The plot of the case history traces out connections that make human actions intelligible as the expression of individual character. But this connection is neither one of logical implication nor one of chronological sequence. It is important to note that, unlike a proposition or conclusion that can be detached from its argument, the meaning embodied in the narrative form of the story cannot be replaced by some other kind of account. Although a story may be said to have a point that can be stated independently of the narrative, we generally recognize that the point becomes platitudinous unless it returns us to the story for another reading.

-- Steven Goldberg, Two Patterns of Rationality in Freud's Writings

The quotation above comes from a narratological discussion of psychoanalytic case history, and it claims to identify a degree of interrelatedness between narrative form, characterization and meaning that is unique to the case history. The notion of story not as a vehicle of meaning by as constitutive of meaning is fundamental not only to case history but to Lushootseed oral tradition as well. I think fundamental not to that, unlike a proposition or conclusion that can be detached from its argument, the meaning embodied in the narrative form of the story cannot be replaced by some other kind of account. Although a story may be said to have a point that can be stated independently of the narrative, we generally recognize that the point becomes platitudinous unless it returns us to the story for another reading.

In this paper, we will look at Martha Lamont's "Mink and Changer" to see how Lushootseed tradition supplies the tools for crafting a narrative whose meaning is not detachable from its form. It needs to be said, however, "Mink and Changer" is only the first part of a longer narrative in which Martha tells about several other people's encounters with dukʷtibš, and so the aspect of meaning that Mink and Changer has as the initial move in a collection (its function in the story, as opposed to its utility to me in this essay about its narrative anatomy) is not represented in the following discussion.

Lushootseed oral traditional puts at the disposal of its practitioners rhetorical strategies by means of which they can organize and direct the reflective activities of the audience as it listens for meaning. The fact that it is looking back at the narrative that enables us to appreciate it in its unfolding is mirrored in the fact that the chief medium of traditional rhetorical strategies is repetition. By the storyteller's use of such artifices as hermeneutic dyads, pattern episodes, chiastic structures and keywording, events are not merely told, but revealed in patterns that invite examination and remembering.

Of the 134 lines of Martha Lamont's "Mink and Changer" (as lineated by the editor of Lushootseed Texts, 1996) only a passage of six lines is not paralleled elsewhere in the story at the level of event, rhetorical structure or diction; but even this little passage itself forms part of the core of an inclusio. The density of the story's display of traditional narrative resources allows us not only to identify these resources, but also to see how they are used for performing such functions as evaluation...
and characterization and for creating such textures as humor, irony, pathos and suspense.

The story concerns Mink, who steals food that is cooking on the campfire of an old man who is asleep. *dukʷiʔat*, the Changer, then steals food from Mink’s fire while he is sleeping. To get even, Mink tricks *dukʷiʔat* twice into mistaking piss for water and drinking it. In response, *dukʷiʔat* changes Mink into an animal. Though this is a story about a pair of characters who do similar things -- stealing and getting even -- it is a more complicated structure than a story, such as Martha Lamont’s “Pheasant and Raven,” that shows characters who are the opposite of each other and who demonstrate their difference in parallel episodes that reverse one another. And though this is a *dukʷiʔat* story that ends as usual in somebody’s being reduced from myth-age polymorph to modern day niche-occupant, it is not at all like the typical tale in which *dukʷiʔat* arrives, asks, “What are you doing?” and then condemns the person to the performance of an animal, vegetable or mineral version of that activity forever. In Martha Lamont’s “Mink and Changer,” the tale-type (*dukʷiʔat* story) and the structure-type (a pair of protagonists in parallel episodes) are combined, complicated, and extended to form a prismatic narrative of which it can be said that the more one pays attention to it, the more it seems to be about.

