ORAL TRADITION

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Oral Tradition seeks to provide a comparative and interdisciplinary focus for studies in oral literature and related fields by publishing research and scholarship on the creation, transmission, and interpretation of all forms of oral traditional expression. As well as essays treating certifiably oral traditions, *OT* presents investigations of the relationships between oral and written traditions, as well as brief accounts of important fieldwork, a Symposium section (in which scholars may reply at some length to prior essays), review articles, occasional transcriptions and translations of oral texts, a digest of work in progress, and a regular column for notices of conferences and other matters of interest. In addition, occasional issues will include an ongoing annotated bibliography of relevant research and the annual Albert Lord and Milman Parry Lectures on Oral Tradition. *OT* welcomes contributions on all oral literatures, on all literatures directly influenced by oral traditions, and on non-literary oral traditions. Submissions must follow the list-of-reference format (style sheet available on request) and must be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope for return or for mailing of proofs; all quotations of primary materials must be made in the original language(s) with following English translations. Authors should submit two copies of all manuscripts. Most contributions will be reviewed by at least one specialist reader and one member of the editorial board before a final decision is reached. Review essays, announcements, and contributions to the Symposium section will be evaluated by the editor in consultation with the board.

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Editor's Column

With this seventeenth volume *Oral Tradition* offers what has become its stock-in-trade: a cornucopia of articles on the natural diversity of the world's oral traditions and related forms. Indeed, the miscellaneous character of this issue, and of many of our collections over the past decade and one-half, is straightforwardly mimetic of the field itself. Almost weekly one hears of a recently discovered tradition, or a new genre within a well-known oral poetry, or a freshly encountered interface between orality and literacy. If the study of oral traditions initially made its way by attempting to distinguish itself from "literature" and to define itself quite separately as an implicitly homogeneous type of verbal art, so now all indicators seem to be pointing in the other direction. Oral traditions dwarf their textual counterparts in size and variety, and many of the most intriguing challenges arise from the intersection of orality (in all its guises), literacy (in its own manysidedness), and even the ever more important electronic media. To put it simply, such miscellanies only become more appropriate vehicles for the presentation of research and scholarship as time goes on and our perspectives deepen.

Here the reader will find essays on Native American, modern Italian, Irish, and Indian verbal arts, as well as the New Testament and uses of orality in the Romantic period and the late twentieth century. Four of these articles constitute the first half of Guest Editor Mark Amodio's collection on "Oral Tradition and Contemporary Critical Theory." The next issue, 17/2, will follow suit by presenting the second half of that cluster and by focusing on orality and hypertextuality, Romanian epic, *Beowulf*, Chaucer, the concept of "auralture" in medieval Spanish, and other subjects.

Looking further ahead, we plan a special event for *Oral Tradition* 18/1, wherein more than three dozen specialists in a wide variety of disciplines and from various parts of the world undertake brief, 500-word answers to two questions: (1) What is oral tradition in your area? and (2) What are the most interesting challenges now emerging within your specialty? The responses will come from six of seven continents and treat more than thirty different oral traditions. If the early submissions are any measure, this collective (and, yes, extremely miscellaneous) issue may prove a benchmark in assessing the current vitality, diversity, and complexity of this fascinating field of inquiry.

Finally, we urge our readers to visit our new web site at www.oraltradition.org, where we are beginning the construction of an e-archive for oral tradition. At present, visitors can listen to South Slavic epic

and charms, as well as watch a videotaped performance of slam poetry; searchable bibliographies are also available there, and much more will be mounted in the months to come. We welcome your suggestions and contributions to this facility, which is intended, like the journal *Oral Tradition*, as a resource that fosters cross-disciplinary exchange.

John Miles Foley, Editor

Homespun Homerics in the Kingdom of Aeolus:
Ninu Murina in Stromboli

LindaAnn Loschiavo

Homer immortalized Sicily's Lipari Islands when he opened his epic poem *The Odyssey* in the kingdom of the wind god Aeolus. The adventures of Odysseus were kept alive by oral tradition; reciting verse before an audience, the singer would be cued by the meter, end rhymes, and stock epithets. Composed during an era when most people could not read, Homer's lengthy epics were an educational tool as well as a means of expression.

No regulated teaching system was in place for most of the nineteenth century on the island of Stromboli, a period when the population was still increasing in both settlements. In 1864, for instance, Stromboli village had 1,473 residents and Ginostra's community numbered 355, or 1,828 total; by 1891, that combined figure had increased to almost 2,100 inhabitants. Yet the Strombolarians did not have a school until c. 1890-91, nor the Ginostreses until 1901. In the 1800s, most of the locals were illiterate—which is not to say that they could not appreciate the spoken word and poetry.

The existing literature of the Aeolian Islands had been for centuries mainly oral, consisting of epics, legends, folklore, tales, proverbs, *stornelli* (satirical songs), and song lyrics. No doubt the tardiness of the Italian government in organizing a system of public education throughout these islands allowed the oral tradition to endure there longer, as well as a greater emphasis on transmitted memory of significant local events from one generation to the next.

Current affairs and personal experience fueled the poetry of Antonio Lo Schiavo[1] [1827-1917], one of the few literate adults on Stromboli. Born and bred in the hamlet of Ginostra, Lo Schiavo took it upon himself to teach the Ginostrese children to read and write. He himself had been taught by his

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[1] "Lo Schiavo" (or "the slave") is the Sicilian form of this name; "Loschiavo" represents an Americanization.

maternal uncle Giovanni Pereira [1793-1873], who had studied for the priesthood. It is estimated that Lo Schiavo gave lessons from the mid-1850s into the 1890s.
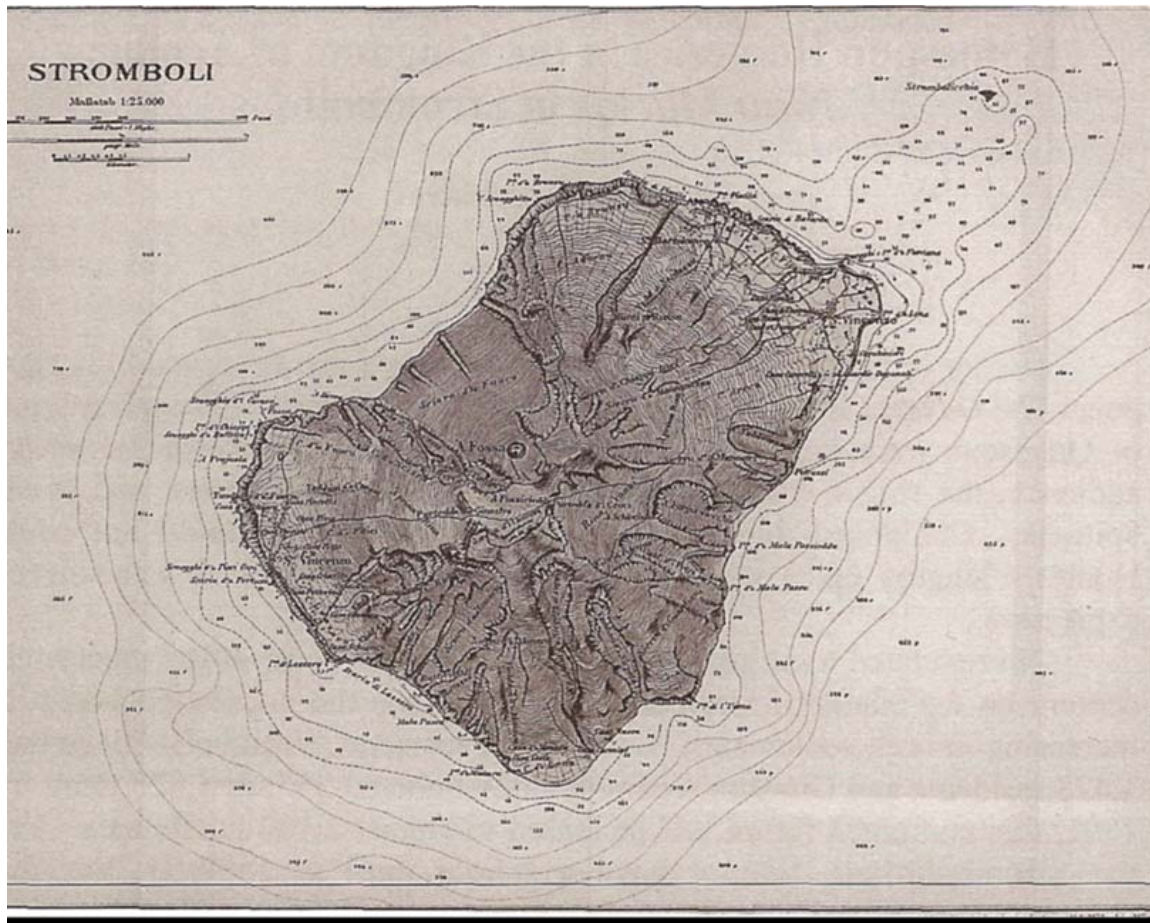
Stromboli (Ed. Höläl Geographical Institute, Vienna, 1890-92)

No educational budget, let alone textbooks, could be available to a volunteer instructor such as Lo Schiavo.   Yet this resourceful man discovered the key to tempting illiterate youngsters to return for lessons: morality disguised as gossip. By creating colorful, irreverent stanzas based on the neighborhood contretemps and scandals, the poet attracted his pupils, who gathered around him after finishing their daily outdoor chores. Since his poetry was recited and memorized, before long the verses were known by several generations. *Beato lui*![2]   Giuseppe Cincotta, a grandson of Antonio Lo Schiavo, wrote down his most popular poem, "La Canzune i

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[2] "He's blessed!"

