Notes

1. For detailed descriptions of the transition period, see Van Donge 1995: 3; Chimombo and Chimombo 1996: 25–26; Muluzi et al. 1999: 135–50.

2. Banda's birthday was not recorded, leaving much speculation about his actual age at this time. Popular opinion put him in his late nineties.

3. This organizational structure is similar to those in other African countries. Jane L. Parpart and Kathleen A. Staudt estimated that political parties in as many as forty-one African states have similar women's sections (1986: 9). See also Mba 1982, 1989; Munachonga 1989; Geisler 1995; Adamolekun 1976; Chazan 1989.

4. Cf. Mullings 1976; Robertson and Berger 1986; Bayart 1993.

5. The histories of malipenga and by extension chilimika, which was modeled on malipenga, intersect with World War I and World War II, which explains the militaristic themes characteristic of both genres (Ranger 1975; Kerr and Nambote 1983; Kamlongera 1986; Gilman 2000a.). In my research on chilimika, I was very interested in these connections, and I asked many people in Nkhata Bay about the militarism in both forms. Though historians and some elderly Tonga people make the connection, most in Malawi did not equate the dances with militarism, but rather associated the costumes and movements with ideals of dignity, respectability, and dressing well. Though I do not think that this militarism held any political significance in contemporary Malawi, the costumes and movements of a related dance form, *beni*, by the Yao people in the southern part of Malawi, more clearly resonated with contemporary law enforcement, and this dance was probably used at times to comment on or parody the contemporary political sphere.

6. The Tonga and Tumbuka both dance malipenga, though they are distinguished largely by the tempo of their stepping. The Tonga variant is exaggeratedly slow, and the Tumbuka one is much more fast paced and athletic. A stereotype of the Tonga is that that are obsessively concerned with their appearance and cleanliness, and many Tonga explained that their malipenga is slow so that they can preserve the cleanliness of their all-white uniforms. Many other ethnic groups in the region perform variants of malipenga, often called *mganda* or beni (see Jones 1945; Mitchell 1956a; Lambert 1962–1963; Koma-Koma 1965; Ranger 1975; Argyle 1991, Hill 2000; Nyoni 2000).

7. For examples across the continent, see Mack 2004: 48–49; Askew 2002; Kasule 1998: 45.

8. I should clarify that concerns about Muluzi's faith were relatively minor, and tensions between Christians and Muslims in Malawi have not been very politically significant. In my description of Muluzi's northern campaign launch in Chapter 5, for example, a Christian clergy member leads the prayer without evoking tension from Muluzi.

5

Power and Performance in Political Rallies

My focus now narrows to a single high-profile rally to illustrate how these performance events both serve the interests of political power wielders and yield opportunities for negotiations of power. This event, the launch of Muluzi's campaign for reelection in the northern region, which took place on April 17, 1999 in the city of Mzuzu, was the most elaborate of any campaign rally I attended. It was especially interesting because the focal person was the country's president, and the event took place in the northern region, many of whose residents felt that Muluzi had largely ignored their needs. UDF officials exerted great efforts, including transporting masses of women and established entertainment groups from throughout the region to come to Mzuzu to perform, to ensure that this event was a success. They also distributed enormous amounts of paraphernalia, effectively cloaking the event and much of the city in yellow.

Inasmuch as political dancing constitutes a performance, so too do the rallies of which it is a part. Rallies are complex performance events in that they comprise multiple primary genres—speeches, slogans, prayers, dances, songs, and costumes—each of which serves as a communicative channel on its own. These genres then interact with one another in the constitution of the whole event, in addition to referencing previous enactments intertextually. The women who dance play an especially important role in these communicative processes because through their participation, they embody numerous channels simultaneously: They appear in great numbers, wear yellow, shout slogans, sing, and dance, all of which contributes to the repetition of party symbols and messages. However, the multiplicity of channels and the potential for dialogism also produce the possibility for them to express multiple,

and sometimes conflicting, messages. Examining the ways in which politicians capitalize on these communicative channels and the ways in which audience members can differently interpret what manifests during rallies yields insights into ways that power is articulated and negotiated through performance.

Muluzi's Campaign Launch in the Northern Region

After launching Muluzi's campaign in the southern and central regions, teams of organizers from the UDF came to Mzuzu to work with the district and regional level committees to organize the event in the north. Preparing for the event generated a buzz of activity across the region, and I joined many hundreds of Nkhata Bay UDF supporters who traveled to Mzuzu to participate. By the day preceding the event, President Muluzi gazed down from life-size portraits placed in central locations throughout the city. Bright yellow flags waved from vendors' stalls, and yellow banners draped the outside walls of businesses and other important institutions. UDF supporters—women dressed from head to toe in bright yellow fabric; men and boys wearing yellow T-shirts; and men, women, boys, and girls wearing various combinations of yellow hats, towels, scarves, and buttons—brought to the regional center from all districts in the north poured into the city, strolled the streets, and filled restaurants, hair salons, and rest houses. Yellow vehicles circulated the city carrying loads of yellow-clad supporters who shouted slogans and sang songs that thanked and praised the president and his party. Supporters swarmed the yellow-walled UDF regional office, distributing or receiving party materials, rehearsing, and helping to coordinate the week's events.

Having received permission from regional UDF officials, I joined several thousand people as they made their way to the airport on April 16 to welcome Muluzi, who was scheduled to arrive that afternoon on the presidential jet. A UDF official directed me to stand, video camera ready, alongside reporters very near the red carpet that would lead Muluzi from the airplane into the airport. The exterior walls of the building were lined with life-size portraits of the president and covered with yellow banners and flags. UDF supporters abounded, wearing multiple yellow items while carrying yellow banners and holding portraits of the president high overhead. As the time for the president's arrival neared, hundreds of yellow-clad women clustered in groups lined the tarmac, as shown in Figure 5.1. Each group moved rhythmically in place, singing its own songs, which produced a cacophony of melodies. Muluzi's accomplishments and greatness rang through the air in mosaics of song texts. Behind me pushed hundreds of male party supporters, probably members of the youth wing, all dressed in yellow T-shirts and other party paraphernalia.

Figure 5.1 Women dressed in UDF uniforms line the tarmac at the Mzuzu airport on April 16, 1999, waiting to welcome President Muluzi. A red carpet leads into the airport, and life-size posters of Muluzi decorate its walls. *(From the author's collection.)*

When the presidential jet was sighted in the distant skies, party and government dignitaries, mostly men dressed in black and gray suits, lined the red carpet, preparing to welcome and greet the president; the crowds hushed, allowing the women's singing voices to rise above the din. As their singing reached a fevered pitch, Muluzi emerged from the airplane, wearing a black suit with a small yellow flower peeking from his left jacket pocket and a bright yellow UDF button fastened to his left lapel. Ushered by male UDF officials clad in dark suits and plenty of security staff, he walked along the red carpet, shaking hands with each of the almost exclusively male dignitaries awaiting him, who stood just in front of me. Behind me the hundreds of men pressed forward. As Muluzi neared the airport building, two security officials raised yellow umbrellas to shield him as he disappeared into its entrance (see "President Muluzi's welcome at the Mzuzu airport," http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/eviada/5-E7025).

The next day, yellow-clad crowds made their way to Katoto Freedom Park (see "President Muluzi's campaign launch in the northern region," http://purl.dlib.indiana.edu/iudl/eviada/5-E5559). To one side of the large grassy field, a yellow shelter erected during the preceding days shaded a platform on which were rows of chairs. To the fore was a podium draped in UDF fabric. To either side of the platform, but on the ground, and without shelter, were several more rows of folding chairs. VIP guests—regional party leaders, UDF parliamentary

Figure 5.2 UDF women situated in the center of the entertainment arena spontaneously stood up, burst into song, and danced during a speech by President Muluzi at his northern region campaign launch in Mzuzu on April 17, 1999. *(From the author's collection.)*

candidates, the spouses of prominent UDF politicians, important traditional authorities and village headman, the press, and I—gradually filled these seats. The general audience, consisting of entertainment groups and hoards of people in the same yellow regalia seen for days created a semicircle in front of the seating area, leaving a large open space between them and the VIPs.