Schematically, the story can be described as having three parts: the two thefts of food, Mink’s piss trick, and *dukʷiʔat*’s changing of Mink. These sections may be described in the light of differing evaluations, as in the following examples: 1) *dukʷiʔat* pays Mink back for stealing food from an old man; Mink takes revenge; *dukʷiʔat* punishes him; or 2) *dukʷiʔat* decides to engage this clever Mink, about whom he has already heard, in a game; Mink wins two rounds of the game; it is in the nature of his power that *dukʷiʔat* is too jealous of his own position in the world to let this go on, so he ends the game; or 3) *dukʷiʔat*, lonely in his assigned role of punisher, seeks the company of one who is enough of a supernatural being himself to be able to delay the inevitable; Mink does this not just once, but twice, letting into the world a new notion of agency; *dukʷiʔat*, his own activities already determined by the future that is coming, forecloses the novel possibility. Martha’s storyteller’s decisions can be read in all these ways and more: what she does is to set the pair up in a shifting field of relations -- now suggesting their equality, now their ranking in a hierarchy, now the possibility of changing the plot, now the impossibility: in exploring the dynamics between the two persons, she is asking questions about the nature of human existence in a spiritual world. By telling everything two times, so the listener cannot think about anything just once, she opens up the *dukʷiʔat* story to speculation, so that when she closes it up again with the traditional ending, we hear that ending as less final (or perhaps more final) than ever before. We have said that meaning is inseparable from form, and yet we have just discussed ways in which form opens up the field of signification, rather than defining specific meaning. What is overdetermined in Lushootseed narrative is a range of possibilities, not a collection of specificities. It is to maintain the tensions set up by the story within this range that formal artifices are of service.

The events of the story -- the thefts, the drinkings of piss and the reduction of Mink to an animal -- are each presented as the cores of inclusii. Someone is traveling, then an event happens at the place where he has arrived, then he travels on. In the hands of a lesser storyteller, the passages telling how this person travelled can be mere boundary markers between scenes. In Martha Lamont’s storytelling, and notably in “Mink and Changer,” they perform the function that commentary by the omniscient author performs in a Victorian novel: they let you know more about the characters than they know about themselves, thus placing the story in the context of the world at large. Indeed, the final disposition of Mink is described by *dukʷiʔat* in terms of how Mink will be travelling from now on; and his speech makes use of wordplay to contrast that future way of travel with the way Mink has travelled throughout the story from episode to episode and the way he travelled into it in the beginning.

In the relatively short compass of “Mink and Changer,” word echo and wordplay of various kinds can have not only a local effect, but can serve to unify and contextualize the entire story. The echoes of near homophones like qaḍadd (to steal, from the theft episodes) and qʷuʔqʷaḍid (to drink, from the piss episodes) can bring into parallel two widely separated episodes. And, as in other stories (such as “Pheasant and Raven,” which became a meditation on the levels of meaning encompassed by a word for “person in need of help”), Martha holds up for examination in “Mink and Changer” a key word whose exploration in the story starts at one end of the spectrum of its lexical field and has traveled to the other end by the time the story draws to a close. Since this word, *dukʷiʔat*, is also part of *dukʷiʔat*’s name, the changing ways it is invoked provide a series of evaluations of *dukʷiʔat* himself and thus open the path to metaphorical reflection, if you care to go there in the course of a slightly naughty story about a Mink long ago.

II

Let us begin our investigation about the inseparability of form and meaning by looking at what the narrations of the ways Mink and *dukʷiʔat* enter the story to tell us about each other.

(about Mink) (about *dukʷiʔat*)

2. baʔeqəb tu ?ah.
35. gʷshaʔə? loʔbaʔaxʷ tiʔa? *dukʷiʔat*.
36. lədxʷʔadʔəpəxʷ tiʔa? *dukʷiʔat*,

This Mink was traveling.

Yes, Mink would travel long ago,
At that place, there was Mink.

He would travel long ago,
Mink was there.

long ago, as "would," in order to mark the absence of it in the third repetition of the first four lines Martha is situating Mink as he customarily was in the world before this story happened and in the fifth line is moving into the action of the story; for the next thing she says is "That's when he came upon him [the old man]." There is nothing remarkable about this passage telling how Mink inhabits the place when we consider it in isolation. But meanings accrue when we compare it with the narrative of dukwibat's intrusion into the place and with the description at the end of the story of Mink's future way of being there.