Ninu Murina" ("The Ballad of Tony the Eel"),[3] and others as he remembered them, and taught these to his daughter, Maria Cincotta Salvi.

Stromboli, an active volcano, has been inspiring poetry and fear for centuries. A black, smoke-spewing cone that rises from the Mediterranean, it is the most striking and savage of the seven Aeolian Islands and serves as a natural lighthouse. As Homer's Odysseus is said to have done, sailors set their vessel's course by heading toward the red glow of lava from this spouting, pluming fire fountain. Daily seismic activity has created an environment that is full of hazards and obstacles for the residents, who grew up seeking solutions. More emigrate nowadays than stay. From a high of several hundred, Ginostra's native population has shrunk to twenty or thirty people and a few donkeys. But prior to this mass emigration, these islanders had become self-reliant by internalizing the question: *how do I surmount this*? Antonio Lo Schiavo saw injustices and surmounted them; seeing things go wrong and observing misdeeds within his community, he found a voice out of the turmoil.
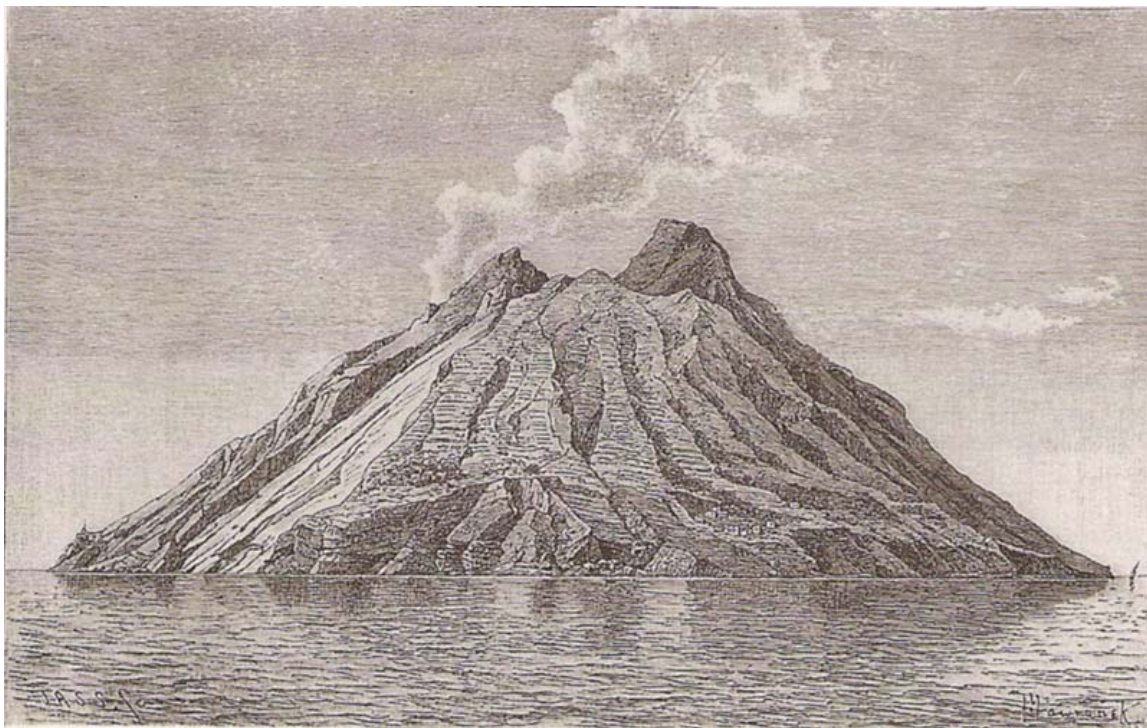
Stromboli with the hamlet of Ginostra (southern aspect)

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[3] Ninu Murina, or "Tony the Eel," is a neighborhood nickname. His legal name is Antonio Cincotta.

Injustice and villainy are the themes of "La Canzune i Ninu Murina." The plot centers on Ninu Murina, an old man with an invalid wife, who hires a younger maid,[4] Annunziata; Nuzza, as she is called, becomes Ninu's lover, making him sign over his property. The gull-and-knave plot was a familiar feature of Roman comedy; the roles of a *servus callidus* (cunning slave) and a *senex amator* (elderly lover) were stock characters in comedies by Plautus
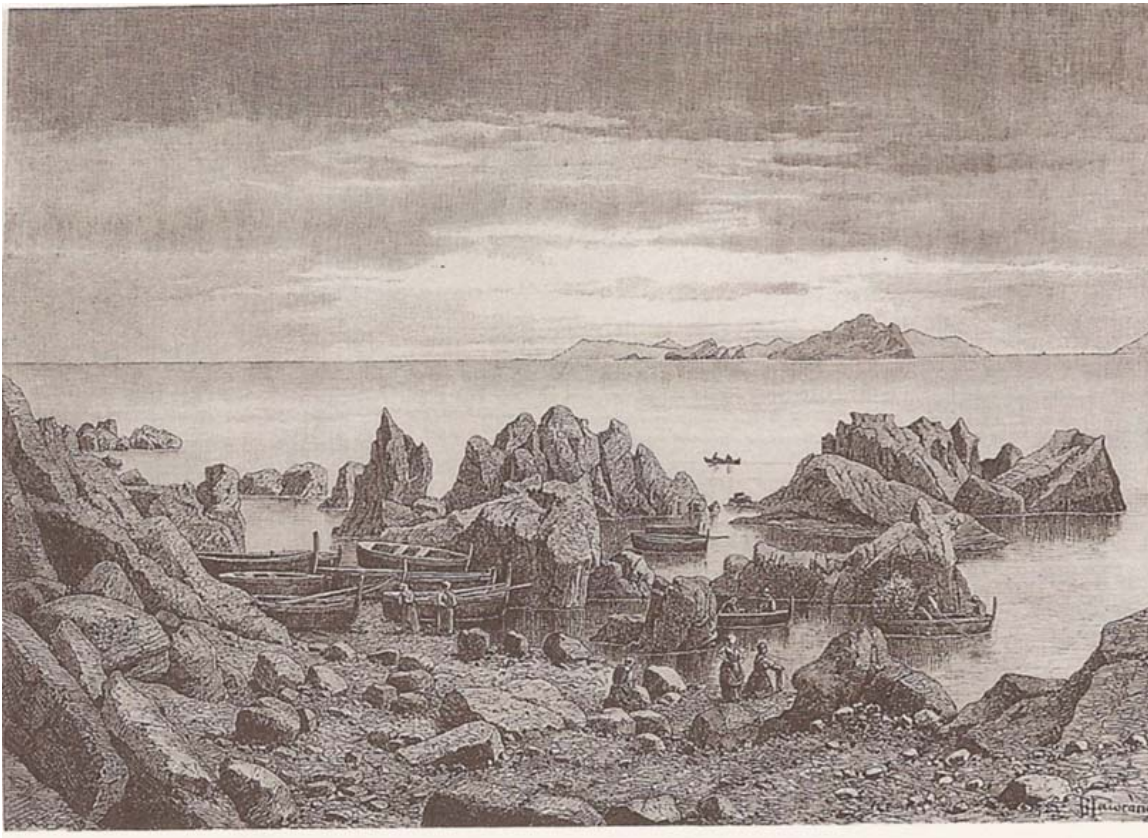
U Purtusu, the harbor on Stromboli that leads to the village of Ginostra. The *Guinness Book of World Records* calls this the world's smallest harbor.

and others.   The situation of a servant (slave) who is smarter than the employer (master) has a long history, and is still a staple of   novels, musicals, movies, and sitcoms (e.g., *Jeeves*, *Hazel*, *Mary Poppins*, *Benson*, *Mr. Belvedere*, and *The Nanny*). Was Lo Schiavo familiar with these Roman models? Was he aware of Ben Jonson's *Volpone* or Elizabethan satires that

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[4] Ninu Murina was born in 1821. Nuzza, born in the 1840s, was 20 years his junior, more or less.

adapted the Roman practice of presenting a virtuous narrator who would confront adversaries as a means of moral instruction, a narrator appalled at the evil he sees and forced by his conscience to skewer those who are harming society?

Whether or not he was familiar with previous authors, Lo Schiavo is not afraid to skewer wrongdoers and, in doing so, he brings new elements to the gull-and-knave plot in "Ninu Murina." For one, the poem is based on a local scandal in the poet's family (c. 1885-86). Names are not disguised; his listeners knew the characters as their neighbors. As with *The Odyssey*'s audience, the locals would have known the poem's ending; thus the entertainment therein did not arise from suspense. How the tale was told was paramount; it had to be clever, captivating.

In the telling, the poem comes alive because the omniscient narrator's role is minimized. As in a play, Lo Schiavo creates dialogue for his five characters: Ninu Murina, Nuzza, her brother-in-law Vanni Cincotta, her sister Genia, and the Liparese lawyer Favaluoru. As though gathered

The simple parish church where Ninu Murina was baptized, married, and mourned.
The round "beehive" is a villager's oven.

together, each narrator tells part of the story (in the same order as the original events), each one picking up where the other left off. This creates a rich opportunity for an engaging oral performance. As each of the personae carries the narrative forward and reveals himself or herself, a switch in voices would heighten the effect of his or her involvement in the swindle. Also, it is more shocking when Nuzza speaks boldly about being in bed with Ninu Murina, or when Ninu tells Genia that she is going to hell, than if a third party were to relate it. While an audience is being moved along with the characters towards an understanding of what occurred, each listener becomes an insider, privy to the varied viewpoints and sins. Such mischief and misrule must have intrigued Lo Schiavo's Ginostrese pupils.

