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Based on a corpus of Texan oral narratives collected by the author over the past fifteen years, this study presents an analysis of the literary qualities or orally performed verbal art, focusing on the significance of its social context. Although the tales included are all from Texas, they are representative of oral storytelling traditions in other parts of the United States, including tall tales, hunting stories, local character anecdotes, accounts of practical jokes, and so on. They are also highly entertaining in their own right. Professor Bauman s main emphasis is on the act of storytelling, not just the text. His central analytical concern is to demonstrate the interrelationships that exist between the events recounted in the narratives (narrated events), the narrative texts, and the situations in which the narratives are told (narrative events). He identifies these interrelationships by combining a close formal analysis of the texts with an ethnographic examination of the way in which their telling is accomplished, paying particular attention to the links between form and function. He also illuminates other more general concerns in the study of oral narrative, such as stability and variation in the oral text, the problem of genre, and the rhetorical efficacy of literary forms. As an important contribution to the theoretical and practical literary analysis of orally performed narratives, the book will appeal to students and teachers of folklore, sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, and literary theory.