. He said, “Ok, it’s yours, Goodbye.” When he raised it, inside he saw his own reflection and said, “It’s a guy.” He didn’t know that it was his own reflection. Ok, this...</p> <p>This mirror is yours goodbye. This mirror is yours, the mirror of that guy. It’s his. Goodbye.</p> <p>Then one day a guy from Wardak came. MM: wardak. MA: a guy from Wardak People from Wardak. MA: Wardak is here. A province. MM: it’s a place MA: a place MM: I’ve seen it. Those people have a story.</p> <p>Then one day the wardaki got into a car. J: they’re stupid.</p>
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<p>sowar shud, J: UnA be-aqlan MA: yak dahI, dahI pul, ne? dA rupIeh qaghaz-e Ba dast-khu gereft.</p> <p>I awA garm bud. dastesh arak kard I.</p> <p>WakhI sail/r kad dId I arak kard I Ba nazAr az I alat I bechara tarsIda arak kada Guft, "chort mawaha! Kun dar kom, wellakeh ta dar kun!"</p> <p>I bAz-e pashtu-e, mEfamEn? MM: nE. Yane kUn mEtum walak Agar tUr mEtum. maqsad az I bud. InjA kUn dAdan besyAr yak gapa bade, nE? Mm: ah MA: baine mardum. MM: ah MA: besyAr I-raqam gap-e chI J: guft, pul bedIh (?) ba dega kas namEtum arak karda MA: wala kUn-e ma Agar tUr betum.</p>	<p>MA: 10 rupis of money, no? 10 rupis of paper [money]. He took in his hand.</p> <p>The weather was warm. His hand was sweating.</p> <p>When he look he saw that it was sweating, He thought that it came from this poor guy was afraid of the sweat. He said, "(in Pashto) Don't worry! I'll give my ass before I give you to them"</p> <p>It's a little Pashto, do you understand? MM: no. Rather, I'll give my ass blood if I give you. That's the meaning of this. Here ass-giving is a really bad thing MM: yes. MA: among the people here. MM: yes MA: there's a lot of this kind of talk. J: he said, give the money (?) I won't give it to another person because he's sweating MA: By God, it's my ass if I give you to them.</p>
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Text G CCCXCVIII 30:14-31:39 and CCCXCIX 00:00-01:01

<p>J: yak wakhtI, yak kabullI rafta bud ba atrAf. MM: ah J: kabullI ba atrAf rafta bud. Bad Az nAn. faorI khEst Dast-e khuda shusht Ametu estad shud Guft ke kudam mabraz nEst?</p> <p>atrAfI guft, "albat chiz-e khordani dega mekhaya, I ke bukhora chiz-e khordani kho nabud</p>	<p>J: one time, a Kabuli went to the country. MM: ah. J: the Kabuli went to the country. After he had eaten, he got up and washed his hands. Like this he stood. He said, "Is there no bathroom?"</p> <p>The rural man said, "He probably wants something more to eat. There wasn't anything left to eat. He brought the last bit. Everything that</p>
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<p>u khalas awurda bud ar chi ke pukhta bud ba jelao az I awurda bud khorda bud guft ke kudam mabraz nest? Ne wala bachaha khordan MM: Kudam chi? J: guft kudam mabraz, mabraz ya ne tashnab nest? tashnab MM: oh (Laughs) J: Guft, ne bachaha khordan Atrafi khiyAl kad ke chiza khordani megen (Laughs) Guft ne bachaha khordan</p> <p>Yak wakhti yak nafar-e dega raft ba iran I chi mekada</p> <p>Shorwa khasta ab-e gosht khasta Unja mekhorda ba baine az i Magaz bazi mekada</p> <p>Du ta magaz</p> <p>Amu pesh-e khadmat-e hotal khasta Guft byayeninja O bache bya AmAda Guft, tu chi megi Gufta ech Guftinja magaz meraqsa Guft, koko du rupleh shorwa khasti ami du rup-et khanum jamila raqs kuna Magaz bas as ba dU rupleh dega</p> <p>MM: I-ra Az kujA shunIdEn? J: I dar yak mujala khAnda budum. Yak dAfa ma khud kushkenakhod nan mekhordum nan khordum khordum</p> <p>Yak wakhti ma ba Kabul meAmAdum par sal ba kushkenakhod mekhordum Unja ba otal</p>	<p>was prepared he brought and it was eaten. He said, “Is there no bathroom?” “No, by God, the boys have eaten it.” MM: What kind of thing? J: he said, “Is there a bathroom? A <i>mAbraz</i> is a bathroom, no? bathroom MM: oh (laughs) J: He said, “No the boys have eaten it.” The man from the country was surprised that he was talking about something to eat. (Laughs) He said, “No, the boys have eaten it.”