dukwibat enters the story just after Mink has gone to sleep while his salmon is roasting over the campfire. In contrast to Mink, dukwibat has a mission in life. His way of walking along the shore is conveyed by a word, dx?d'alg"sp, that, among numerous passages in the story telling how people walked along the shore, is used only here. By this time, Mink has also walked along the shore (thus I take ti?i?eac li?i?ilg"it in line 37, "along the shore that was there," to refer to the place Mink walked), but the word used for his traveling is the same ?iba~ of the introduction. In comparison to ?iba~, litt?ilg"it (literally, "walk"); dx?d'alg"op is a fancier, more specific word, as its presence as the core of a small circular figure with ?iba~ as its outer rim seems to testify. In addition, la?eydx~ (going along finding) and lawiliq"id (going along asking people) amplify la?iba~ (going along walking) as it is used of dukwibat in a way that contrasts with its bare repetition of la?ib~ in the passage about Mink. These two passages, which only seem to be "filter" between episodes and to be accomplishing nothing much besides moving characters around, actually serve to distiguish the characters from one another and to set them in a certain tension with one another. Mink belongs here; at this point he is part of the background. dukwibat has arrived, walking in Mink's tracks but with a different step and in a different frame of mind.

The story begins with the entrance of Mink: the passage above presents him as he is just before he comes upon the sleeping old man and his roasting salmon. We notice the chiasmus of the first two lines and, along with taking pleasure in the figure, may wonder what besides this tradition opening for a story is encoded there. I have taken the liberty of translating the tu- prefix, which indicates a time line. In addition, I have taken the liberty of translating the ti?- prefix, which indicates a time line.
And afterward, his eating was done. So he ate it now.

He picked and chose from what Mink was cooking. duk'ibat ate now.

But he left alone maybe for some reason some of what Mink had cooking, some salmon.

Mink’s action is opportunistic, and it is not the first time he has seized such an opportunity (I translate the “ba-” prefix [“again”] on qadadid ("to steal") with a whole clause in order to bring out this point.) laKwyid is literally “to gobble away from someone.” Mink, like an animal, does not steal the food with his hands, take it away and eat it later, but steals it with his mouth, devouring it on the spot. Martha speaks about Mink first as “stealing” and then, after the statement that the victim is not only old, but asleep, about Mink as “gobbling away.” As far as he is concerned, the end of the food is the end of the incident, even though the old man will eventually awaken. The close of the episode, huy tiʔaʔ sʔatads (And then his eating was done) mimics one of the ways a story can close (huyax’ tiʔaʔ syahub, this story is done now).

One of the Lushootseed teachers at Tulalip says that since “Mink and Changer” only has two characters in it, the old man must be duk’ibet. (To her, this means that duk’ibet is either a very limber old man who could follow Mink over the bluffs along the shore, or else he is in disguise during the first scene.) In its interlaced binarism, the story suggests both of these possibilities, along with others. Even the one linguistic clue linking the old man with duk’ibet can be interpreted several ways. When he is thinking about stealing Mink’s salmon, duk’ibet uses haqadadid, “steal again” or perhaps “steal in turn,” an echo of what Martha says about Mink’s stealing. It fits Mink because he is a chronic thief, but how does it fit duk’ibet? Is he going to turn the tables on Mink in carrying out a personal revenge? Is he a moral force whose mission is to let Mink know what it feels like to be treated as he treated an old man? What one makes of this “ba-” prefix echoed here from the earlier episode will color his reception of the rest of the story. But, crucial as it is, the echo itself cannot be reproduced in two words to suggest an intonation pattern: the result is that the interrelatedness of the two passages is not represented fully and the rest of the story is diminished as well.

It is noteworthy that in this story duk’ibet does not ask Mink stab k’ʔ(ʔ)suluy (“What are you doing?”), as he traditionally does when he comes upon people. Instead, he does what Mink has done.

This departure from expectation is counterpointed by the very traditional diction in the first four lines of the passage, which I cannot find a way to bring over into acceptable English.

Whenever duk’ibet appears in a story and begins to interact with people, all the transitive verbs appear in passive form. The stories never say, “duk’ibet did this to X,” but always instead, “This was done to X by duk’ibet.” In Lushootseed, if both duk’ibet and X are named, the passive is obligatory. But when the actor is not named, both passive and active voices are acceptable. Nevertheless, the stories always choose “It was done to X” rather than “He did it to X.” An attempt to preserve this powerful feature of Lushootseed storytelling is seen in my rather odd English, “And now, Mink was come upon” (ʔtsəshub, the passive). In the theft passage in which Mink is the agent, we see the verb in the active form: ʔtəs (“happened upon”). (ʔtəs is hard to translate into English anyway, because it is the transitive form of a verb, to arrive, which does not have a transitive form in English.) I used “happen upon” for Mink, since the previous reiterations of ʔtsəshub (walking, traveling) do not seem to express a destination or purpose; I use “come upon” for duk’ibet because with him, you may not know for sure but always suspect predetermination.