As the time for the president's arrival neared, the female master of ceremonies stood up and yelled over the microphone in Chitumbuka, the language of the Tumbuka, majority ethnic group in Mzuzu: "Ladies, ladies, we should be, we should be singing over there. We should sing because the boss is about to arrive. Ladies, ladies, we should sing." A group of about thirty women in head-to-toe yellow positioned themselves in the middle of the empty performance space, where they remained for the duration of the speech making that followed, as shown in Figure 5.2. Standing behind a microphone, they began to sing, only to be interrupted soon after by sirens in the distance, signaling the president's arrival. The TOT Band, a Tanzanian ensemble hired by the president for the campaign period, positioned on a stage behind the general audience, burst into the theme song of the president's campaign. The audience and many already seated in the VIP stand enthusiastically joined in repeating this strident, catchy melody over and over:

President Muluzi
President Muluzi
Palibenso ofananaye
President Muluzi
President Muluzi
President Muluzi
There is no one comparable
President Muluzi

It graced party dignitaries and presidential security as they descended from vehicles, and women ushered them to their reserved seats, the most central and best chair offered to the smiling president, who was wearing a bright orange-yellow shirt.

The MC officially began the rally by initiating a well-known UDF slogan. She shoutied "U," and the crowd, led by the yellow-clad women still seated in the center of the arena, yelled back, "DF." The MC proceeded:

MC:	*UDF*	UDF
CROWD:	*Boma leni leni*	The real government
MC:	*Kumpoto?*	In the north?
CROWD:	*U*	U
MC:	*Pakati?*	In the center?
CROWD:	*D*	D
MC:	*Kumwera?*	In the south?
CROWD:	*F*	F
MC:	*Dziko lonse?*	In the whole country?
CROWD:	*UDF*	UDF

After greeting and paying her respects first to the president and then to all the important guests in order of descending status and prestige, the MC called the Reverend Overton Mzunda to say a prayer because "the president, who is God-fearing," is "heading the party, which also fears God." Following the prayer, the regional chairman took the microphone to invite all UDF parliamentary candidates in the northern region to parade in front of the audience, accompanied by the Phaka Town Band, the same honara group that had performed at Austin Mwenda's rally months before. Members of the group played the accordion, sang, and danced alongside the shadow MPs, who mimicked their dance steps. Once all were seated, the regional chairman stood up to make a short speech. Immediately, the yellow-clad women spontaneously rose and burst into song:

Boma, boma ili
Bomali lachitukuko
Ati amayi?
Amayi kuyenda opanda mantha, ee!
Bomali lachitukuko
Ati abambo?

Abambo kuyenda opanda m'sonkho, ee!
Ati anawa?
Ana akupita kusukulu
Bomali lachitukuko

Government, this government
This government is development conscious.
What about the women?
They move without fear, yes!
This government is development conscious
What about men?
Men move without poll tax, yes!
What about the children?
They attend school [without paying fees]
This government is development conscious

Eventually stopping their singing, the MC thanked the women, asking them to sit down so the parliamentary candidates could proceed with their presentations.

Then speaker after speaker rose to talk, each one alluding to the role the president played in the transition to a multiparty state, emphasizing the weakness of the opposition, pointing to the UDF's accomplishments during its five years of rule, and intermittently shouting slogans. The yellow-clad women in the arena periodically stood up and burst into song, responding to and interrupting speeches. On occasion women seated within the VIP stand—some politicians or political organizers, others wives of politicians, most dressed in full yellow uniform—descended from their VIP seating to join the singing and dancing women.

The last person to speak was Muluzi, who was welcomed by the singing women, who were again interrupted by the Tanzanian TOT Band singing the president's theme song. Muluzi began his address by shouting in his characteristic low, booming voice: "*Zinthu zathani*?" (What have things done?) to which the audience roared, "*Zasintha*!" (They have changed!) He then made some attempts to address the crowd in Chitumbuka, the language most commonly spoken in the north, instigating much ululation and clapping by the women in the arena and the general audience, positioned farther away. After greeting all the honored guests—"the country and UDF's vice president, executive members of the party, members of Parliament and parliamentary candidates, traditional authorities, church officials, and all ladies, gentlemen, boys, and girls present"—he began his speech. He emphasized his accomplishments during his term of office, explained the government's shortfalls, made promises for the future, and criticized his political adversaries. Singing women intermittently interrupted his speech with songs that alternated between praising him and castigating his opponents. He ended by pleading with people to vote for him and the UDF parliamentary candidates in the upcoming elections, warning them that if they did not vote for UDF candidates, they should not be surprised if after elected, he did not visit their areas or see to their development needs. Women accentuated the conclusion of his speech with shrill ululation, clapping, and more singing.

The entertainment portion of the event followed. One after the other, dance groups and a few choirs took turns coming into the performance arena. Most women dancers wore full yellow party uniforms, while most of those men and women performing dances with more specialized costumes incorporated bits of yellow. When the MC called for Rumphi women to dance mbotosha, three women in yellow UDF T-shirts and yellow skirts made from UDF fabric (zitenje) crouched at the microphone while three drummers, all wearing yellow UDF T-shirts, arranged their drums behind the women. One drummer pounded a triplet pattern, which the other drummers quickly took up with interlocking patterns. The three women stood and started the call line "*Rumphi-i-i iyo*!" (Rumphi, there it is!). They stepped in place three times, and then kicked their right feet out in front of them while their hips moved to the triplet patterns of the drums, with occasional pelvic thrusts as accents. Their arms reached high into the air and waved back and forth. As they sang, the rest of the group, about one hundred, emerged in three columns, each of which followed a dancer, moving backward who drew the column into a large concentric circle. As they stepped, kicked, and thrust their hips, they sang the call line repeatedly in unison until they had formed three rings of concentric circles, at which point they took up the rest of the song:

"Rumphi-i-iyo!"
Ona step iyo
Mayi wa ku Rumphi
Awo wona m'nyako

Matipati ndi bona
Ndimphalilani
Wanyina chipani wapinyoliska
Wapinyoliska
UDF ni bona, wanyinu chipani

Rumphi-i-iyo!
Nati nimphalilani

Muluzi ku Malawi wawinengeso
Wawinengeso
Chipani Chambula bona

Chikhalenge cha
Wawinengeso
Muluzi ku Malawi wawinengeso
Tamvotera Muluzi ise-wo!

Rumphi, there it is!
See the steps
Women from Rumphi
Watch your friends

Multiparty government
Let me tell you
Your friends have sold their party
They have sold it
UDF is the government, your friends have sold their party

Rumphi, there it is!
Let me tell you

Muluzi in Malawi will win again
He will win again
A party without government
Will not stand
He will win again
Muluzi in Malawi will win again
We will vote for Muluzi!

As with every other group that performed, halfway through the first song, the VIP stand emptied as men in dark suits, a few women in elaborate versions of the party uniform, and President Muluzi, flanked by male security guards, also in dark suits, descended from their elevated stand, walked across the open space, and approached the dancing group deposit money into waiting hands. The MC thanked them and called the next group, a malipenga group from Rumphi. As each group performed, the politicians paraded down to give money, so much so that bills and envelopes often tumbled out of the receivers' hands, challenging them to maintain their performance while deftly reaching to the ground to gather them up.