Some repetition is evident throughout the poem. Was it deliberate and used to mimic speech, which is naturally redundant, or even used pedagogically to get a point across? Or is it there because this poem was imperfectly recalled?   For example, not all of Genia's lines rhyme [note verses 35-36, 43-44], indicating perhaps that some original words were lost or that the poet wished to show Genia's coarseness by her lack of finesse with a couplet. In contrast, Ninu's scorn and self-disgust climax in a stanza whose rhythm is intensified by an orchestration of repeated short-*i* endings: *cuntenti, parenti, quanti, santi* [lines 63-66].

The essential need to produce children is also an implicit message in the poem. "For Sicilians one could really say the family is all," observes Gaetano Cipolla (1996:15), adding, "it is a means of defense against outsiders." This poem illustrates the consequences of living in a household that lacks a family's unified force. Since Ninu Murina and his wife are childless, there are no daughters to tend to an ailing parent, no sons to protect them against intruders, and no direct heirs. In folklore, when a wife is childless, her barrenness typically defines her as evil and elicits no sympathy from the narrator; similarly, when a husband is impotent, his lack of virility often defines him as weak and unworthy. An outsider, the unmarried Nuzza enters the Murina household without fearing that she will be bullied by the mistress, or molested and impregnated by the master. Though (presumably) a virgin and sexually inexperienced, this younger woman seems confident of her power both to hook him and to avoid the consequences.

In this aspect of its telling, the poem comes closest to *The Odyssey* and pornography—in its seduction, if not its graphic explicitness.   As Odysseus struggles to return to wife and family, he encounters temptations that represent an all-consuming alternative fantasy; he could, for instance, succumb to Circe's lethal sexual magic, join the Lotus-Eaters, or surrender to the Sirens' song—all attractions that promise excessive pleasure and

forgetfulness (thus irresponsibility). This is also what Nuzza represents: the eternally nubile playmate, ever ready for sex, never unwilling or displeased, unencumbered with consequences such as inconvenient pregnancies or messy marital vows. In pornography, sex is easy, ecstatic, constant, failure-proof, convenient. This is the fantasy that porn celebrates: an environment with no pain, no regrets, no consequences. No wonder Ninu puts up very little resistance to Nuzza's bedside manner even when she raises her price by demanding the total betrayal of his family.

There is a curious absence of honor or traditional family values. Although honor had been the principal normative system in the Mezzogiorno, governing marriage, kinship, transactions of property, and social status, ethical behavior (or even a concern for one's reputation) is nowhere evident in the poem. At marriage, Sicilian women were to be untouched, even by implication; within marriage, infidelity or even a whisper of it invoked severe sanctions. However, Nuzza seems more like a golddigger vacationing at a Club Med, where *carpe diem* freedom is encouraged, or a Circe who turns men into lustful beasts, than a Sicilian virgin bred on Mediterranean values. It is also strange that Nuzza's relatives do not voice fears about her safety, reputation, or the impropriety of her having sex with a married man. Vanni Cincotta, Nuzza's status-conscious brother-in-law, expresses a desire only to maintain his standing in the neighborhood, not wanting anyone to look down on the family because one of their relatives is a maid. Genia Cincotta expresses a desire to help her sister Nuzza seduce a man in order to acquire wealth and property; her suspicions are directed at Ninu only insofar as he promises to make a new will but does not act on it.

This poem is comical—and comedies are distinguished by happy endings, matrimony, and the dispensing of justice and blessings. Despite that tradition, and despite Nuzza's financial success, there is no lightheartedness in the conclusion. By refusing to give his audience any hint of a "happily ever after," Lo Schiavo communicates that character is destiny and evil-doing is not rewarded. No one, in fact, is spared the poet's grim jesting in this ribald cautionary tale that illustrates how (and why) bad things will happen to bad people. Each character's wrong-doing and dishonor are exposed. Married Ninu, who lusts after extramarital sex with a young maid, is no less guilty than Nuzza, who lusts after money and will sell herself for it, and the greedy threesome who have assisted her. As in *Volpone*, where the villain is open about his motives and proud of his skills as a manipulator, the two female characters are bold, sly, and aggressive; Genia, an instigator, can outperform her husband in cunning, and Nuzza, a hussy, is not shy about the unsavory dynamics she sets in motion. The relationship between Nuzza

and Ninu is sordid, depicted as nothing more than a series of inappropriate, wrongful exchanges: she should not be giving him sex, and he should not be giving her his property. In real life, Nuzza's relationship did not end at the altar but with Ninu Murina's death at age 64 on November 10, 1885. Nevertheless, Lo Schiavo stretches reality to include the afterlife, thereby attaching a moral: an affair with a Jezebel can damn you to hell. Perhaps he was familiar with *La Divina Commedia*, for, in an inversion of the scene where the angelic Beatrice stretches out her hand to Dante from *Paradiso*, Ninu Murina offers his message from hell, promising to wait for Nuzza and her scheming brother-in-law.

For all the good Antonio Lo Schiavo may have accomplished as a literacy volunteer, the winds of change arrived in 1901 when a one-room schoolhouse opened on Ginostra. The Italian government sent a teacher, a young siren from Montealbano, who lured sunburnt hands used to fishing or farming to venture indoors, into the five-fingered partnership of penmanship practice. The children forgot about Lo Schiavo, by then 74 years old, widowed, and lonely. Evidently hurt that no one visited, he wrote "Lamentation," his only non-humorous poem:

Quannu yo fashia lu galant' uomu,
Ogn' unu shircava di piscarami cu l' amu.
Ora chi su cadutu e fazzu pena,
Nuddu sapi chiù cumi mi chiamu.

I was worth knowing as a young gentleman;
Everybody wanted to be my friend and reel me in.
Now that I'm old, lacking glamor, acclaim,
There's no one who seems to remember my name.

A devastating volcanic eruption in 1930, coupled with transportation advancements and the deprivations of the Second World War, motivated the locals to leave the wind god behind. By 1950, the majority of islanders had boarded a ship to seek Penelope-like wives for themselves in Australia or America. The one-room school in Ginostra, no longer needed by youngsters, has become a chic bed-and-breakfast called *Vecchia Scuola* (Old School). Nonetheless, there are a few lessons left. That Homeric hunger lingers there, among the urges a wind will spare, and a true poet will respond to that telltale taste of fire in the throat.

Cu voli puisia vegna in Sicilia.[5]

New York City

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Cipolla 1996   Gaetano Cipolla. *What Makes a Sicilian?* Ottawa, Canada: Legas.

Appendix 1

La Canzuna i Ninu Murina[6]   "The Ballad of Tony the Eel"
by Antonio Lo Schiavo   translation by LindaAnn Loschiavo

Ninu Murina vulia la criata   Tony "the Eel" wanted a serving girl hired.
Ca la mugghieri sua la via ammalata.   With his invalid wife, help was required.
Ci truvò na bona picciotta   Then he found himself a hearty young miss,
Ch' era cugnata di Vanni Cincotta.   One of Johnny Cincotta's relatives.

Vanni Cincotta ci dissi: "Cugnata,   Johnny Cincotta told her: "Sister-in-law,

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[5] "If you want poetry, come to Sicily." This quote, which represents a shortened version of "Cu voli puisia vegna in Sicilia, ca teni la bannera de vittoria" ("Whoever wants poetry, let him come to Sicily, which holds the banner of victory"), originates with the Sicilian Stesichorus of Imera (c. sixth century B.C.E.), who is regarded by the ancients as one of the first poets to treat mythological and epic tales in a lyrical way. This phrase sometimes occurs in casual Sicilian conversation.

[6] The text, written in an old Sicilian dialect, was kindly provided by Antonio Lo Schiavo's great-granddaughter, Maria Cincotta Salvi. The true events of this story took place on Stromboli c. 1885. Antonio Cincotta, nicknamed Ninu Murina, was born in Ginostra (on Stromboli) on March 10, 1821; he died there on November 10, 1885. Ninu's sickly wife was Annunziata (Lazzaro) Cincotta; she died in 1885, about five or six months before her unfaithful husband's death.

Nun vuogghio che faciti la criata.

If you were his maid, it would stick in my craw.

Ca chisti su genti di menza midudda—

This guy's a half-wit; there are more brains in cement.

Manciamunielu ca un filu i rapuddi."

You're better off home, without a cent, but content."

Ma Genia la pinsò diversamente:

But Genia's brainstorm was the crowning touch:

"Ca faci la criata un fa nenti.
Finu a tantu chi n'accalumamu
Lu pruppu e buonu e nu spidizzamu!"

"Becoming his maid, it wouldn't take much.
If you get close while you're in his employ,
You *will* pick on bones that you might enjoy."

A cussi Nuzza ci ni iù a criata

That's how Nuzza[7] wound up as a housemaid—indeed

Era patruna cumu maritata.

Meeting her employer's needs as if they were married.

'nta tabari, vasatieddi e buoni tratti
Ci fici fari lu primu cuntrattu.

All this flirting and kissing made its impact;
This affectionate act was part of the pact.

Nun passo mancu cacchi misi,
Nuzza ci arripizzava la camisa:

Not even one single month had gone by
When Nuzza took control through the clothes of this guy!

"Zu Ninu, la camisa v' aripiezzu

"Your shirt, Uncle Tony, I will be mending—

Ma vu minnati addassari nautru piezzu."

As long as I see that your Will you'll be tending."

"Yo nautru piezzu nun tu puozzu dari?

"How can I will you my wealth from here on?

Ca a li niputi mia chi ciaiu lassari?

What will I leave to my heirs when I'm gone?

Ca chisti cuosi nun la fattu nuddu!
E inutili chi mi sturdi la midudda!"

No one's ever done anything so inane!
It's useless to nag, so quit being a pain!"

"Ma chi niputi e chi iti pinsannu?

"What are you thinking? And where is your family?