</p> <p>One time another guy went to Iran. And what did he do.</p> <p>He wanted to eat Shorwa, water and meat he wanted. There he was eating in the middle of this (soup) there were flies playing.</p> <p>Two flies.</p> <p>He wanted the waiter at the hotel [to come over]. He said, “Come here. Come here boy!.” He came and said, “What are you saying?” He said, “Nothing.” He said, “In here flies are dancing.” He said, “Uncle, you wanted two rupi shorwa. For these two rupis you want Khanum Jamila to dance? The flies are enough for two rupis.”</p> <p>MM: Where’d you here this? J: I read it in a magazine. One time I was eating at Kushkenakhod. I was eating a meal, eating.</p> <p>One time I was coming to Kabul last year</p>
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<p>Nan khordum, khordum, didum Da ami zer-e peshqab-e berenj yak ameg zar teka-e shAlcha Az kun-e az ami farsh Yak zara kona teka (birun?) shud Oтели-r guftum, bya inja rafiq</p> <p>AmAd. guftum I shAlcha chI As ba zer-e nAn Guft, o brAdar chandin dAdI bar-e nan Guftum panzda rupIeh, shanzda rupIeh ena bist rupIeh Guft ba bist rupIeh-et mekhasti qalin buraya Guft, shalcha bas as dega</p> <p>Guftum, khair as brAdar</p> <p>MM: unhA ba koshkenakhud besyar bAZI mekunam ba musafara Ar wakht-e ke InjA estad meshem az ma kkAreji koshesh mekunam ke ziyad mefrosham, qimat mefrosham J: bale, hA. M: az ama kas az dakheli ametu kar mekuna</p> <p>J: yak (laughs) wakhti dega... J: ma na guftum, arak kadum, guftum panzda rupIeh dAdem, dega, mega... qAlin buraya I shalcha bas as dega MM: (laughs)</p> <p>Yak, Yak wakht-e yak irani, yak afghani ba iran buda</p> <p>I dida ke yak tefl-e khurdi irani az ami tui (hayat) az koti birun shuda Ba birun Unja Bazi mekuna Yak seke palawi</p>	<p>and was eating a meal at Kushkenakhod. There at a hotel. I was eating, eating. I saw, That in there under the dish of rice there was a small piece of carpet. From the corner of this here carpet/ A little old piece came out. I told the guy that worked at the hotel, “Come here friend.</p> <p>He came. I said, “This piece of carpet that’s under the food. He said, “O brother, how much did you give for the food?” I said, “15 rupis, 16 rupis, here 20 rupis.” He said, “For 20 rupis you want it to come to a whole carpet?” He said, “A little piece is enough.”</p> <p>I said, “It’s ok, brother.”</p> <p>MM: At Koshkenakhud they play a lot of games with travelers. Every time I stop they try to sell us foreigners a lot of expensive things. J: Yes, unhunh... M: They try to do like this to locals too.</p> <p>J: One other time... I didn’t say that I was sweating. I said, “I paid 15 rupis.” He says, “...A whole carpet... this little piece is enough already.” MM: (Laughs)</p> <p>One, one time there was an Iranian. An Afghan was in Iran.</p> <p>He saw that a little Iranian child from a wedding party was coming out of a house. Outside She was playing there.</p>
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<p>Tela ba dast az I buda Ba dast-e dukhtar I afghani gufta ke Bya ke paisa-e khud awaz kunem AmrAi-et Guft, ami dukhtar-e khurdi bazi betum Guft bya ko ke ewaz kunem</p> <p>Guftan ne ewaz namekunum Guft, ina qaghaz ke tu-ra bedlh Masalan du toman, chand ta Paisa-ra kashida Gufta ne Gufta yak dafa amU dukhtarak-e khurd ba I gufta ba afghani gufta Tu ba mesle khar (h)arraz beকাশ Bad az u (ham) buko ma metum Afghani I taraf u taraf kho dida Mesle khar araz kashida Guft, ale betI dega I paisa-ra metum Gufta buro Afghana, afghana be... be adab Guft tu ami khargari-khu ke khar astI aras mekashi mefamid ke I telas ma nemefamum?