As it got later, the MC rushed groups into and out of the arena as quickly as she could, calling out "*Nyengu yamala*," (Time is running out). The entertainment segment was cut short when the rally was called to an end at around five o'clock, and the president and other dignitaries made their way back into their vehicles and departed ceremoniously in a convoy with the presidential siren blaring, women's singing voices still in the background.

Rallies as Complex Genres

Malawians classify events such as Muluzi's launch within the generic category of political rally. Because a rally is a recognizable genre, people expect certain structural and ideological conventions when they attend one (Bakhtin 1981; Bauman 2004: 3; Barber 1999). The ideological conventions for this event included that power was centralized within the party and politicians sponsoring the event, and that the event was explicitly about promoting a party, its members, and its activities. The structural conventions included that it took place in a public arena, followed a formulaic sequence of events, and was multigeneric.

Building on Bakhtin's argument about speech genres and using examples from Northern Ireland, Ray Cashman (2007) argued that by their very nature, certain performance genres are monologic, while others are dialogic. Malawian rallies, such as the one discussed in this chapter, were intended to be monologic: All messages should serve the single goal of promotion by reifying, legitimating, and advertising a party and its leaders in addition to spreading information about the weaknesses of opponents. To some extent, they could be analyzed as scripted performances (Jourde 2005: 430–37). Party officials worked hard to try to ensure that all involved participated in this event in the way they had planned, and that they disseminated only those messages desirable to the party. An AFORD politician interviewed in April 1999 described this process when he explained that composers were told that songs performed at AFORD's rallies should (1) praise the party's leaders, (2) disseminate the party's manifesto and policies, and (3) educate audiences about important health or economic issues. Similarly, at the regular rehearsals for UDF women in Blantyre I attended in 2000, officials from the district office regularly attended to make sure that dancers were fulfilling party directives.

Though organizers of the Muluzi launch event in the north attempted to control the messages disseminated, the possibility for the articulation of multiple concurrent messages during the enactment of individual genres, in addition to the dialogic potential of different genres interacting with each other, allowed for contradictory messages to be disseminated simultaneously, ultimately resulting in semiotic cracks often outside the control and sometimes even awareness of rally organizers (Bakhtin 1981: 276–77, 1986: 62; Bauman 1991). The dialogic interaction of the numerous communicative channels operating within a single complex performance engendered webs of signifiers that could be variously interpreted by participants based on the foci of their attention, their relationship to various aspects of the performance, their past experience, and so on. Furthermore, because many actors were often involved in the production of the primary genres, the locus of control was diffuse, and messages that could be variously interpreted by participants could leak out (cf. Fernandez 1986). The manifestation of power and the types of meanings

various actors attached to what transpired in rallies were therefore not nearly as centralized or monologic as they might have appeared to be.

Pre-Event Hubbub

The UDF leadership went to great efforts to coordinate the prerally buzz through the ubiquitous display of party colors, the singing party supporters paraded about on top of open-bed trucks, and the singing and dancing women rehearsing throughout the city in the time preceding the event. As with the rallies described in Chapter 4, organizers coordinated performers' early arrival at the launch as part of a strategy to attract an audience. The performers themselves were members of the audience: The more performers the organizers invited who attended, the larger their audience would be.

As people arrived, they were immediately enveloped within an escalating emotional atmosphere saturated with multisensory messages about the greatness of the soon-to-arrive politicians. Murray Edelman explained that "political symbols bring out in concentrated form those particular meanings and emotions which the members of a group create and reinforce in each other" (1985 [1964]: 11). The political symbols at this Malawian rally, already concentrated with meanings and emotions, were intertwined with energetic and culturally valued music and dance practices. Bruce Kapferer wrote that music and dance have a central role in Sinhalese rituals because "they mold all subjective experience to their form" (1986: 198). Whether or not they mold *all* subjective experience, there is no doubt that direct experiences of collective music making can impact a person's emotional state. As Steven M. Friedson asserted, the experience of people making music together is "an intense, intersubjective experience" that brings participants "into an existential immediacy unparalleled in quotidian or ritual life" (1996: 7; Turino 2000: 56). All those present, whether performing or observing, participated as the rhythmic vibrations moved from the ground through their bodies, and their sensory receptors became alert and focused on the surrounding heightened atmosphere.

Of those who attended this rally, as with other rallies, some came because they were committed party members. Through their presence, they expressed support, and they came prepared to listen to what the party had to communicate to them. Others came because they were politically undecided and wanted to hear what those sponsoring the event had to offer. Others may have been opposed to the party but were interested in hearing what it had to say. Some came only because they were invited as performers, or they came primarily to be entertained. Others came in the hopes that they would receive material gifts. Regardless of why an individual attended, she or he contributed to the dissemination of messages about the party: A large turnout communicated symbolically to politicians, voters, and opposing parties that the party enjoyed popular support (cf. Kertzer 1988: 119).

The Arrival

Muluzi's arrival in Mzuzu a day before his launch provided the opportunity for two welcomings: one at the airport and the other at the rally. The arrival fanfare was a display of the presiding politicians' legitimacy and status. In the case of Muluzi's arrival by airplane, air travel within the country of Malawi was rare, and the distance between cities was small, making air travel usually unnecessary. His airport arrival was a loud statement proving that he was presidential material, given that he already had access to the presidential jet. At all rallies, politicians' ceremonial arrivals in private vehicles (or airplanes) is also a performance of their status as part of the country's elite, their economically and politically superior position to the people they address in speeches, and, indirectly, articulations that they have adequate resources to provide for their current or prospective constituents.

When Muluzi emerged from his vehicle at the launch into a dancing mass, the women welcoming him sang:

Tialandire, kudzatiwona	We welcome you, you've come to see us
Tialandire	We welcome you
Anduna athu, tialandire	Our leader, we welcome you
Abwera lero	He has come today
Tialandire	We welcome you
Kudzatiwona	To see us
Tialandire	We welcome you

Welcoming guests properly to one's home is very important culturally in Malawi, and failing do so can cause great offense. Through songs, women conformed to these cultural conventions and symbolically enacted their roles as the representative hosts for the region. They welcomed Muluzi warmly on behalf of all.

The relationships between the guest(s) and the dancing women, expressed kinetically and through song texts, were clearly ones in which the guests were in more authoritative and powerful positions and deserving of special attention.[1] For example, being offered a seat in Malawi is a signal of being a welcomed and honored guest. When I was welcomed into people's homes, status differentials were clearly enacted. As a well-educated foreigner, I was automatically granted a certain amount of status. In most cases, the person receiving me greeted me and provided me with seating. The status of the person then determined whether or not he or she joined me. It was fairly common that after I had

been received, the person greeting me would disappear. However, if the person receiving me shared similar status, she or he often sat on a chair with me. In the case of political rallies, women welcomed guests and then left to sit on the ground in the audience space, or at the Mzuzu event in the middle of the performance arena, thus signifying their respect for the guests in addition to their lower status. UDF officials who greeted the guests, by contrast, joined them in the VIP seating, enactments of their similar social positions.

These welcomings also played an important role for politicians faced with the challenge of promoting themselves at these events. The enthusiastic displays could affect the psychological states of both the people already there and those who were arriving. I did not speak with Muluzi about how he felt at this event, though I do have information from other politicians about their experiences at other rallies. In my travels with politicians, the rides were often long; sometimes meals were skipped. When the rallies took place in rural areas, the roads were often bad, making the trek even longer and more tiring. The throng of women swarming around the car, expressing excitement and happiness at our arrival, invigorated and energized us so that by the time we emerged from the car into the singing mass, we too had smiles on our faces; enthusiasm for the event returned. Politicians interviewed expressed that these performances often empowered them to lead the event. Ophten Ebell Sinkhala, an MCP parliamentary candidate in Chitipa in the 1999 election, explained, "Sometimes when you prepare to have a public meeting somewhere, you feel very weak spiritually. You have all the facts with you, but you feel very weak. But after hearing some dancing and some singing, then power comes on you. You speak with power, which you did not expect to have when you started" (Group Interview with MCP Officials, March 29, 1999). The greeting of guests and their ushering to specially arranged and reserved seating contributed to the warm welcome: They received the communication that they were wanted in the area, certainly information important to someone presenting him- or herself as the locale's current or prospective representative.