Ca 'nta la robba vosra fannu dannu!

Can't you see they just damage your property?

E fannu tutti cuosi pi dispiettu

Jealous, they do what is thoroughly spiteful—

E yo vi siervu fina ta lu liettu!"

Yet I take care of you in bed each nightfall."

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7 Nuzza is believed to have been about the same age as Genia; thus, although she was in her 40s, she was 20 or so years younger than her employer.

Nun sulu Nuzza pallava cumora.
Ma Genia la stissa puru ancora.

Li viaggieddi ci li fascia spissu
P' aripassari a du piezzu di fissa.

Genia ogni vota c' anchianava
Na cosa duci a vota ci purtava.

"Zu Ninu, quantu vi vuogghiu bene
Abasta chi ci dassati tutti cuosi a Nuzza."

"Yo tutti cuosi a Nuzza ci vurria dassari

Ma bisogna chi si chiama lu nutaru.
Yo vuogghiu fari li carti a tinuri.

Yo vaiu o'nfiernu e vuatri puri!"

Genia ci lu dissi a lu maritu:

"Senti ca fattu lu partitu
Ci voli lu nutaru supra luocu.
Scrivici prestu e mannalu a chiamare."

Vanni Cincotta sintiennu lu fattu
Anchianò a ghiurisusa cumu un cani mattu.

Facia finta ca ia a travagghiari
Pinsannu pi la via cumu avia a fari.

"Stativi ciuttu senza diri nenti
Ca lu ponnu sapiri li parenti."

Finalmente lu cunsigghiu terminaru
Asta ca fina a Lipari u purtaru
E lu purtaru da ni Favaluoru
All' usanza di li mariuoli.

Favoluoru ci missi a pinsari:
"Chisti cuntrattu favusu annu a fari.

Not only Nuzza spoke in her own defense.
Genia, too, expressed much the same
    sentiments.

Her sister dropped by often, visiting them,
To take turns at making a fool of him.

Each time Genia went to pay them a call,
She carried sweets and cakes inside her
    shawl.

"Uncle Tony, I'm treating you awfully good.
You should leave it all to Nuzza,
    understood?"

"I'd want to leave everything to Nuzza
    solely
But for this you would need to call a notary.
I want to do this right, according to the
    rules.
I'm headed to Hell anyway—and you are,
    too!"

To her husband Johnny, Genia made this
    clear:
"To find out if these promises are sincere,
Let's bring a notary here and get this done.
Write to him now and tell him we want to
    come."

Johnny Cincotta considered this plan
And, like a mad dog, rushed to see the old
    man.
Pretending to work there, like a logician,
He made plans how to become heir-
    conditioned.

"Keep quiet now and don't say one word.
We can't let his kin know what has
    occurred."

At last Johnny's scheming provided the key:
An excuse to bring Tony to Lipari.
They brought him to Favaluoru in a bit.
Their demeanor was not unlike sly pirates.

Favoluoru was thinking to himself:
"Here's the most dishonest contract ever
    written.

Ca yo lu viu ca sunnu malandrini.

It's clear these swindlers knew how to stack
     the cards;

Annu la vista di li saracini."

With these saracens, I'd better be on guard."

Tirminati i fari lu cuntrattu

When the new Will had been completed—
     well, then!

Nuzza a Scimuna arridia sula sula

Nuzza, Simon's daughter,[8] smiled again and
     again

E ci facia a carizza sutta a ula.

And caressed Tony "the Eel" under his chin.

Iddu ci dissi:
"Nuzza cumi si cuntenti.
Mi facisti niari a li parenti.

He made a statement:
"Nuzza, you look so content.
I've denied my heirs my holdings without
     restraint.

Mi facisti niari a tutti quanti

I've relinquished everything without a
     complaint.

Niavu a Cristu cu tutti li santi!"

I've even betrayed Christ and all of heaven's
     saints!"

"Zu Ninu! Sti paruoli u lati a diri
U mi lati a dari stu dispiaciri!
Ca yo ta li vrazza vuosri m' arripuosu

"Uncle Tony! Your words are insulting me
And you shouldn't make me feel so badly!
You know I will be in bed, at your side,
     lying—

Ora chi mi lasciastivu tutti cuosi."

Especially now that you have left me
     everything."

Setting: Ninu Murina's house, where his relatives have gathered to divide his earthly belongings.

Nuzza a Scimuna assumò un cuntrattu,
Vanni Cincotta assumo un tistamientu
Ci visturu cunfunnuti ta li carti
E ristaru cumu i sierpi 'nto parmientu!

Nuzza showed up equipped with a contract;
Vanni Cincotta showed the Will was intact.
These legalities—slippery, serpentine—
Were elusive as snakes on glass inclines.

Ninu died in 1885. Here is Ninu's Letter from Hell:

Ninu Murina a Nuzza ci a scrivutu

Though dead, Tony "the Eel" to Nuzza had
     written

E ci mannò na lisra assicurata.
Diciennu: "Cara Nuzza, su pintutu

A letter sent by registered mail wherein
He said: "Dear Nuzza, I am sorry and blue

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[8] Despite the specific reference to Nuzza as "a daughter of Simon," it is believed that Lo Schiavo changed the maid's name because birth and death certificates have not been located.

Diddi vasatieddi chi taiu datu!	For all those stolen kisses I've given you,
Pidda robba ammucciuni chi ai vulutu	For property I gave you, and too willing!
Mi truovu all' infernu vivu e dispiratu.	As if alive in Hell, I can't help despairing!
Nun ti dicu chiu nenti e ti salutu	Sending you my regards, I won't say anymore.
Cà t'aspiettu a tia e a tu cugnatu!"	I'll await your arrival with your brother-in-law."

Appendix 2

La Canzone di Nino Murina (Italian translation by LindaAnn Loschiavo)

Nino Murina desiderava in casa
una serva, ché sua moglie era malata.
Così ha trovato una brava ragazzotta
ch'era cognata di Vanni Cincotta.

Vanni Cincotta le disse: "Cognata,
non voglio che la serva voi facciate.
Quelle son persone mezze matte
accontentiamoci di un po' di pane e latte."

Ma Genia la pensò diversamente:
"Se va a far la serva non fa niente,
vedrai che dopo un po' ci adatteremo,
il polpo è buono e ce lo gusteremo."

Così a far la serva Nuccia è andata
ma come una padrona era trattata.
Tra paroline dolci, bei modi e qualche abbraccio
lo convinse a stipulare già un contratto.

Non era passato più che qualche mese
e Nuccia gli cuciva le camicie:
"Don Nino, io le camicie ve le cucio a dovere,
ma voi mi dovete lasciare un altro podere."

"Ancora terra non te la posso dare,
se no ai miei nipoti che devo lasciare?
'ste cose nessuno l'ha mai fatto,
inutile che mi fai diventar matto."

"Ma che nipoti, che andate pensando?

Che con la vostra roba fanno danno.
E poi loro fanno tutto per dispetto
mentre io vi servo fin nel letto."

Non solo Nuccia così parlava,
ma anche Genia lo stesso diceva;
i viaggetti li faceva spesso,
per prendere in giro quel povero fesso.

Ogni volta che Genia lì andava,
qualche cosa di dolce gli portava.
"Don Nino, io vi voglio tanto bene,
purché lasciate a mia sorella tutti i beni."

"Io tutto a lei vorrei lasciare,
ma il notaio bisogna chiamare;
tutto in regola io voglio fare,
io vado in inferno ma voi pure."

Genia allora disse a suo marito:
"Senti che dice quel partito
ci vuole il notaio qui per firmare
scrivigli presto e mandalo a chiamare."

Vanni Cincotta sentendo questo fatto
andava in giro come un cane matto;
fingeva di andare a lavorare
pensando invece a come poteva fare.

"Statevi zitto, senza dire niente
che lo possono sapere i suoi parenti."

Finalmente il consiglio fu terminato
e infine a Lipari lui fu portato.
Lo portarono dal Favaluoro
così come fa ogni mariuolo.

Favaluoro si mise a pensare:
"Questi contratti falsi voglion fare;
io li vedo che sono malandrini
hanno lo sguardo dei saracini."

Dopo aver firmato quel contratto,
Nuccia rideva dalla contentezza
mentre gli faceva una carezza.

Lui le disse: "Nuccia, come sei contenta.

Mi hai fatto rinnegare i miei parenti
mi hai fatto rinnegare tutti quanti
ho rinnegato Cristo e tutti i santi."

"Questo non lo dovete proprio dire
non mi dovete dar sto dispiacere
che io tra le vostre braccia mi riposo
ora che mi lasciaste tutte le vostre cose."

Dopo la morte arrivano i parenti.

Nuccia tirò fuori il suo contratto.
Vanni Cincotta prese un testamento.
Si videro confusi tra le carte
e rimasero come serpi in un palmento.

Nino Murina, condannato all'inferno, scrive una lettera a Nuccia.

Nino Murina a Nuccia scrisse
e le mandò una lettera espresso
dicendo: "Cara Nuccia, son pentito
di tutti quei bacetti che t'ho dato
di quei beni che di nascosto hai voluto
mi trovo in inferno e disperato.
Non ti dico più niente e ti saluto
e ti aspetto a te e a tuo cognato."