Martha continues her narrative about duk’ibet with another passive that I could not bring over into English: ʔʌx’ʔutəbəʔəʔ (“It was thought about to himself”); evidently even when duk’ibet is not acting on others, but only on his own thoughts, the one who tells about it feels pressure to express his actions in the passive. As duk’ibet talks to himself, however, he names his own actions in the active voice. There follow in this passage several sentences with intransitive verbs (“eat” and “pick and choose” are intransitive in this passage), until, at the end, there is something rather unusual, a transitive verb in the active voice telling what duk’ibet did. The verb, k’aʔə’ʔəd (to leave alone, cease to occupy oneself with) is prominent acoustically by occurring as the first important word after a pause and rhetorically as the verb in the cap statement in a circular figure. It is also important for the plot.

The narration of the thefts is full of repetition within episodes and echoes between them. In Mink’s episode the repetition is not figured, or perhaps figured only latently. The most striking feature is that by the end of the passage qadadid (steal from someone) has changed to laʔKwyid (gobble away from someone) as the characterization of his action. duk’ibet’s passage, however, is realized in two circular figures:

I.  
   Aa Maybe he thought
   Ab direct quotation of his words
   core Mink was known (?ashaydub) to him
Aa' He thought "Maybe"

Ab' direct quotation of his words

Il. A He ate  
  core he picked and chose

A' He ate  
  cap he left something alone (kwa?ad)

In his theft episode, Mink does not think, he acts. Everything we need to know about him we can learn from watching. The circular figuration shows duk$ibat, on the contrary, to be full of thought, even intent. He does not heedlessly devour but carefully chooses; the food is not finished, but some is left: the occasion for a reply has been put in place. In the notes to the text of "Mink and Changer" in the 1994 volume, it is suggested that duk$ibat leaves a little food on Mink's mouth, so he will think when he awakens that he has eaten the salmon himself (a traditional motif). If so, he has underestimated Mink; for when Mink wakes up,

Immediately he knew.

"Oh, it was duk$ibat who came upon me.

It was that no-good duk$ibat who came upon me and gobbled away (la\k$yic) my food from me."

Perhaps it is the very food left behind to dupe him that lets Mink know who the thief was. Perhaps Mink, identifying with this other thief as this thief has with him, even sees duk$ibat as stealing the food with his mouth, like an animal. At any rate, the appearance of kwa?ad (to leave alone) in the active voice at the end of duk$ibat's theft episode has already reduced him from supernatural cause of things that happen to people to mere actor in the transitive-active mode of daily life.

III

In this discussion of the theft passages, it is clear that in translating, the task of representing the meaning that resides in the forms of the narration -- complementary morphological forms, rhetorical forms, structural forms -- often works against the task of representing meaning at the level of the individual word. Even when the important individual word can be translated the same way in two importantly different settings, failure to incorporate the settings can reduce the translation to a shadow, as we shall see with

the example of a word we have already noticed, kwa?ad.

After the theft episodes, Mink and duk$ibat walk away toward the next scene in the story. Mink goes along in his typical fashion. What is utterly fascinating is that duk$ibat, having committed a transitive action in the active voice like anyone else, is described as "going along" in almost exactly the same way that is characteristic of Mink:

(about Mink)


14. l\ibat.

15. l\ibat ba? bu\xw\ad.

16. x\u?ole? si\ba? ?al ti?at lit\ilg\it?  
   ?a to x\al\c.

17. ah k\i Xubasi?fa\at,  
   lit?al ti?at ?fa\at.

18. ah k\i si?ita?k\w.

And then Mink walked on.

He was walking along.

He might walk along the shore of the salt water.

Or again he might walk along the heights.

Or he might go down along the water.

(about duk$ibat)

51. huy g\al huy, ba?iba?is\w  ti?at  
   cedit duk$ibat.