Spatial Relationships and Orientation

The spatial arrangements at the Mzuzu events as well as at rallies more generally created an immediate visual and physical representation of power and class divisions (cf. Stoeltje and Bauman 1989: 167). As Muluzi descended from the airplane, the relationship between Muluzi, parading on the red carpet, and the rest of those present, standing on the tarmac, articulated gradations of status. Immediately along each side of the carpet were those elites, almost all adult men wearing dark suits, privileged enough to occupy the space closest to that reserved for the president, with whom they were also entitled to physical contact: The president shook each of their hands as he advanced toward the airport building. Immediately behind were people a few rungs down the status ladder, including myself, categorized between the elite and the general population. The male youth were positioned in organized clusters behind the higher-level participants. The women dancers lining the edge of the tarmac were visually prominent, yet also farther away, fulfilling their specialized roles as praise performers.

The organization of space at the launch was similar to that at other rallies I attended, though on a far grander scale. The VIP area at rallies always included some type of seating, though the quality and quantity differed depending on the occasion and location. The highest-status politician, often the one for whom the event was organized, in this case Muluzi, sat in the best seating, positioned in the center and front. To his immediate right and left was lesser-quality seating reserved for his immediate entourage, officials at the next status level. Less comfortable seating and benches were placed beyond and behind (cf. Kertzer 1988: 31). At the Mzuzu event, the attendees with the highest status not only received comfortable seating, but also sat under a canopy. Those of us in the less exalted seating area enjoyed the comfort of chairs but suffered under the beating sun. The thousands of other people present, performers and general audience members, sat on the hard, dusty ground or stood for hours, many of them fanning themselves with pieces of party paraphernalia.

Access to the VIP seating space at rallies was for the most part limited to political leaders and other elites, except when people in the general population escorted politicians to and from seats, greeted them, or delivered messages. The spatial division between politicians and the general population was especially pronounced at the Mzuzu event, where the president and the other highest-ranking elites sat on a stage above ground level and far removed from the audience, whose positioning was controlled by security personnel.

The performance arena was an open though restricted domain that either remained empty or was occupied with individuals or groups who entered to perform. At most rallies, women party members filled this space with their singing and dancing before rallies began. Once a rally officially started, the area usually remained empty except for the designated entertainment segment and when women spontaneously entered it during speeches. In the scripting of the Mzuzu event, officials coordinated women to sit in the middle of the entertainment area. They were the only ones sanctioned to fill this usually empty space in order to fulfill their prearranged roles as exemplary audience members: They were positioned to be the quick respondents to initiations of slogans or comments from the podium. Anyone else attempting to enter this space was quickly ushered off by the many security personnel.

The use of the performance domain was most formalized during the entertainment segment, when the MC invited one performance group after the other into the space for a limited amount of time. The MC called each group

by name, officially giving them access to the space; each group moved in quickly and subsequently acted its praise for the party. When the MC felt that the group had performed enough or that it was not fulfilling its role appropriately, it was told to leave the space through the MC's repetition of the words "Thank you, thank you, thank you," either in English or in Chitumbuka, followed by the immediate introduction of the next group. During the performance segment, politicians and guests of honor accessed the performance space to gift and join dancers. Had they entered it at any other time, it would have caused confusion.

The centralization of power at this and other rallies was contingent on all participants complying with the rigid spatial and sequential structures established and controlled by party organizers. Failure to appear or to leave the performance arena, singing or shouting slogans at inappropriate times, or entering a space to which one was not permitted or at the wrong time could disrupt the rally or subvert the messages intended by organizers. During a speech by Manoah Chirwa, a leader during the independence movement who was forced into exile shortly after independence, a group of young men, probably AFORD supporters, disrupted the event by noisily emerging from the audience space and shouting slogans against the UDF. The response to this disruption was quick. The MC quickly took the microphone from Chirwa and loudly shouted "U!" The audience was supposed to respond "UDF!" but the MC did not get much response. She then shouted, "Sit down everybody. Take your positions. Nothing has happened! Sit down! Nothing is wrong!" A man then led the women located in the performance arena in a song while the security personnel hustled the rabble-rousers away.

The use of space also provided opportunities for dialogic messages. The movement into the entertainment arena by VIP guests to join dancers was a symbolic act because the VIPs transgressed the spatially established identity divisions. While the dancers and the VIPs were dancing together, class divisions were briefly overridden by shared cultural identifiers. When VIP women joined women dancers, they expressed shared gender identity and solidarity. When asked about joining dancers during her rallies, Bertha Masiku, a successful UDF parliamentary candidate in the 2004 elections, explained that it was to "make them feel that I am part of them. Yes, you see. I did not want to just sit on the chair and then look at them. I join them, make them feel that I can dance. I can also dance traditional dances" (personal communication, June 16, 2004).

These displays of gender solidarity communicated complicated messages about class and status. As Laura Fair wrote, differences in dress can be examined for the ways in which they articulate intersections of gender and class (2001: 64–109). On the one hand, they expressed cultural solidarity tied to shared gender identity. On the other hand, conflicting messages emerged through the vast contrasts of the visual images presented by the dancers and the female VIPs as they shared space. The latter were often heavier, a signifier in Malawi of wealth, well-being, and beauty, and had smoother, shinier skin because of greater access to cosmetics and less time spent working under the beating sun. Their dress, hairstyles, and footwear also differed markedly. The uniforms of most dancers tended to be made with minimal amounts of cloth and usually lacked any extra ornamentation. The dancers' footwear was usually cheap, worn-out, and sometimes missing. In contrast, women VIPs, especially at an event like the Mzuzu launch, usually wore elaborate outfits. They were tailored in the same basic clothing style and made out of the same party fabric of the same quality produced by the same cloth manufacturer. However, their outfits were visibly of higher quality and more expensive. They often included a second-layer of fabric, fancier tailoring, and additional adornments, such as ribbons or lace. When the VIPs wore head wraps, they often wore wigs under them, making for more flamboyant and stylish headpieces, and many wore fancy sunglasses, showy costume jewelry, and stylish high-heeled footwear. When elite women entered the dance arena to perform, the two categories of women dancing together communicated to some extent unity based on shared gender: All were women wearing party uniforms and dancing together, yet, at the same time, their actions and contrasting dress pointed to striking differences in economic status.

Opening of the Event

The moderator for the Mzuzu event was a woman MC who ushered speakers on and off the stage and performers in and out of the performance arena. It was also her job to bring the crowd's attention back to the official activity when there were disruptions and to gracefully stop women from dancing or singing when their spontaneous performances was deemed to have gone on long enough. The selection of a woman for this particular event was a calculated demonstration of Muluzi's commitment to women's rights, as was clear from the MC's opening speech:

> The women have sent me, Mr. President, to thank you for the great party platform that you made public at Mount Soche the day before yesterday when you unveiled the manifesto, especially when you said that women should take part in development work, work in the business sector, work in the education sector and other areas, especially in politics. *As you can see for yourself today, I am the Director of Ceremonies.* Secondly, Mr. State President, my friends sent me to thank you because it is only the UDF that has ten women as shadow MPs in the upcoming general elections.