The Poetics of Arapaho Storytelling:
From Salvage to Performance

Andrew Cowell

Introduction: Textualization, Analysis, and Performance

One of the most widely discussed issues for students of Native American anthropology, literature, linguistics, and ethnopoetics has been the question of how to represent verbal narratives on the page. In the past generation, Dell Hymes and Dennis Tedlock led the way in demonstrating the poetic elements of these narratives, and "poetic" as opposed to prose presentations are now the norm—though this is certainly not uncontested (see Mattina 1987). Among poetic "intersemiotic translations" (Fine 1984: 96), two broad approaches developed, each linked to one of the two figures above. Hymes' textualizations were often retranscriptions of narratives in now-vanished languages, taken down by the original collector in prose form. These textualizations tended to place great emphasis on the spatial or visual organization of the "text" (Fine 1984:3) on the page. This organization attempted to reveal the underlying formal and narrative patterns that organized the texts. As such, Hymes' textualizations focused primarily on the grammatical, semantic, and syntactical (the broadly linguistic) aspects of the texts. Lines and verses are typically determined by lexical markers and other features of semantic content. On the other hand, paralinguistic aspects dominated Tedlock's decisions on textualization. Elements such as pause, tonal contour, and other paralinguistic features stand out in his textualizations of Zuni and Maya verbal performances. Simply put, Hymes focused on "text," Tedlock on "texture," to use Alan Dundes' terms (1964).[1]

It is important to recognize, however, that textualizations are not simply intersemiotic translations, but also methods of analysis of verbal

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[1] See Fine 1984:61 and Wiget 1987:312 as well.

narratives: they are interpretive acts.[2] This fact underlies the recent trend within Native American ethnopoetics towards recognizing the complementarity of these two approaches, as well as others.[3] Scholars have begun to recognize that textualizations "on the page," when thought of as specific approaches to a narrative or as analytical tools, can take many different forms, depending on the goals and interests of the particular study. While we may argue over what final form a textualization should take for publication, especially in the commercial press, no one would contest that both linguistic and paralinguistic features (as well as kinesic and others) are present in verbal narratives, and that all contribute to the narratives' overall organization and reception, for both native listeners and non-native students. In this paper, I would like to apply the two methods mentioned above not as competing forms of textualization, but rather as complementary approaches to analyzing one Native American (Arapaho) text. I will at least initially be much less interested in how one might eventually textualize the narrative (in English translation) than in attempting to analyze the key features of the narrative itself in its original Arapaho.

     We will find many surprising differences between the linguistic and paralinguistic organization of the narrative—certainly more so than in many recent studies. Of course, there will also be many areas of overlapping organization. The first goal of this paper is to elucidate as generally as possible the poetics of Arapaho verbal narrative, and to examine the complex interactions between linguistic and paralinguistic features as they contribute to overall structure. I will use first a linguistic approach, oriented towards semantics and syntax, followed by a paralinguistic approach directed towards specifically vocal features. The validity of this method is, incidentally, enhanced by the fact that I originally had access to the narrative only in a textual transcription. I was thus forced to approach it from this standpoint and was able to do so "uncontaminated" by the knowledge of how the narrative was actually performed. I then gained access to an audiotape recording several months later, after the first analysis was completed.

     The result of these approaches are the analytical textualizations that appear on the pages of this journal. But the result will also be the revelation of a complex series of rhythms that structure the narrative. Among these will be a quite regular "formal" rhythm, whose basis is primarily linguistic—the regular recurrence of certain markers of line, verse, and so

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[2] See Titon 1995:436-38 on the changing status of "text" and "textualization" in folklore studies.

[3] See Krupat 1987:119-20, 124; and Sherzer 1992.

forth. There are also, broadly speaking, rhythms of "narration" and "moral lesson." These rhythms are produced by features in the narrative that serve to highlight key moments of excitement or tension in the action, or underline the moral implications. As such, these rhythms are much more irregular than the formal rhythm, and, interestingly, they turn out to be much more a function of the paralinguistic features of the narrative than of the linguistic features. Thus there is a general tendency for poetically marked linguistic features to ally with formal rhythms that recur independently of narrative content, while marked paralinguistic features (of volume or speed of delivery, for instance) ally with rhythms related to content. And finally, the places where linguistic and paralinguistic features tend to overlap most strongly are the places where the linguistic features are most strongly content-oriented rather than formal.

Armed with this appreciation of a near-full performance of an Arapaho narrative (following Bauman 1977 and Hymes 1981 on "performance"), I will then focus on a second topic: the relation of Arapaho narratives recorded in the early twentieth century to the narrative examined here and its poetics. The reliability and utility of such older transcribed narratives has been a central question for Native American ethnopoetics in recent times.[4] I will argue that the earlier Arapaho texts share the same basic oral poetics as my "performance narrative" of the 1980s, but that the poetics found in those earlier texts is "relictual." Clearly, we have no access to the paralinguistic features of the older narratives, so in that sense they are obviously relictual and incomplete. What is missing from the earlier texts is not just the voice, but everything that is most closely allied to the voice in Arapaho poetics. In particular, the specifically linguistic features most closely tied to narrative and moral rhythm in the 1980s text are precisely those features missing from the earlier transcribed texts. It is primarily the purely formal rhythmic features that remain.

Based on this discovery and on other evidence, I will suggest that the older texts do not represent fully emergent performances.[5] More importantly, what is lost is the guiding "texture"—linguistic and paralinguistic—of the performance, which is oriented towards meaning and interpretation. I will also suggest that across the continuum of traditional oral poetics certain narrative features are typical only of full performance, while others may be typical or indicative of minimal or perfunctory performance—plot summary, essentially. Thus the "poetics" one discovers

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[4] See especially Hymes 1992 and Clements 1996.

[5] See Hymes 1981, Fine 1984:61, and Clements 1996 on this term.

in many transcriptions may be so incomplete as to be illusory: a rigidly formal and regular relictual organization may come to dominate in such records. This knowledge will allow us to return, finally, to the twin questions of textualization and performance, which are crucially related.

Part One: A Linguistic Analysis

Background on the narrative

Few Arapaho verbal performances—other than songs—have been recorded and published in the original language. I was thus interested to learn that during the 1980s, a member of the tribe had video- and audio-taped his father recounting traditional Arapaho stories in what approached a full performance setting. In addition, he has since published edited versions of these stories, which include a diplomatic transcription, an edited version with interlinear English translation, and a free English translation. I was able to obtain a copy of these texts and to begin a study of the poetics of Arapaho storytelling. Such performances occur very rarely now, and the storytelling tradition (in Arapaho as opposed to English) is moribund.

    The story studied here was told by Paul Moss, who lived on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming, in the settlement of Ethete. It was recorded by Alonzo Moss, Sr., who has collaborated on this paper. Alonzo Moss is exceptional among native speakers of Arapaho in that he reads and writes the language well; his edition largely conforms to current linguistic standards.[6] He is the head of the Northern Arapaho Language and Culture Commission and is recognized throughout the tribe for his traditional knowledge. For the most part, I will rely on his translations in this paper, though I have slightly altered them in order to stay closer to the literal Arapaho in several cases.

    The texts were performed either for high school students in Alonzo Moss' Arapaho language classes at the Wyoming Indian High School on the reservation, or else in the tribal offices in Ethete. Neither situation represents a fully developed performance context, though the high school situation approaches it more closely and is the setting for the text I will discuss here. In that case, however, the students were not sufficiently fluent in Arapaho to fully understand Paul Moss' narration (though his son and others present were). Thus the setting, the audience, and the fact that he was

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[6] Moss 1993. Available from: Nii´ei hii koyiho´/Cultural Resources Center, Wyoming Indian Elementary School, Ethete, WY 82520.

being recorded, as well as his awareness that he was under time constraints due to school schedules and tape lengths, may all have mitigated against a fully emergent performance. On the other hand, the narrations were performed for an Arapaho-only audience, and they were performed for a traditional reason—as moral lessons to the students. Thus the aberrations that can be produced by narration for outside linguists or anthropologists were not present.[7] As a final point of information, Alonzo Moss mentioned that two other unrelated members of the tribe, who along with Paul Moss were among the most knowledgeable traditional Arapaho—and according to Alonzo Moss the only other persons able to tell these stories fully "in the old way"—remarked after hearing or seeing some of the tapes that they were glad to see these stories told the "right way" again, as they were when they were boys listening to the old men tell them.

I will concentrate on one story, entitled "Nii´ehiiho´"[8] or "Eagles." It tells the tale of a young man who wants to go and take young eagles from the nest in order to use their feathers. He has already done this four times, however (four is the culturally ordained sacred number for the Arapaho), and is warned by the elders not to do so again. He goes anyway, but suffers an accident. He must be rescued by the eagles themselves and then be carried home by an elk in exchange for a promise to the eagles not to engage in such behavior again. As a condition of the rescue, the elk also imposes upon the young man a prohibition against eating a certain part of the carcass of any game. His wife, however, mistakenly puts that part of the carcass into a stew, and he eats it. He realizes that now his mistake is beyond saving, and waits for the eagles, who arrive in the form of thunder clouds and take him away to the sky, where he becomes one with the thunder and lightning. The general moral is that one must respect the elders and their wisdom and not venture beyond the proper bounds of conduct.

The recorded version lasts almost exactly twenty minutes. I do not offer the full text in this article, though it can be obtained from the tribe (see note 6). It was noted down in prose form by Alonzo Moss, and the translation has many elements of so-called "Red English." However, it can certainly be divided into more precise poetic units. This discovery is hardly new, of course, and here I wish simply to note some of the precise ways in which these structures are marked in Arapaho. I follow Dell Hymes

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[7] Alonzo Moss states that his father did not expect the tapes to be transcribed and had to be convinced by Alonzo to permit this. He did, however, expect them to be preserved.

[8] Although Arapaho is often written with accent marks on vowels, Moss omits them from his edition, and thus I will do so here.

(1981:9-10, 144) in stressing that these texts are obviously all the product of a single individual, and thus cannot be taken as fully representative of "the" poetics of Arapaho. They are "a" poetics, of one Arapaho man. Nevertheless, in its general features, this narrative seems to follow a general Arapaho pattern. The previously cited remarks of the other (unrelated) storytellers support this assumption. I have since had the opportunity to hear stories told by several individuals on the Wind River Reservation, and their stories largely share the oral poetics exhibited by Paul Moss.

