

Editor's Column

With this issue of *Oral Tradition* we offer our readership a salmagundi of essays on an international variety of fields. John McDowell begins the discussion with his remarks on immanence as a characteristic and crucial feature of traditional discourse, drawing particularly from his fieldwork in southern Native American verbal art. Jarold Ramsey also focuses on Native American oral tradition, forming a small cluster on that important and extremely diverse area; in addition, he probes the effect of gender on narrative voice in a tale from the Clackamas Chinook.

From Sibundoy and Chinook we take a long step back and eastward to the subject of E. A. Mackay's contribution on ancient Greece, which tackles a fascinating set of correspondences between the representational codes of vase-painting and Homeric epic. Betsy Bowden then moves forward in time to the English Middle Ages and Renaissance with her recovery of performance context for a neglected collection of proverbs (with a Chaucerian connection) composed by William Painter; the collection is published for the first time here. Robin Waugh's interest, still against the background of the Middle Ages, is in another aspect of "orality," namely the somatic emphasis in Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse narrative on the various functions of the mouth and the breath.

From this point Susan Niditch takes up the "song," considering the evidence in the Hebrew Bible for a linguistic register or specialized idiom ascribable to its origin in oral tradition, and then going on to discuss the implications of that expressive medium. Werner Kelber's subject is far the broadest and most ambitious of the issue: nothing less than a historical sketch of how concepts of language, memory, and sense perception modulated from earliest times through the medieval period. With Jesse Byock's contextual reading of Stephen Mitchell's recent book, *Heroic Sagas and Ballads*, the conversation comes temporarily to a close.

The next issue of *Oral Tradition* (11, i) will present a unique glimpse of epics along the famous "Silk Roads," an immense stretch of territories and peoples across northeast Europe and vast parts of central Asia. We are particularly proud to be presenting this group of essays, many of them translated specifically for inclusion in this collection, on areas that are little known to mainstream Western scholarship, largely because of the language barriers. With this issue readers may expect to hear, perhaps for the first time, of Mongolian, Tibetan, Chinese, Indian, Palawan, Caucasian, and Khalkan epics as well as of the Finnish *Kalevala*, more familiar to those of us laboring in the Eurocentric vineyard.

Also in the future are special issues on Native American and on South Asian women's traditions, as well as the more customary miscellaneous issues that, like the present one, attempt to make connections and portray contrasts by illustrating the international ubiquitousness and diversity of oral traditions.

As always, we welcome your manuscripts, responses, and suggestions.

John Miles Foley, Editor