In response, the women in yellow seated on the ground in the performance arena broke out into hand clapping and ululation. The convention during the Banda era was for the MC to be selected from high-ranking members of the League of Malawi Women, suggesting that the selection of a female MC for this event may have had more to do with the traditionalization of the practice than Muluzi's commitment to women's rights. Also note that ten female MPs comprised about 5 percent of the parliamentary seats at the time, not a very significant representation of women, and positions to which the applauding women seated on the ground could never aspire, given the lack of opportunities for poor women to move up politically. The paternalistic relationships so ingrained within the political sphere were also implied in the MC's speech. She thanked the president for all he had done and would do for women, portraying the president as a benefactor empowered to bestow upon women their rights. She thanked the president alone for the party manifesto, certainly the product of a great number of people's efforts, in much the same way as he was panegyrized in song texts.

The prayer that followed the opening of the launch was a standard feature of rallies. The male clergyperson who led the prayer was from a local Christian church; he prayed loudly so all could hear him give credit to God for having safely brought the guests to Mzuzu, communicating that the politicians were watched over, and hence legitimated on a higher cosmological plane.

Symbols

The preponderance of UDF symbols before and during Muluzi's campaign launch in Mzuzu was striking given the regionalism of Malawian party politics. People in the north overwhelmingly supported AFORD, yet one of the biggest cities in the region was covered in UDF yellow. Party colors and symbols disseminated through visual media served the party in several ways. When a party creates and spreads its name and symbols throughout the country, it becomes a real entity, something tangible with which people have regular contact (Kertzer 1988: 6; cf. Blomqvist 1987). The presence of these symbols not only on inanimate objects, but also on bodies, further reifies the party, visually demonstrating that it has real people as members. It is also through the wearing or displaying of party symbols on personal property that people can publicly proclaim allegiance to an organization. All those displaying party symbols contribute to the goals of the party. The frequency with which people see the symbols can increase a party's perceived legitimacy, as it becomes ever present and gives the illusion that it enjoys support (Kertzer 1988: 17). In the following quote from his speech, Muluzi demonstrates his understanding of this process:

> We want to know who belongs to the UDF. We don't just want yellow here and there. If a person is a preacher, he is supposed to move with a Bible in his pocket. Who knows? Maybe he will find himself at a funeral. What would he do then? The name of the father, son, and the holy spirit, yes! [Laughter.] People should know that you are UDF! Look yellow!

There is also a psychological dimension to getting people to display and enact their allegiance to the party. The fusion of some dance forms in contexts throughout Africa with supernatural beliefs and practices has made dance an especially powerful and sometimes dangerous mechanism for political use. Reed, for example, explained that *genu*, masks of the Dan in Côte D'Ivoire, mediate between the spiritual world, where the ancestors reside next to God, and the world of humans. *Ge* dancers are valuable to politicians because they are the "ultimate manifestation of earthly power and authority" (2003: 55). Similarly, in the Mande world, the words of griots and griottes are laden with *nyama*, a powerful force associated with the occult that according to Patrick McNaughton "is a prerequisite to all action and it is emitted as a by-product of every act" (1988: 14–15). Barbara Hoffman explained that the griot's (*jeli*) performance "stimulates the person to whom it is addressed, wakes him/her up, makes him/her vibrate with the energy of *nyama*" (1995: 39). These powerful performers variously invoked the spiritual world to bring power to politicians in these contexts, and they could also use it dangerously against opponents. In Malawi, some dance forms are linked to occult power in similar ways, for example, the masked dance form, *gule wa mkulu*, of the Nyau male secret society of the Chewa people. David Kerr, for example, explained that Banda used gule wa mkulu dancers to intimidate the supporters of the exiled ministers (1998: 37). The dancing by women party members at this rally was not associated with the occult in these ways. It could nevertheless evoke powerful emotional reactions useful for achieving political goals. David Kertzer explained that "by engaging people in a standardized, often emotionally charged, social action, rituals make these symbols salient and promote attachment to them" (1988: 40; cf. Stites 1987: 23). The meanings people attribute to symbols are often influenced by the sentiment they associate with it. For example, if a person experiences a symbol within a context of intense positive emotion, for example, at a rally with its pervasive singing and dancing, they may associate positive attributes with that symbol (Elder and Cobb 1983: 37).

Political leaders at this as at other rallies strategically attempted to give potential supporters a positive embodied experience of their parties in the hopes that it would invoke such feelings of unity, solidarity, and membership, and later translate into votes. Edelman explained that "ritual is motor activity that involves its participants symbolically in a common enterprise, calling attention to their relatedness and joint interests in a compelling way" (1985 [1964]: 16). By being together at a rally, participating in the singing,

dancing, slogan shouting, and wearing of symbols, individuals engaged in motor activity of togetherness, and significantly a togetherness that was specifically identified in relationship to the party. An MCP regional official for the south gave me a schema that described the party's strategy for attracting supporters that relied on providing opportunities for people to experience the party firsthand. In the first step, they provided people with knowledge of the party. Once a person learned about the party, she or he should have direct experience of the party, which could include attending or participating in a rally. They hoped that this experience would influence her or him to bond with the party. The process for bonding in their schema was detailed as "I know, I see, I was helped, I trust." Once an individual bonded with the party, he or she should identify with the party. Once the identification occurred, then the person should register to vote. This bonded, identified, and registered person was then somebody who could potentially convince others to also vote for the party (Dausi, personal communication, May 30, 2000).

The distribution of party paraphernalia at rallies continues to function when people display them outside the context of party events. Even people who do not actively participate in politics are nonetheless involved in politics to the extent that they live in a political environment and monitor political happenings through their interactions with political symbols and activities in their day-to-day lives. Though this involvement may be passive, it "involves actively assessing continuities and changes in one's political environment" (Elder and Cobb 1983: 10). In a country such as Malawi, where most of the population lives outside of urban and administrative centers in remote rural communities, if there were no political symbols paraded about, those not already engaged with the political sphere could easily live their lives with little idea of its existence. The presence of bodies clad in party symbols both in the context of rallies and outside them provided a constant stream of information about the political world that even those with little interest nonetheless perceived. The UDF hoped that by having many more symbols of their party on display, they would communicate to these passive participants that its party dominated.

The association between a party and its visual symbols is especially important in Malawi, where the majority of the population is nonliterate; visual symbols are therefore used to identify political parties on ballots. UDF supporters therefore exhibited the clasped-hands symbol kinetically during slogans and dancing, and when shouting to supporters, and it appeared on all their paraphernalia, offices, and vehicles, thus ensuring that voters would recognize the symbol come voting day.

The efficacy of convincing large numbers of people to display UDF paraphernalia has to be qualified given that Malawians were well aware of parties' strategies. Some remembered that in 1994, the MCP very energetically distributed its party materials, yet its candidates lost the general election. Others interviewed during Muluzi's presidency explained that they knew that many of the people wearing yellow were not actually UDF supporters, but rather were hoping to be compensated for their displays of commitment. When these critics saw people wearing yellow, it detracted from the UDF's intended message because some interpreted the ubiquity of these symbols as a sign of the UDF's greediness and willingness to do anything to appear as though it enjoyed support. Politicians, performers, and many in the general population were well aware that performers clad in yellow may or may not have been members of the party sponsoring the rally.