Formal linguistic markers

        Arapaho has several key marker words that serve to delineate poetic verses. The most important of these is the word "wohei," which might be translated as "OK," "well now," "right," "yes." The word is used in everyday speech as well as in storytelling, but in both cases often serves a primarily phatic function. In the 534 lines of the narrative as I initially divided it based on linguistic criteria, the word occurs in sixty-eight lines, and only rarely with more than ten lines between occurrences. As a further indicator of its function, it always occurs at the beginning of an English sentence in Alonzo Moss' translation, with just one exception. In fact, at certain points towards the beginning and end of the narrative, it occurs regularly every three to four lines, giving a distinctive rhythm of "plunging into" the body of the narrative and then "tying up" its final events. This is the linguistic feature least allied to narrative or moral content. Two quite similar terms are the verbal prefixes "hee′ih-" (special narrative past tense) and "ne′-" or "he′ne′-" (meaning "then" or "next"). Both are used, but not commonly, in everyday speech; in the narrative, however, they occur with frequencies and distribution roughly similar to "wohei."

Linguistic markers with both formal and content-centered roles

        Other linguistic features are more closely tied to narrative content. One example is "niine′eeno′ [+ noun]" and its reflexes,[9] which Alonzo Moss translates as "here they are, these [+ noun]." The word serves pragmatically both to highlight the main topic of the narration, and perhaps most

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        [9] For the purposes of discussion, I will use the single form "niine′eeno′" in the analysis; however, poetry transcriptions will retain this word's variations.

commonly to introduce new topics.[10] Note its use many times initially, then its absence in the central part of the narrative as no new referents are introduced, then its heavy use again towards the end as Paul Moss emphasizes the moral message of the narrative. At this latter point it serves not to introduce new topics, but rather to highlight the significance of the topics. The clustering of these particular types of poetic features towards the beginning and end of narratives, with their diminution towards the middle, is a feature that has been noted previously.[11]

A similar term, "niiyou," meaning "here it is" or "here they are," is used in everyday speech when giving or showing something to someone. It serves a similar function as the preceding, though with a slighter emphasis.[12] Its weighted occurrence in the narrative following line 256 corresponds to the climax of the action, when the protagonist accidentally eats the forbidden cut of meat. Here it seems to replace "niine′eeno′." It highlights and gives immediacy to nouns central to the ongoing action.

Mr. Moss shows great flexibility in using lexically near-equivalent forms to add shades of meaning and emphasis. The pair "niine′eeno′" and "niiyou" is one example. Arapaho, like all Algonquian languages, typically combines many of the features of an English sentence into a single word made up of one or more roots and numerous lexical and grammatical affixes. But one can also separate off many of these affixes and, with the addition of appropriate endings, use them as independent words. The Arapaho adverbs are the most common example. The ending "-ííhi′" is added to the normally affixed form to produce an independent word. In this narrative, Mr. Moss performs the same shift not only on adverbs, but also on affixes indicating tense and mode of the verb (by adding an adjectival ending). Thus he alternates between "hee′ih-" and "hee′ihiini" for primarily emphatic purposes, and likewise between the prefixed form "beet-" ("to desire to do" something) and the independent form "beetoh′uni." A related example is the complex series of forms "nee′-," "heenee′-," "nee′ees-," and "heenee′ees-,"

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[10] See ll. 11, 12, 18, 32, 36, 40, 73, 78, 80, 91, 197, 198, 224, 254, 309, 319, 345, 350, 351, and 400. Despite the fact that the complete text is not available to the reader of this article for reference, I give line numbers so that an appreciation can be had not only of the relative frequency of occurrence of various forms, but also of the ways in which they may be clustered or have a tendency to occur towards the beginning or end of the narrative. A copy of the narrative with lines and line numbers delineated is available from the author.

[11] See Kroeber 1997:5 and Ramsey 1997:30.

[12] See ll. 11, 63, 75, 124, 159, 173, 210, 256, 270, 271, 276, 286, 297, 298, 331, 353, 375, 398, 411, 413, 432, and 454.

which can all be translated as "thus," "then," or "in this way" when prefixed to a verb. They thus serve the same function as the forms "niine´eeno´" and "niiyou" do with nouns, adding more or less pragmatic weight to each verb.

These features are augmented by combination and repetition. Especially in the case of verbs, different verbal prefixes may be used in consecutive lines with the same verb stem so that grammatical heightening via the various prefixes is augmented by a repetitive, lexical heightening of the verb. The overall effect of these procedures is to produce a strongly "paradigmatic" feel, centering attention on each noun or verb in varying degrees and lessening the "syntagmatic" temporal movement of the narrative. This seems to be the single most important difference between Paul Moss' performance of this narrative and Arapaho narratives recorded by Dorsey, Kroeber, Michelson, Salzmann, and others earlier in the century.[13]

This effect is augmented by the relatively small vocabulary used in any Arapaho narrative. This is not to say that the vocabulary of the language as a whole is small or limited, but simply that within a given single narrative, the vocabulary often seems purposefully restrained, with much repetition of the same root word for the same general concept on multiple occasions, without an effort at inventive lexical variation. There seems to be little effort to substitute synonyms or create metaphors, thus increasing the "incantatory" nature of the narrative as compared to a linear narrative flow.[14] Indeed, where such substitution does occur, it tends to strongly mark the importance of the item, as when Paul Moss gives two different terms for "eagle" in quick succession in the beginning of the narrative.

As an example of the interaction of these features, I will cite the opening nineteen lines of the narrative. All of the forms discussed in the previous paragraphs are italicized. I have added in brackets translations of words that are implied but not present in the original Arapaho. I leave "wohei" untranslated. Roman numerals indicate verses. The character "3" is the standard Arapaho symbol for the sound [θ], as in the initial sound in "three."

    I.   *wohei* ceese´
           teecxo´ heenoo 3owo3nenitee nih´*eeneis*iine´etiit

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[13] See Dorsey and Kroeber 1997 [1903], Kroeber 1916, and Salzmann 1956a and 1956b. Michelson's materials are in the Smithsonian's Anthropological Archives mss. 2708.

[14] See Swann and Krupat 1987:252 on the "beat" and "formal sense of expectation" created by limited vocabulary.

heetee tiiwooheineiniihiiniini
*nee´eenees*iini hiine´etii3i´
II. hinono´eino´ heenoo 3oowo´
niitowo´einiihi´
*nehe´nih´iis*iini
III. kookon hooweeneiteneihiinoo heeyouhuu
nih´iinestobee´i3i´
niine´eeno´ beh´eihoho´
niiyou nuhu´
IV. *wohei niine´eeno´* nuhu´ nii´ehiiho´
nii´ehiiho´ hinee coo´ouu3i´i
ni´i3eihi3i´
hee´inonoonee nooko3oni3i´
V. *wohei niine´ehk* nehe´ hinen
he´ih´iinestoobe´
niine´eenino´ nuhu´ beh´eihoho´
VI. yein beebeet ne´nii´eii´toowoohu´

I. *Wohei!* Another [story]
from long ago when the Indians always lived *like this*,
before they were rounded up
and lived *like* they are living now.
II. Arapahos always remembered
the proper way.
That's how it used to be.
III. You just couldn't take anything for yourself for any reason.
They used to warn their people,
these old men of the tribe.
Here it is [the story].
IV. *Wohei! Here are these* eagles,
eagles, those that are way up there.
That's what they are called.
You know them—they have white tail feathers.
V. *Wohei! Here is this* one man.
He had been warned
[by] *these* old men of the tribe,
VI. "You can only take [them] four times."

As can be seen here, the italicized demonstrative forms serve a pragmatic function related to narrative content. However, the content is organized such that the verses themselves are constructed around specific narrative topics. As a result, the demonstratives also contribute to the creation of a fairly steady—and more formal—rhythm from verse to verse, similar to "wohei." One can in fact define a series of rules for delimiting verses in this narrative: (1) "wohei" begins a new verse; (2) "niine´eeno´,"

"niiyou," and their reflexes begin new verses (sometimes in combination with "wohei"), except when they are used with a noun acting as object; (3) "nee´ees" and other "thus" forms mark the end of a verse; (4) all lines with grammatical or semantic repetitions and parallelisms in groups of two, three, or five occur within a single verse; (5) in such groupings, shorter lines preceding longer lines mark the beginning of verses, while shorter lines following longer ones mark the end of verses; (6) in the case of dialogue or directly cited speech as opposed to narration, the beginning of multi-line speech also begins a verse; (6a) the end of such speech ends a verse with the following verse often beginning with "nee´ees" and similar forms; (6b) repetition of a given line of dialogue marks the end of the verse containing the first instance of that line. Note that the beginning of all verses is not explicitly marked, but when a verse ending is explicitly marked one takes the next line as the beginning of the next verse.[15] When applied to the text, they produce a quite regular series of verses of four lines on average, with fluctuation to three and five being quite common, and rarer instances of shorter or longer verses.

Irregular "small-scale" rhythmic features

The fairly steady rhythm produced by the interaction of form and content, combined with the more formal linguistic features, certainly contributes to the "incantatory" effect mentioned above. At many places more elaborate series of near-repetitions and parallelisms are inserted into these more regular rhythms, intensifying the sense of incantation. Such parallelism is a dominant feature of the narrative, both serving a pragmatic role related to content emphasis and producing formal rhythms. The rhythms in these cases, however, are often both more intense and more irregular than the earlier one discussed. For example, many consecutive pairs of lines have the form "nominal emphasizer + noun; verb" (33-38):

niine´eeno´ nii´ehiiho´	*These* eagles
co'ouu3i'i	were held in high regard.
wohei niine´ehk nehe´inen	*Wohei! There was* this man
neiheibeetoh´uni cenenoot	who wanted to take these eagles down.
niine´eenino nii´ehiiho	*These* eagles
hee´inonoot heetooni3i´	he knew them, where they were.