</p>	<p>A Pahlavi coin A golden [coin] was in her hand. In the hand of a girl. The Afghan said to the girl, “Come so that I can change your money With you.” He said [to himself], “I’m going to trick this here little girl.” He said, “Come here so I can change it.”</p> <p>She said, “No. I’m not going to change it.” He said, “Here’s some paper money that I’ll give you, for instance two or more tomans.” He pulled out the money. She said, “No.” One time the little girly said to the Afghan, “If you bray like a donkey, then I’ll give you the coin.” The Afghan looked both ways Brayed like a donkey. He said, “Now give me the coin. Give the money.” She said, “Go on. Afghan, misbehaving Afghan.” She said, “You in your donkey-like behavior that you’re a donkey and bray like one, know that this is a gold, but I don’t know?”</p>
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Text H CCCXCIX 05:01-05:49

<p>J: yak wakhti dega Yak nashekan furosh AmAda bud ba deh-e ma Nashekan mefrokht</p> <p>Guft ke ena-ya pyala-e nashekand Ina qaba-ye nashekand ina, ina etu</p> <p>Saodo mekad mardum unja dar peshesh shesta astam.</p>	<p>J: One other time. A seller of unbreakable glass was in my village. A seller of unbreakable glass.</p> <p>He said that here’s an unbreakable cup, here’s an unbreakable dish, here, here, this is.</p> <p>He was calling people. They were sitting in front of him.</p>
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<p>Ma guftum rafiq lala nashekand nest nako</p> <p>Guft aga nashekand nabud ech paisa nate</p> <p>Kho, amrAi az u zid kadum. I guft nashekan as, ma guftum nest I Guft, nashekan as, ma guftum nest. Nashekan nabud Az durogh meguft I fikr mekad ke ma khatkhan nestum khanda nametanum khat</p> <p>Yak dafa, ami yak pyala-ba I das-e khu gereft, yak pyala ba I das-e khu Ami yakI-ra I taraf andakht, guft aga nashekand nest paisa-eta nate Yaki I taraf andakht, yaki u taraf Ar du shekesht. MM: (laughs)</p> <p>Guft, khub nashekan as dega Ba ma mardum ba jal-e nashekan mefuroshi MM: (laughs) J: echI baine mardum-e dega nakharida</p>	<p>I said, "Friend, uncle, they're not unbreakable. Don't."</p> <p>He said, "If they're not unbreakable, don't pay me any money."</p> <p>Well, I was opposed to him. He said they're unbreakable, I said they're not. He said, they're unbreakable, I said they're not. They weren't unbreakable. He was lying. He thought that I was illiterate, that I couldn't read.</p> <p>At once, he took a cup in one hand and another cup in the other hand. He threw one in one direction, he said, "If they're not unbreakable, don't pay any money." He threw one in one direction and the other in another direction. Both of them broke. MM: (Laughs) He said, "They're good and unbreakable." In the place of unbreakable glass he was selling to my people... MM: (Laughs) J: Nobody else bought anything [from him]</p>
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Text I (CCCXCVI 8:45-10:54)

<p>J: yak IrAnI O AfghAnIstanI O pAkistAnI</p> <p>InhA barAdar, yak jAI muzdUrI mEkadan MM: ah</p> <p>J: ba IrAnI guftan ke tU chand kuze ba AfghAnI guftan ba IrAnI guftan tU chand kuze- mEbarI?</p> <p>guft, ma barAdar dU kuze ba amu dU dast-e khud dU kuze bOrda</p>	<p>J: An Iranian and an Afghan and a Pakistani...</p> <p>Brother, they were working in a place. MM: yes.</p> <p>J: They said to the Iranian, "How many jugs..." They said to the Afghan, they said to the Iranian, "How many jugs can you carry?"</p>