Furthermore, the dissemination of party symbols embodied the risk that people would use the symbols subversively to communicate alternate and even derisive messages about the party. In *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, Dick Hebdige described how members of a subculture appropriate items associated with one context and place them in a different "symbolic ensemble" that works "to erase and subvert their original straight meanings" (1979: 104). People could appropriate the pieces of a party's paraphernalia and place them within a new "symbolic ensemble" or use them in a manner deemed inappropriate, thereby transforming the messages conveyed. This could happen, for example, if a person stole a car while wearing a UDF T-shirt or tore up the T-shirt and used it to haul trash. Some women, for example, who received political cloth did not display the fabric publicly to express their support, but rather used it as bedsheets, where it was out of view. In doing so, they used the cloth not to convey messages intended by the UDF leadership about the party's popularity or legitimacy, but rather reduced the cloth to a useful object hidden within the private realm.[2]

Slogans

A party's visual symbols at rallies intertwine with slogans, creating overlapping layers of signifiers intended to reinforce a party's messages. Politicians often relied on women party members, usually the most covered in party symbols, to also be the loudest respondents to slogans. At the Mzuzu launch, The MC and other speakers often directed their slogans in the direction of the women who dance, who were seated prominently to the fore of the audience space, or at the Mzuzu launch in the center of the performance arena. Slogans were used to focus attention on the podium, to raise emotional levels, and to further disseminate symbols and messages. At the Mzuzu launch, as the rowdy opposition members were being apprehended, the MC attempted to draw attention back to the podium by loudly initiating the popular UDF slogan.

The most popular party slogans in the 1999 campaign were simple and familiar to most people in the country. The slogan used by the MC to mark

the commencement of the Mzuzu launch was one of the most popular at UDF rallies:

MC:	*U*	U
AUDIENCE:	*DF*	*DF*
MC:	*UDF*	*UDF*
AUDIENCE:	*Boma lenileni*	The real government
MC:	*Kumpoto*	In the north
AUDIENCE:	*U*	U
MC:	*Pakati*	In the center
AUDIENCE:	*D*	D
MC:	*Kumwera*	In the south
AUDIENCE:	*F*	F
MC:	*Dziko lonse*	The whole country
AUDIENCE:	*UDF*	UDF

This slogan presented an image of national unity that differed from the political reality. Through this slogan, the UDF conveyed the message that the party was not the party of the south as was popularly thought, but in fact a national one. The lead line of another very common UDF slogan was "*Zinthu zatani*?" (What have things done?) with the audience answering "*Zasintha*!" (They have changed!) This single phrase encapsulated references to all the bad things of the Banda regime and all the positive accomplishments of the UDF, and implicitly moved to the forefront the leadership role of Muluzi and his party to the exclusion of others that were also involved in bringing about the change.

A common slogan for AFORD during the 1999 election campaign was as follows:

INITIATOR:	*AFORD*
AUDIENCE:	*Moto, Moto*
INITIATOR:	*Chihana*
AUDIENCE:	*Simbi ya moto*
INITIATOR:	*Ukayigwira?*
AUDIENCE:	*Wapsa*
INITIATOR:	*Ukupsa kangati?*
AUDIENCE	*Katatu Psa, psa, psa!*

INITIATOR:	AFORD
AUDIENCE:	Fire, fire
INITIATOR:	Chihana
AUDIENCE:	A hot iron
INITIATOR:	If you touch it?
AUDIENCE:	You will be burned
INITIATOR:	You will burn how many times?
AUDIENCE:	Burn, burn, burn!

This slogan extolled Chakufwa Chihana, claiming that he was so powerful that anyone who challenged him could not succeed.

Slogans also provided a verbal medium for the repetition of visual symbols displayed on party paraphernalia, further reinforcing relationships between the symbol and the party. In the following example from the March 30, 1999, Chinteche MCP rally described in Chapter 4, a party leader initiated a slogan whose express purpose was to remind people that the rooster would be the symbol for MCP candidates on the ballot:

MC:	*Voti*
AUDIENCE:	*Yang'ana pali tambala*
MC:	*Nawu a Chirwa*
AUDIENCE:	*Nawu a Chirwa*
MC:	*Wawusyaso*
AUDIENCE:	*Wawusyaso chipani. Yang'ana pali tambala*

MC:	Vote
AUDIENCE:	Look where there's a black cock
MC:	Even Mr. Chirwa
AUDIENCE:	Even Mr. Chirwa
MC:	He has uplifted
AUDIENCE:	He has uplifted the party. Look where there's a rooster

Speeches

The relationships among the constituent genres within Malawian political rallies highlighted the social differentiation and political stratification of the participants and that of the political and social environment in Malawi more generally. Speeches were the most restrictive genre, and only those of the highest status and who had been explicitly granted access by political power wielders had the opportunity to address the audience using this genre. Relationships between formal and ideological conventions of this genre were especially strong: Individuals in positions of power stood confidently before the audience and made proclamations that affirmed and legitimized their authority (see Bakhtin 1981: 259).

Often five or more individuals made speeches, culminating in that of the highest-level political figure present, in this case, President Muluzi.

Continuing the model established during the Banda years and widespread throughout the world, the sequence was also an enactment of status gradations within the party, with the lowest-status speaker going first, followed by the next higher person, and so on. It provided opportunities for each speaker to repeat the monologic messages most important to the event. As representatives of the local community, the first speakers in the sequence also voiced the needs of the community to the power wielders present. This sequencing thus allowed for some dialogism, as each speaker had the opportunity to comment upon or respond to things said or performed previously.

Though rally organizers attempted to control the tone of the messages, the speech genre allowed for some agency in that speakers could imply criticism of the party or politician(s) using the generic convention of requests. Speakers who represented communities usually appealed to party leaders for material or development needs, such as schools, wells, hospitals, roads, or fertilizer. These requests were sometimes intended to be or interpreted as diverging from the monologic aura of a rally. Participants—politicians and members of the general audience—sometimes considered them to be direct or indirect criticism. An example of overt criticism might be when a speaker reminded a politician that in past rallies, the politician promised to build the community a well, but they still did not have a clean water supply. Indirect criticism might include a speaker requesting a well without referring to past promises. Members of the community may have heard the politician's promises in the past, and so they could interpret the speaker's request for the well as criticism of the politician's lack of attention to the community's needs.

The Mzuzu launch was less like others I observed in that the ruling party exercised greater control over the messages disseminated in the early speeches. Prominent UDF politicians were selected to give these addresses rather than local officials at the lower echelons of the party as was usually the case. These choices helped to ensure that the overall messages would be supportive.

In his speech, Muluzi alluded to his awareness that he did not enjoy widespread support in the region, and this event was intertextually linked with Muluzi's previous launches in the central and southern regions. Many felt that the decision to leave this region for last reflected his general attitude about the north. Muluzi therefore addressed the ongoing criticism that his government had systematically neglected this region and emphasized his plans for the north, even though these criticisms had not been expressed in the early speeches. Muluzi explained, for example, that only the day before, he had launched his manifesto at Mount Soche in Blantyre, in which he had "made 289 pledges—things that we are going to do to develop the country." Among these pledges, he emphasized that he had finally found funding for a project long promised to the region, the completion of the Karonga-Chitipa Road, which would provide direct transportation to the northernmost district: "I am very pleased to inform you today that I have identified the money from the African Development Bank and also from the Republic of China to construct the road. In fact, the Ambassador of China came to see me yesterday at ten o'clock to tell me, 'I know you are going to the north. Tell the people there that we are releasing the money for the construction work.'"

As in many parts of the world, the audience was aware that making promises was a convention of the genre of political speeches; this awareness combined with their past experiences of Malawian politics impacted their interpretations of Muluzi's pledges. Northerners had long been promised the Karonga-Chitipa Road and had long been disappointed by the government's failure to deliver. Though Muluzi was reelected in 1999, by the time of this writing, the Karonga-Chitipa Road had still not been built, and newspaper headlines continued to address northerners' dissatisfaction (e.g., Ashaz 2008).