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[15] These rules could be compared to those in Hymes 1981:150ff.

Another pattern involves the use of the same central root with various grammatical and lexical affixes. An example occurs in lines 69-71, where a key moment of the narrative takes place—the protagonist's passing beyond the proper rules of restraint:

woow yein nih´iiscenenoot	He has already taken them down four times.
woow heet*cebe´ei*tiit	Now he will go past that—
nii´*cebe´ei*s	do it more—
*cebe´ei*toot	overdo
nih´isooxuwuheihi3i´	what he was told.

I have arranged the above lines in order to highlight the parallelism. The root "ceb-e´ei," meaning "go past/beyond," is used in three consecutive lines, the first time with the suffix "-tii-t" ("he went beyond it [inan. obj.]"). The next line uses the suffix "-s," which is a shortened form of the morpheme "to go," thus giving a meaning of "he went beyond." The final form uses the morpheme "-too-t," meaning "to do," thus giving a meaning "he did more/beyond." Clearly, the larger sense of the three sentences is essentially the same, but the grammatical variation (or "play") on the same root allows for a form of repetition that avoids exact replication.

In saying that the lines are largely the same, however, one should recognize that there are typically subtle plays of difference in meaning. While most instances of this parallelism are in threes, groups of five occur as well. For example, when the young man realizes that he has violated the prohibition and eaten the particular cut of meat, he begins to prepare for the inevitable visit of the eagles (314-18):

3iwoo *hiise´enou*'u	You [man's wife] try to be ready!
heetih´*iise´enou*3i´	So they [the eagles] will be ready [able to do what they must].
ne´*neenou*noo	Then I will get ready, too.
heet*neenou*noo	I will get ready.
heet*niiseenou*tonou´u	I will get ready for these eagles.

Alonzo Moss explains that each line employs forms of the verb "to prepare/to get ready." The first two use a form that implies an intransitive state of readiness, of being already ready, while the last three use a root more typically used transitively to indicate the process of getting ready for something or someone. Note also the progression from present to future: "heetih" means "in order to, so that" and carries a forward-looking implication, "ne´-" means "then" and indicates temporal progression, while "heet-" is a prefix placing the verb into future tense. This temporal

progression is matched by a thematic one: as one first is ready, so that things will be ready for the eagles, then one actively gets ready personally and internally, so as to be pepared for an experience, so that one will be ready for the eagles. In each case, the one who is "ready" or the thing that one is "ready for" is slightly different. Twice consecutively, "readiness" moves from the inward—the self—to the outward—ready for others, as outlook moves from present to the future. The larger dynamic between one's inner states, the events of the surrounding world, and their ultimate inseparability are underlined in this subtle interweaving of grammar and theme.

While these forms of parallelism and repetition are intimately related to key moments of narrative climax or moral emphasis, they also serve to structure verses formally. A related technique of prefixual repetition with verbal variation is often used to "build up" a verse, as in lines 243-45 below, where the prefix "nih-is-" (perfective past) is repeated with three different verbs: each line not only introduces new action, but is longer than the previous one, so that increased information corresponds to an increase in lexical material:

*nih´is*toot	He did it.
*nih´is*cee3toot	He did it by accident.
*nih´is*ce´no´eeckooht	He went back home again.

Compare lines 28-29:

he´ne´nih´is	That is what,
ne´nih´iis*inihii3i´ nuhu´ beh´eihoho´	That is what these old men had said.

An alternate way of doing this and of bringing an end to a verse is a repetition in which the second line is an exact (or near-) replication of only part of the previous line, such that the second line is always shorter. Here are two examples, the first from lines 118-19 and the second from 152-53:[16]

heetiini hoowounoneen	We will have pity on you
	(lengthened form of future prefix)
heetoowouneen	We will have pity on you.
	(regular form of future prefix)
heetnee´inow xonou	You will know it right away.
heetnee´inow	You will know it.

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[16] Cp. also lines 229-30 and 321-22.

In general, the "ascending" technique begins a verse, while the "descending" technique ends it.

Larger-scale rhythms of narration

Near-repetition and parallelism in groups of threes (and fives) is characteristically used at moments of high drama.[17] In passing, it should be noted that this organization of lines in threes and fives is in tension with the Arapaho "sacred number" of four, as noted above. There are other, even larger-scale instances of four (and two) in the narration, such as the overriding structure of two chances for the man before he is condemned. The organization is nevertheless interesting because it conflicts with a tendency that has otherwise been widely noted, especially in less clearly performance-type texts, for both form and content to be organized by twos and fours, or threes and fives, but not both.[18] Thus the narrative reveals a tension or discontinuity between its small-scale formal rhythms and the larger narrative and moral content regarding two chances and limits of four.

These same smale-scale (verse-level) rhythms also serve to produce a more general effect, however. We noted above the intensely "incantatory" feel produced by small-scale rhythmic effects. But the opposite effect is also possible. In particular, parallelisms within a verse sometimes serve to give a dynamic motion to certain verses that contrasts with the incantatory stasis of many others. Examples of this procedure are lines 170-72, 174-76, and 199-202 (not cited here), where the future prefix "heet-" + verb is used, with each verb being different, or where the form "nee´-," meaning "thus," is followed by a different verb on each line. Thus the same repetitive device that produces near-static incantation in one case (with variations on the same verb) serves to underline and heighten the forward motion of the narrative when combined with several different verbs in rapid succession. The movement from anticipatory repetition to rapid narration is shown in the following passage (314-18):

wohei *hiise´enou´u* hee3eihok	Wohei! "Get ready!" they told him.
wohei he´ne´*iise´enou´u*t	So then he got ready.
*het*nouusi´oo	"You must close your eyes,
*heet*niiteheibeen	we are going to help you.

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[17] Other examples include ll. 98-100, 112-14, 121-23, and 143-45.

[18] See Hymes 1992:93; see also pp. 95-105 for exceptions that resemble the present analysis.

*heet*neeckoohun   You are going home."

Another example, using patterns of five rather than three, occurs at lines 197-202:

>   wohei niine´een
>   *ne´*iitoxoot niine´een nuhu´ woxuuhuu
>   *ne´*iisiitenoot
>   *ne´*teesiseet
>   ´oh *ne´*ookoo3eit niixoo
>   *ne´*heesinihii3eit nehe´ woxuu
>
>   Wohei! Here they are!
>   Then he came upon here they are these elk. (new referent)
>   Then he caught one and
>   then he got on it.
>   And then this elk took him home too.
>   Then this is what it said to him, this elk.

Additional examples of variations on these techniques could certainly be cited from the text, but the key point here is to show how fine gradations of word variation, repetition, parallelism of structure, and alterations in the length of successive phrases function simultaneously to define poetic verses, to underline and emphasize the importance of certain key moments in the narrative, and to establish an undulating rhythm that alternates between incantation and rapid narrative advance. This larger rhythm then itself serves as part of the narrative's repertoire of emphatic devices.

Part Two: A Paralinguistic Analysis of the Narrative as Vocal Product

At this point we have discovered certain key components of the formal organization of one of Paul Moss' stories, and textualized the story from this persepective. Our analysis and presentation pick up on certain rhythms and alternations in rhythm present in the narration. Certain terms and grammatical structures (such as "wohei") recur with a regularity that is certainly perceived by the listener. "Wohei" in fact serves virtually as a kind of musical marker, like the heavy first beat in 4/4 time. These are the rhythms that Dell Hymes has specialized in picking up.[19] But this is certainly not *the* rhythm of this narration. While "wohei" and forms such as "niine´eeno´" and "niiyou" provide a complex and fairly regularized matrix

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[19] See especially Hymes 1981.

for the story, this formal matrix does not often correspond to the most obvious rhythms of pause and volume when one hears the story. The rhythm of the telling is often quite different from the linguistic rhythm that one can see on the page. What we have just been doing has been to take apart a kind of musical score, putting elements in parallel to illustrate clearly the organization that subtends the "song"—the technical harmony of the narrative. Yet this story, like any western musical composition, does not come to the listener in such neatly ordered ways. We do not typically hear just the four-beat pattern of 4/4 time or the clear, regular occurrence of the dominant musical theme. The linear flow, with its dynamics, pauses, variations, and melodic syntagmatics, always partially obscures the harmony.[20] It is to these other rhythms we now turn.

Changes in Volume

Volume shifts are common in the narrative and play both formal and content-centered roles. However, their primary functions seem to center on narrative and moral content. Heightened volume serves especially to highlight words key to moral meaning. Words that are emphasized repeatedly include "heenoo" ("customarily," "in the past"; "always"), "yein" ("four"), "coo´ouute´" ("to be high up"—as in the case of the eagles, and the spiritual connotations of the eagles' ability to fly near the heavens), "ceebeh" ("don't"—eat the particular part of meat), and "cebe´ein" ("pass beyond," as in the behavior of the young man). However, heightened volume can also be used to introduce new referents in the narrative, especially with "wohei," and thus to begin a new verse; in this case, its role is more formal.[21] But as we noted earlier, there are often overlaps in these categories: Paul Moss tends to situate words of importance to the narrative's moral content at the beginning of verses, combining features of form and content in the accentuation. Verbal accent works along with "linguistic" accent (for example, "niiyou" and "niine´eeno´") to pragmatically mark important topics—though not always—and it also functions with these or other linguistic features to mark lines and verses—though not always.[22] In general, one could say that increased volume is motivated more by content

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[20] I am inspired here by Dennis Tedlock's (1983:6) use of musical imagery to evoke similar internal patterns heard and felt.