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<p>mEtanum dU kuz-e Ao ba pAkistAnI guftan pAkistAnI tū chand kuza mēbarī?</p> <p>Pākistānī guft ma sē kuza yakī ba-am takht- e shāna mīgzarum, yakī dū tā ma dastam mīgrum MM: āfghān guft dū dāna? J: nē īrānī guft dū dāna, pākistani se dana Ba afghani guftan tu chand dana mebari? Guft ma panj dana</p> <p>Guftan chi-raqam Guft Pakistani se dana dara du dast-e khu yaki ba sar-e khu ma du ta ba dast-e khud migirum Pakistani-ra ba sar-e aspbab-e khu migirum panj dana mesha az u ra mebarum MM: (laughs)</p> <p>J: yakI dega Yak hhazAra o Aoghan</p> <p>Inha guftan ke brAdar shart zadan ke bya but jor mekunEm Mujasama ki khub jor mekuna</p> <p>KhO, Jor kadan guftam buri eni felani roz- e juma jor ko byar amagi ma myayem az ar kas ke khub bud sahi-ye dega</p> <p>HhazAra raft brAdar, but jor kard ba daste U aks-e Koran-e shahrIf Ba dast-e but Koran-e shahrIfa dAd</p> <p>Aoghan raft peshe raft Buti jor kad</p>	<p>He said, “Brother, I can carry two jugs, in these two hands of mine, two jugs of water.” They said to the Pakistani, “Pakistani, how many jugs can you carry?”</p> <p>The Pakistani said, “I [can carry] three jugs, I’ll put one my back and take two in my hands.” MM: the Afghan said two? J: No, the Iranian said two and the Pakistani said three. They said to the Afghan, “How many can you carry?” He said, “I [can carry] five.”</p> <p>They said, “How?” He said, “The Pakistani has two in his hands and one on his head. I’ll take two in my hands and take the Pakistani on top of my apparatus. That makes five. In that way I’ll carry them. MM: (laughs)</p> <p>J: One other [story] A HhazAra and A Pasthtun</p> <p>They said, brother, they made a bet that we should go and make a statue. A statue. The one that makes it well.</p> <p>Ok, they made it and they said let’s go on such and such a Friday, build it and bring it. All of us will come and the one who makes the best one will win.</p> <p>Brother, the HhazAra left . Made a statue in its hand he put an image of the Holy</p>
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<p>Ba yak dasti U nun ba(h)am dahani U am nuna mekhora chak mezana Yak dast-e aspbaba-ye jor kad</p> <p>ke Roz-e juma awurdaninja brAdar hhazArA u taraf AoghanA I taraf Guftan buro aoghan chi jor kada be padar be adab gosh ko Aspbaba-ye khud gerefta nana ba dan</p> <p>Yak dafa aoghOn gufte Eh hhazAra Guft ma nan mekhordum Tu gufti ba man nan bedlh Guftum nametum Tu Koran etaunagI gerefti ke yane beti</p> <p>Bedlh ba-m ba az barai Koran bedlh Ma guftum kira-e khud metum ba tu (Laughs) Aoghana o hhazAra ametu zid am</p>	<p>Qur'an In the hands of the statue He gave a Holy Qur'an.</p> <p>The Pashtun left And made a statue In one hand there was bread and he was eating the bread, In one hand was holding his apparatus.</p> <p>They brought [the statues] here on Friday. Brother, the HhazAras were standing on that side The Pashtuns were standing on this side. They said, "What did that bastard Pashtun make. Listen."</p> <p>Then the Pashtun said, "Oh, HhazAra." He said, "If I was eating bread. And you said to give me some bread. I would say no. You took the Qur'an like this to give the bread.</p> <p>By the Koran, give me some bread (like a beggar) I would say I'll give you my prick. (Laughs) The Pashtun and the HhazAra are opposed to each other like this.</p>
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Text J CCCCXVI 7:31-8:44

<p>J: dege ke yak nafar dehqAni bud</p> <p>Dehqan bud, I brAdar Ami bAle zan kho ghair bud del az i I Guft atmi kuni as</p> <p>Yak rozi I brAdar guft Ke namesha</p>	<p>J: Then, there was a guy who was a villager.</p> <p>He was a villager. He, brother, Ok, his heart was against his wife. He said, "She definitely a kuni."</p> <p>One day this brother said that it can't</p>
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<p>Awurd ba am ta chi az I Ba am bale aspbab-e zan, kho Ba amu tap-e mui-ye Yak dana gandum gudesht Yak dana gandum gudesht Bad az u Guft Ke shum AmAdum aga I gandum bud kho sai-ye Tu nameti aga nabud meti</p> <p>Kho shao AmAd Sham guft Ke beakash I zare kashid I tukhumha-ye khud (ba) zanaka. shui ke raft. I taraf u taraf dawid dega Maksad khana jaru kad nan pukhta kad Gandum am budan beftAd har chi bain-e khana-r polid Bain-e Sarar polid Gandum Nayaft Akher gereft yak ba am ba (m)unje namaz- shum Yak pure Ard gudesht</p> <p>Yak pure ard gudesht Bad az u ke shui AmAd Guft ezare beakash Kashid Did brAdar gandum, ne arda Guft ba padarake-tu nAlat, gu be tu ametur zadam ke gandum ard shuda (Laugh)</p>	<p>happen.</p> <p>He brought to that thing of hers to the top of the woman's gear, that hairy place he put a kernel of wheat He put a kernel of wheat After that he said, "I'm coming back tonight. If the wheat's there, ok. It will be there if you're giving (yourself), if not you're giving."</p> <p>Ok, evening came. In the evening, he said, "Pull it out and she pulled out the piece." (repairing the sequence) He gave these seeds to the woman. When her husband had left, she ran around this way and that. She swept the house. Baked bread. The wheat that was there fell out and As much as she searched around the house And searched around the yard She couldn't find the wheat. In the end at the time of evening prayers, she took a bit of flour and put it there.</p> <p>She put a bit of flour up there. After that when (her) husband came back. He said, "Pull out the piece (of wheat) She pulled it out. Brother, he didn't see wheat, but flour. He said, "Curses on your little father, you had so much sex that the wheat's turned into flour. (Laugh)</p>
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Text K CCCXCII 14:01-14:53

MM: inha az kuja shuniden?	MM: Where did you this (story)?
MA: inha dega	MM: This one...

<p>J: az rafiqA MA: az rafiqA O yaki dega mA az... labwartwar-e inglisi darEm MM: ah MA: az enami ra zine-r naguftam? MM: ah. MA: I zina-e labwartwar-e inglisi ba mA mega</p> <p>I lughatA-e inglisi ke mA gosh mekanEm? MM: kho, famidum MA: U ami mesle az I ami raqam ketaba neweshta mesha U ba inglisi mega, bAz mA am ba farsi mefamEm U-ra ba khud-e Afghanistan pur shude MM: mefamum. MA: kho. MM: Shuma Awal ba lafs-e dari shunidi? Ya ba lafs-e inglisi? MA: awal ba lafs-e inglisi shunidum. Ba dari besyar-e inha MM: (unintelligible) ke MA: Ba dari ma megum MM: ami rejeba sebA ke mefteka ba inglisi yad gereften? MA: ah ba inglisi shunida mesha MM: (?) J: (unintelligible) MM: ah ma am ba inglisi ketaba rajeba mula nasrudin darum J: (simultaneously) mula nasrudin daren MA: na inhAr aslan chiz-e khud-e afghanA inhA inha-r ba inglisi tabdil kada tA bachA-r, shoaq am dAram az yak negAh shoaq am bukhoram unha yaki dega befamam Inha aksar-e ami-r bar shunidum wo az chiz</p>	<p>J: from friends. MA: from friends. One other we learned from the English laboratory. MM: yes. MA: Didn't I tell you about this here (unclear) MM: yes. MA: This tape from the English language laboratory tells me.</p> <p>We listen to these English words. MM: Ok, I understand. MA: so like this a kind of a tape gets written, it says it in English and then we understand it in Farsi. It was recorded in Afghanistan MM: I know. MA: ok. MM: Did you hear this one first in Dari or in English? MM: I heard it first in English. But in Dari there are a lot of them. MM: (unintelligible) MA: I tell them in Dari. MM: You learned this one about apples that fall in English? MM: Yes, I heard it in English. MM: (?) J: (unintelligible) MM: yes. I also have a book in English about Mullah Nasrudin J: (simultaneously) you have (a book) about Mullah Nasrudin. MA: These were originally told between Afghans and were translated in English So that the boys, who are so playful In one respect they get pleasure from them And on the other they'll understand.</p>
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