Women's Spontaneous Singing and Dancing

Party women participated actively throughout the speeches by encouraging orators with their ululating, clapping, groaning, or shouting. The songs that women sang when interrupting speeches often directly related to what was just said, creating layerings of messages, though usually conforming to the overall monologic tone of promotion. For example, soon after the MC initiated the UDF slogan to refocus the rally after the opposition party's disruption, mentioned earlier, the women seated in the middle of the performance arena burst into a song repeating the narrative that the speaker at the time of the commotion, Manoah Chirwa, was making about his experience with repression during the MCP years, thus bringing the attention back to the subject at hand:

MCP MCP	MCP MCP
Aee aee	Aee aee
MCP	MCP
Amara wanthu	It finished people
A Manoah ndi a Chisiza	Mr. Manoah and Mr. Chisiza
MCP	MCP
Amara wanthu	It finished people
MCP	MCP
Amara wanthu	It finished people
A Chiwanga ndi a Gadama	Mr. Chiwanga and Mr. Gadama
Aee aee	Aee aee
MCP	MCP
Amara wanthu	It finished people

At another moment in the Mzuzu rally, during his speech, Aleke Banda warned the audience that if they voted for Chihana, they were "simply throwing your vote into the water." The women responded with a song critical of Chihana.

Patron-client relations were also encoded in intergeneric exchanges. At the Mzuzu rally, when a UDF politician presented in a speech his or her commitment to developing an area or the work he or she had already done, women interrupted with the development song "Boma Lachitukuko," which characterized the government as being "development conscious" and responsible for instituting such things as free primary education. Meanwhile, Muluzi explicitly stated his commitment to develop only those parts of the country where people had voted for him, evidence of the politicization of development: "Any constituency that votes for an opposition member of Parliament will not benefit from any development assistance from my government. Let us make an agreement here! Everybody knows that UDF is winning this year. So those who vote for an opposition party, no development! You are going to eat opposition politics! Let us tell the truth here!" Shortly after, the women responded with a song proclaiming that they would vote for Bakili, affirming that they should vote for him to receive development.

Tizamvote, ah-ah
Tizambota mavoti
Tizamvota Bakili na waphungu anyake
Eee-ya-ee wawela waka
Aa-ee wawela wakana

We will vote, ah-ah
We will cast our votes
We will vote for Bakili and his leaders [parliamentary candidates]
Eee-ya-ee they will have nothing
Aa-ee they will have nothing

As with speeches, some song texts comprised specific requests from politicians, what some politicians I interviewed referred to as "begging songs." These songs were intended to contribute to the promotion of politicians and the party, yet, because members of the audience were familiar with the generic conventions of praise singing, song texts could also work to undermine the goals of political organizers. The audience knew that singers were organized to show up at rallies and sing songs of praise, and they knew that the convention was for singers to fulfill their generic obligations regardless of the actual qualities of a politician. The interpretive frame for many people receiving the messages was therefore that the content of songs could have little to do with the actual strengths or accomplishments of a politician. Furthermore, expressions of praise could be interpreted in multiple, often contradictory, ways, as is discussed in Chapter 6.

Richard Bauman wrote that "the process of entextualization, by bounding off a stretch of discourse from its co-text, endowing it with cohesive formal properties, and (often, but not necessarily) rendering it internally coherent, serves to objectify it as a discrete textual unit that can be referred to, described, named, displayed, cited, and otherwise treated as an object" (2004: 4; Briggs and Bauman 1992: 73; Barber 1999). As an objectified text, it becomes extractable and recontextualizable each time it is performed. In the case of praise singing, the practice long predates the existence of party politics. During the movement for independence, activists in a sense extracted praise singing from other contexts in which it was practiced, recontextualized it, and made it appropriate for the political arena. Recontextualization then occurs each time praise singing is enacted again, and thus, praise singing at a given rally necessarily references praise singing that has occurred in previous contexts at the same time that it has new meanings specific to the performance context, contributing to intertextual layerings, what Turino called the "semantic snowballing effect" (2000: 176). When a song was sung at an AFORD rally that had been sung the day before at a UDF one, the referential meaning of the song had more to do perhaps with relationships between those in the roles of singers and politicians generally than it did with any inherent qualities of the politicians who were glorified. Praise singing in contemporary Malawi also directly referenced Banda's dictatorship. The continued incorporation of this same genre into the current political culture referenced the oppression of the past. At the same time, that songs criticized opponents in other parties reflected the new multiparty system. Contemporary praise singing also referenced the independence movement, and messages about women's political commitment and pride continued to be central ideological associations of the genre.

That the majority of politicians whose praises were being sung were men and that the majority of the people singing the praises were women revealed an obvious gendered relationship. In Malawi, most women took care of their husbands and families by doing such things as managing households, caring for children, and making sure husbands and children were properly dressed, healthy, and well fed. Men in turn were supposed to provide materially for women and children and were not expected necessarily to take care of them emotionally. Or, as one MCP official explained to me, "with due respect without offending you, you remember that God, in his original plan, according to the Holy Bible, created man, but created woman specially so that the man would be happy" (Dausi, personal communication, May 30, 2000). Within this framework, the dancing of women for men served a similar purpose of taking care of their emotional well-being. By singing for their leader,

a man, women helped him feel good about himself and his work. Being made happy in this way, he may do a better job and be more apt to serve the women well. That women also sang for women politicians in the same way does not detract from this argument. The model was based on gender and status differentials. The male politician was in a position to receive emotional bolstering through both his gender and his political position. A woman politician enjoyed similar status through her political position, and some argued that she fulfilled a gendered male role regardless of her biological sex. Former vice president Justin Malewezi expressed this point of view: "It's mostly the position. One might say that in these cases, the women [politicians] are associated males" (personal communication, June 1, 2004).

Entertainment Segment

At the Mzuzu launch, the party organized numerous established groups to perform a wide range of dance forms from the northern region, including malipenga and chiwoda from Nkhata Bay District, chiwenga from Karonga District, vimbuza from Mzimba District, and *ndolo* from Chitipa District. Scheduling performances from across the district contributed to the aura of northern support. The inclusivity of performers also ensured that representatives from throughout the region heard Muluzi speak and returned home with UDF paraphernalia and messages.

The Mzuzu event was unusual because the Tanzanian TOT Band had been hired to promote Muluzi during his 1999 campaign, raising much discussion from Malawians, who questioned his choice of a Tanzanian rather than a Malawian band.[3] The songs they composed became signature songs of the campaign and were performed at UDF functions across the country. The most widespread was "President Muluzi," whose text is given in full above. At the rallies of other UDF candidates, their name was inserted in the song in place of Muluzi's.

One group during the entertainment component comprised seven school-age girls wearing yellow dresses who lined up in front of a similar number of boys wearing black trousers and yellow polo shirts. They stood behind the microphone facing the VIP guests. An adult man accompanied them strumming on an acoustic guitar. The song in English began with the line "We thank you, President Muluzi, for all you have done for us." It then proceeded to liken Muluzi to Jesus Christ:

> The reason for your travel
> Is the care for us
> You sacrifice to care
> For the trouble we should face.
> Never in this world
> Is another like you, king,
> Who teaches us to love
> Love like our Lord Jesus Christ
> For this we say, God bless.

I have no information about the identity of this group; the MC called them simply "children from Mzuzu." It is possible that the group had some connection to a local church, which could have explained the Christian reference. Regardless, the comparison of Muluzi to Jesus Christ probably referenced the frequent likening of Banda to biblical figures. Likening Muluzi to Jesus Christ elevated him to a status above human judgment, and was especially interesting given that Muluzi is Muslim, evidence of the general lack of religious tension in the country. The similarity between the lines "Never in this world / Is another like you" and the TOT Band's song "There Is No One Comparable" illustrated the type of intertextuality that emerged as individuals drew inspiration from existing songs to create ones appropriate for specific events.