52. bai\ili\aw\

53. l\ibat lit\ilg\it? ?a ti?at x\al\c.

54. ?ah Xubasi?fa\at.

55. g\al Xubasi?ka?k\w k\i s\iba?as lit\ilg\it.

And then he walked on, this duk$ibat.

He went on his way.

He was walking along the shore of the salt water.

He walked along the heights.

And again down along the water he might walk, along the shore.

This travel pattern is a major vehicle of evaluation in the story: how people go places is made to tell about them. Here, the travel pattern encodes a revision of duk$ibat's relation to Mink and, if duk$ibat, in being more like Mink, seems less powerful than he usually is, then Mink, too, is less victimlike than duk$ibat's interlocutors usually are. It is in travelling up along the bluffs and looking back at duk$ibat
on the beach that Mink gets the idea for making the little waterfall -- which, of course, comes from the
eights and pours toward the salt water, echoing the diction of the travel pattern. After duk"ibat has
taken a drink and been told what it is he drank (the second time, in fact, in a passive verb of which he
is the experiencer, a reversal of his usual grammatical role: bocucucab ?a ti?i? baččab, "He was told
by Mink"), Martha tells us about his state of mind by changing the travel pattern at the end of the theft
episode:

104. gwal hu?u?atw. He set off again.
105. ba?u?u?ad. Again and again he spat it out.
106. g"al ?iba~. And he walked on.

His, letting the water (piss) alone is expressed in the passive that is conventional for his actions
(Martha says literally: "It was let alone by duk"ibat"), but though the verb is the way it should be, the
actor is not. The reduction of the travel pattern from bluffs and beaches to simply "going along" mirrors
duk"ibat's distress, while the interlaced "let it alone" and "spat it out" show him the opposite of inspired,
as Mink has been, by the landscape he is traveling through. The striking setting of the ironic passive
k"a?ed as the cap of the circular figure at the end of the theft passage result in a palimpsest of
significations so numerous that they could never be collected and stated -- not in an essay, which does
not take upon itself the task of enchanting an audience, and certainly never in a story. In a translation,
as this discussion of k"a?ed set out to show, k"a?ed as an individual word does not signify: unless
the circular figure and the travel pattern in which it is set are also brought over into the new language
with it, k"a?ed is untranslatable.

The travel pattern puts in a final appearance as an ironic echo at the very end of the story in duk"ibat's
words when, resuming his role as spoiler, he puts Mink once and for all in his place:

123. g"el hay, hay g"el cut(s)ebaw And then, and then he was told
?o ti?i? duk"ibat, by duk"ibat,

The first time we hear the word in the story is just after Mink has awakened to find his salmon
gone. After his accusation of duk"ibat there comes this capped circular figure:

A ?ashaydub ?a ti?i? cadi? baččab. He was known to Mink
B huy, xe? ti baxqahig"ed For there was kind of a lot
ti?i? baččab. to Mink.
B' xe? ti b(a)sduk"il. He was kind of paranormal, himself.
A' ?ashaydx W ti?i? Xus?iba~ ?a ti duk"ibat. He knew that duk"ibat was traveling.
CAP ?asdxw -- le?iba~ ti duk"ibat. CAP He had heard about it: duk"ibat was
traveling.

The first line of the figure is a repetition of the core of the circular figure in duk"ibat's theft episode,
which immediately precedes this scene: "Mink was already known to duk"ibat." This line and the
?asduk"il at the core of the figure here begin to suggest that Mink may be able to engage on non-
victim terms with duk"ibat. But when at the end of the story we hear of Mink as ?asduk" and sduk", the
meanings come from the other end of duk"ibat's spectrum, the difference pointed up by the
homophony. To preserve the homophony in English, the translator would have to resort to a
generalizable word like "strange" or "different" and rely totally on the surrounding figures into which the
word is set to convey what it really means.

The same needs to be reiterated about the story as a whole, for it has been considered in this
paper apart from its setting as one of three episodes in a larger narrative, and so deprives its
contextual richness.

IV

The travel pattern puts in a final appearance as an ironic echo at the very end of the story in duk"ibat's
words when, resuming his role as spoiler, he puts Mink once and for all in his place: