

Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	x
<i>List of Plates</i>	xii
<i>Step into the Oral World</i>	1
Writing the Spoken Word	1
A Stepper's Guide	3
Written Views of the Oral World	5
The Oral–Literate Continuum	6
The Structure of the Book	12
PART I The Oral World's a Stage	13
<i>1 The Good Talker</i>	15
A Rare Commodity	16
Music and the Good Talker	22
The Making of an Artist	25
Rewarding the Good Talker	29
The Performer in Society	32
Vessels of Speech	35
<i>2 Thinking on Your Feet</i>	36
Composition in Performance	37
The Structures of Oral Composition	39
Special Language	48
Music and Metre	51
Stability and Creativity in Transmission	58
Thinking on Your Feet...	64
<i>3 Can I Get a Witness?</i>	65
Sensitivity to the Audience	66
Audience Evaluation of the Performance	70

Magnetized Performance	76
Giving Witness	79
PART II Caught in the Web of Words	81
4 <i>Praising</i>	83
Good Relations	84
A Force for Change	87
The Social Responsibility of the Performer	92
Contests of Praise and Blame	95
A Question of Perspective	98
5 <i>Boasting</i>	100
Self-assertion and Self-defence	101
The Hyperbole of Boasting	105
Self-blame	107
Fighting Fire With Fire	108
6 <i>Abusing</i>	112
The Universal Bite of Satire	112
Verbal Abuse as a Poetic Contest	115
How Far Can You Go?	119
Wedding Invectives Past and Present	123
Ritual or Reality?	130
7 <i>Drawing Together the Web</i>	133
Playing with Fire	134
Three Levels of Referring	134
Sounds Familiar?	138
Preserving the Social Equilibrium	140
PART III The Tapestry of Words	141
8 <i>Spinning the Threads</i>	143
Verbal Elaboration	144
Repetition in Oral Performance	147
Spinning a Yarn	158
The Crafting of Songs	162
You Can Say That Again!	165

<i>9 The Web That Binds</i>	167
Proverbs	168
Riddles	172
Tales of Us and Them	180
Tales of Then and Now	184
Looking After Yourself	186
The Many Fibred Cloth	187
The Finished Product	189
 PART IV Stepping Back	 191
<i>10 Repairing the Seams</i>	193
Potential Minefields	193
Coherence	195
Oral and Literate Traditions and the School	202
A Possible Way Forward?	210
 <i>11 Coming to a Close</i>	 215
Interdisciplinary Perspectives	215
An Oral Perspective on the World?	220
 <i>References</i>	 221
<i>Map</i>	232
<i>Index of Places and Speech Communities</i>	233
<i>General Index</i>	235