During the entertainment segment, women from each district were scheduled to perform chiwoda-like dances as individual groups. All women organized to perform at this event were dressed especially well. The party's effective distribution of its fabric in the weeks prior to the event allowed women the time to tailor new party uniforms. Several weeks before the launch, as I was doing errands in the town of Nkhata Bay, I met people from Nsanje, the village of Mayi Md. Longwe, who had taken the boat all the way to town to pick up their UDF fabric from party officials in preparation for this event, indicating that the party started the process of distributing fabric well in advance. Women from Rumphi District showcased mbotosha, women from Chitipa and from Karonga danced ndolo, and women from Likoma Island on Lake Malawi performed chiwoda, as did women from other parts of the Nkhata Bay District. All these variants shared the combination of stepping and hip and pelvis movements, the circle formation, and the basic drumming styles at the same time that the step patterns and types of hip movements differed enough that they were distinguishable.

In addition, women who worked for the same professional organizations, specifically teachers and others labeled "civil servants," came together to form dance groups for this event, reminiscent of the Banda years. A group of about 150 teachers dressed in UDF skirts (zitenje) and white blouses danced mbotosha, and their song repeated the line *"Tikupempha maloni"* ("We beg you for loans"). A group of about 200 civil servants also wore white blouses with UDF zitenjes. Unlike the teachers, they did not dance a chiwoda-like dance, but they stood in a large mass behind their song leader swaying back and forth and singing diatonic choral harmonies:

Oh-o a Muluzi
Taonga kwiza kwinu
Oh-o a Muluzi
Mufwase kuno
Ku Mzuzu
Oh-o a zinduna
Koleskani ulongozgi
Wa Muluzi
Mzuzu timphalire
Kukawevye chipatala
Tiwonge Muluzi
Chitukuko chakula
Ta na civo tikupempha

Oh-o Mr. Muluzi
We appreciate your coming
Oh-o Mr. Muluzi
Feel at home here
In Mzuzu
Oh-o ministers
Safeguard and hold on to the leadership
Mr. Muluzi
We will tell Mzuzu
There was no hospital
We should thank Mr. Muluzi
There has been a lot of development
We civil [servants] we beg

These women probably held a variety of positions under government ministries, such as health, education, and agriculture. No male civil servants performed in this event within similar occupational groupings. Inviting professional women to dance, don party fabric, and sing in support of the president and his party reduced women once again to the level of party cheerleaders at the expense of their expressing individualized political opinions. It is noteworthy, however, that the song texts of both groups referred to their needs within their professional capacities, hospitals and development in the case of the women who sang this song.

Compensation

Politicians' enactment of their roles as current or potential patrons at this event was especially grand. When the politicians flocked into each dancing throng, they gave money to one representative of the group, often the dance leader, who was expected to divide it fairly among its members. The visual image of Muluzi, flanked by other party power wielders, moving with them in demonstrations of the party's abilities to provide, was a performance not only of the party's generosity, but also of Muluzi's role as a patron to the other politicians, who in turn enacted their commitment to provide for their constituents by giving gifts.

Dialogism

Though politicians made great efforts to ensure that the messages promoting the party were disseminated through all communicative channels operating at this rally, alternate and contradictory messages nevertheless seeped out. Rhetoric about the UDF government's commitment to poverty alleviation abounded during the 1999 campaigns. Praise songs, slogans, and speeches were replete with messages about the president's dedication to and success at poverty alleviation, such as the song thanking Muluzi for free fertilizer, maize, cloth, and "all you have done for us." Muluzi declared in his speech, "We have almost 2.7 billion Malawi kwacha [the local currency] that we are using in poverty eradication. We are no longer calling it poverty alleviation. It's eradication!" The dress worn by many of the women singing the praise songs told another story. Because many women had recently received new fabric, their uniforms were in unusually good shape, as compared to its appearance at other events I attended, where women sometimes wore faded or torn party fabric, or none at all. This newness of women's dress contributed to messages about the party's commitment to helping the country's poor. Participants' knowledge about the economic realities in Malawi and the ways in which politicians organize poor women to dance, however, informed their interpretations: Some people with whom I discussed this issue, for example, felt that women's dress at this event amplified the fact that Muluzi's government spent great deals of money on its campaign (i.e., on party fabric) that it could have used toward redressing poverty.

Participants' corporal displays also interacted to signify economic hierarchies. For example, the differences in quality of seating provided to those at different strata was evident during the performances. For example, some women who danced wearing brand-new bright yellow outfits nevertheless had dirt stains on their backsides from having spent hours sitting on the dusty ground prior to their turn to entertain. The elites who descended from their comfortable seating to briefly join the women did not share this problem.

Furthermore, though the organizers exerted great effort to ensure that all women dancers wore the appropriate yellow costume, they did not pay for such things as tailoring, accessories, skin products, or shoes. The occasional worn garment, the poor tailoring, the deteriorating shoes, and the dried-out skin of many were signifiers of poverty. Despite the similarities in general

style, elite women's outfits interacted dialogically with those worn by women in the poor majority, indicating class hierarchies and restricted access to political power. Whether women intended to express messages about economic inequities, some Malawians with whom I have discussed this issue interpreted the contrasts between the poorer quality of the sartorial presentations of women dancers with the relative lavishness of those worn by elite women as one more indication of the contradictions between Muluzi's claims to be committed to poverty alleviation and the reality, whereby a large percentage of the population remained visibly poor.

The clothing worn by male politicians contributed to the multitextual mix. Muluzi distinguished himself at the Mzuzu event by wearing a bright yellow-orange button-down shirt rather than a suit, which served to reinforce his relationship to the UDF as well as to offset him visually from the other UDF politicians present. The disparities in wealth between the politicians and women performers were expressed through their expensive dress, amply nourished bodies, moisturized skin, and coiffed hair. The dialogic relationship between the divergent dress styles and quality ultimately referenced the widespread corruption, whereby many politicians during Muluzi's presidency benefited personally from donor aid, rather than using it to alleviate the poverty of the general population (see Chinsinga 2001).

Notes

1. Kelly Askew made a similar point in her analysis of the lively welcome that greeted Tanzanian president Ali Hassan Mwinyi's arrival at the Tanga airport on September 13, 1993 (2002: 4–5).

2. In my attempts to collect pieces of Banda fabric, I was told that after the transition, most women used the cloth as bedsheets. The bedroom was a safe place for these symbols because women could benefit from the functional use of the fabric they had been required to purchase while not risking being criticized for continuing to display the symbols.

3. According to Laura Edmondson, the TOT Band was founded by Tanzania's ruling party, the Chama Cha Mapinduzi, in the 1990s as part of its preparation for the country's first multiparty elections in 1995 (2007: 3; see also Askew 2002: 247). Unfortunately, I do not have any information about why this band supported Muluzi in his reelection bid; I assume that it had something to do with relationships between the two ruling parties at the time.

6

Why Do Women Dance?

Justin Malewezi served as Malawi's vice president from 1994 to 2004 under Bakili Muluzi and then ran for president as an independent candidate in 2004. I was introduced to him by a friend who had worked on his 2004 campaign, and he agreed to a hurried interview on June 1, 2004, shortly after he lost the election. I asked him what contribution he thought women dancers made politically. He answered, "In my own experience, . . . in UDF, in PPM [People's Progressive Movement], and as an independent candidate, we found that women were extremely important for a successful rally. At meetings where there were no women singing and dancing, the meetings were rather—what shall I say—inactive, and you tended to go straight into the speech," which he indicated was less than desirable. The AFORD parliamentarian who requested that he remain anonymous similarly explained that some people come to rallies primarily to be entertained by the dancers; once they are there, he could disseminate his messages (personal communication, May 6, 2000). The MCP regional chairman for the north, Wyson Mkotchi, said:

> And you may notice, though it is not on a wide scale, soon after the dances, some people tend to walk away. They have seen what they wanted to see. As for political speeches, [they think,] "Oh, enough of this! We're here to see the dances and then we'll go." So usually, to bring more people to your meetings, you are going to drum and perform some dances. And then when you are halfway through with the dances, then you can stop and put in a political speech. (Personal communication, March 29, 1999)