[21] See Wiget 1987:326-27 on formal versus dramatic volume shifts in Hopi.

[22] See Tedlock 1972:xxi on a similar situation in Zuni.

than by formal organization. It does not occur regularly enough to serve as a consistent marker of lines, verses, or larger textual divisions, and can in fact turn up throughout any part of a given line or verse (as analyzed linguistically) or between pause intervals. Essentially, modulation of volume has comparatively little to do with purely formal linguistic rhythms, being somewhat more closely allied to "mixed" formal/content-centered linguistic features and most allied to the emphasizing of moral lessons.

Speed of delivery and tonal features

Even more so than the preceding characteristics, the paralinguistic features of speed and tone seem tied primarily to narrative content. Certain individual words are consistently drawn out, most prominently "beebei´on," which means "far away," "away over there." Increases or decreases in the rate of delivery of entire passages seem most closely related to the pace at which events in the narration are presented—speeding up as events "speed up," for example. This acceleration often corresponds to the linguistic "speeding up" discussed earlier, where the same grammatical prefix may be added to a series of changing verbs, producing a rapid forward momentum in the narrative. The narrator also generally increases the speed of delivery from the beginning to the end of the narrative.

Conversely, acceleration is also characteristic of moments of repetitive incantation at times. In these cases, however, the tone often shifts to a fairly strident quality, with exaggerated accentuation and increased volume. This is distinctive, as when the young man admits to the eagles after they rescue him the first time that "hee´inowoo heestoonoo noontoonoo noontoonoo" ("I know what I have done. I made a mistake. I made a mistake"). Note also the extraordinary degree of alliteration here. In contrast to the rapid quickening of delivery that correlates with linguistic "speeding up," the tone and volume typically remain neutral.

However, incantatory moments are more typically marked by slower delivery, especially with a falling tone. Thus speed of delivery does correlate fairly well with the small-scale, irregular, linguistic rhythmic effects in the text, and with the larger alternation of incantation and advance. For example, when the Eagles tell the young man early in the story that they will have pity on him, it is said two (not three) times, slowly and also with a very exaggerated falling tone, dropping at least an octave. Here and elsewhere, the most intensive incantatory speeds and tones serve especially

to "clarify the moral values."[23] As an additional example of this phenomenon, we should note that in the cases where volume increase is most obviously tied to moral emphasis, it is also most closely linked to slow delivery and to pauses before and after the words in question. One instance occurs early in the story when the old men warn the young man that four is the limit. "Yein" ("four") has a preceding pause and a following pause at least twice the length of the normal pause. It is also spoken slowly and the volume is raised.[24]

Rhythms and their interactions: a summary

One can separate out—for heuristic purposes—several controlling rhythms in the narrative: (1) a series of repeated or slightly varied linguistic forms, often functioning primarily formally ("wohei"), but at other times in partial conjunction with content ("niine′eeno′"), that form the "measures" of the narrative, and recur regularly every three to four lines; (2) a series of more irregular, small-scale linguistic rhythmic features that closely combine formal verse-building with narrative emphasis; (3) a broader alternating linguistic rhythm of incantation and advance, formed by the juxtaposition of the features in (2). This third rhythm is centered more on the moral message of the narrative, as well as on key moments of narrative excitement, though it also works to formally pattern the narrative on a larger scale; (4) a paralinguistic rhythm of volume (and sometimes tonal) shift that is primarily moral but partially formal; (5) a paralinguistic rhythm of delivery speed (and sometimes tonal shift) centered on heightening the immediacy of the actual recounted events of the story. In general, one could speak of a complex interplay between the verbal "artistry" of the narrative, the content-based recounting of events, and the underlining of moral messages implicit in those events. Among the rhythms outlined above, the first overlaps somewhat (less than half the time) with the fourth, but more so when the formal elements such as "wohei" and the semi-formal/semi-content elements such as "niine′eeno′" are working together; the second tends to overlap fairly closely with the fifth, and the third and fifth overlap most closely.

But there is finally, and most obviously, the rhythm of the telling itself in its most general form: the pauses between words, lines, and verses; their

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[23] See Wiget 1987:328 for similar examples from Hopi.

[24] Similar effects occur with "ciibeh-" ("don't" eat a certain piece of meat—see below).

varying lengths; and their relation to all the other rhythms of the narrative. This rhythm is not concurrent with any of the other rhythms cited above, and is perhaps the most irregular of all. Temporally, the narrative can be divided into lines, with pauses averaging approximately 3/4 of a second between them, and longer verses, with pauses of 1.5 seconds or more between them.[25] The lack of homology between linguistic (both formal and content-based) and temporal divisions introduces a further element of complexity into the narrative. Certainly there are overlaps; for example, groups of two and three lines in close parallel or repetitive relation very often occur within the same verbal line. But there are also many pauses even in the middle of grammatical sentences, and temporal pause and linguistically determined verse coincide less than 20% of the time. And while linguistically determined formal verses governed by words such as "wohei" have a fairly regular length, paralinguistically determined verses governed by pauses vary from a single word to several dozen words. In fact, the result is a complex overlay of categories that virtually defy complete analysis.[26]

Nevertheless, the partial conjunction between temporal pauses and the small-scale, irregular rhythmic effects—where linguistic features of parallelism and repetition and paralinguistic features of volume, tone, and delivery speed most often coincide, and where the emphasis is most clearly on narrative and moral content—appears to me to be significant. The places in the narration where all of the interweaving, complex rhythms come together most clearly are also the most "intense" places in the narration, the places that are fundamental to the elaboration of its deeper meaning and interpretation. I give one example: the episode in which the young man is rescued and then warned by the eagles about eating a certain cut of meat (lines 118-38). Pauses of 1.5 seconds (verse breaks) are indicated by double spacing between lines, pauses of 3/4 second (line breaks) by a new line, and very brief pauses by commas. The line numbers are provided for convenience of reference and do not correspond to those used earlier in the paper. Raised volume is indicated by capital letters.

[extra long two- to three-second pause following preceding content]

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[25] These pause types correspond closely to those isolated by Dennis Tedlock in Zuni materials (1972:xix).

[26] See Sherzer 1987:105, 112, 124; Woodbury 1987:176-77; and Clements 1996:201 for analyses of the way in which the various methods of line-marking can play out against each other, and for the way in which the tensions between the various marking systems can be a contributing artistic device. See also Tedlock 1983:57-61.

1. Heetiini hoowounoneen [slowly, exaggerated falling tone]

2. heetoowounoneen [slowly, exaggerated falling tone]
3. wohei nonih, heetnestoobeen niixoo

4. CEEBEH BII3IH
5. nuhu´
6. ceebeh bii3ih

7. ceebeh bii3ih hi´in

8. hini´iit niiyou ni´nii nihii [drawn out] totoooyone´ neiibi´ni´HOOTE

9. hi´in nii he´neneen
10. ceebeh be cee3bii3ih totoos beenhehe´ ceebeh´ini

11. NEE´EESTOONEHK

12. ´oh BII3nehk noh heetniini nuhu´ hee3eihi´ heetnee´ee3eihin heetcih
            hiise´nouu
13. heetcihneenoutoneen heetnee´noneen [slower with falling tone on
            nee´noneen]
14. xonou heetnee´noneen [same slower and falling tone]
15. heetco´onniihe´noneen [same slower and falling tone]

16. wohei, nee´eesiini. . .

1. We will pity you

2. We will pity you
3. Wohei this way, we will warn you too

4. DON'T EAT
5. This
6. Don't eat
7. Don't eat this

8. That "here it is" [error] weeeeeell on the back where the SINEW is

9. That, [error] that's it
10. Don't, friend, dont eat it even a little, don't
11. IF YOU DO THAT

12. But [should you] EAT it and you will . . . the way they [eagles] are that's the
            way you'll be [too]. You will have to get ready
13. We will be ready for you, we will know [about] you

14. Right away we will know [about] you
15. We will always know [about you]

16. Wohei, that's how it was ... [the eagles will come and get him if he does this, and he will be turned into an eagle]

Due to the amount of dialogue, this scene does not illustrate particularly well some of the more strictly formal linguistic features such as "hee´ih-" or "niine´eeno." This shortfall in itself is significant, however, as it reveals how the regular formal rhythm that these features produce is ruptured at this (and other) moments of high drama: maximum performative effects tend to suppress formal rhythms. Line and verse lengths, as defined by pause, are fairly irregular here (with pause seeming to correlate more closely to moral purposes, in fact [3-4, 6-8, 10-12]). However, "wohei" and "niiyou" do both occur (3, 8, 16), and "wohei" does correlate with temporal verse beginnings and endings.

Concerning the dramatic and moral implications of the performance, note the following in particular: the conjunction of volume shift and moral message (4, 8, 11); the conjunction of tonal shift and small-scale effects of linguistic repetition, with the repetition centering on moral message (1-2, 13-15; the falling tone of "pity you" also exactly matches that of "know you," and the words themselves rhyme, thus producing a larger-scale linguistic and paralinguistic unity); the conjunction between parallel verbs and temporal line (10, 12); and the conjunction of parallel verbs and temporal verse (4-6, 13-15). In all these instances, the dovetailing of linguistic and paralinguistic organization serves to underline key moral messages.

Even here, however, the conjunction is not complete: lines 1-2 are temporally split, though linguistically one would want to put them in the same verse, for example, and other instances of linguistic parallelisms not in the same verse could be pointed out (the "-ehk" subjunctive forms in 11 and 12 for example). In fact, the use of pause for moral effect seems to override the use of pause for the production of rhythmically regular lines and verses in these two cases, and in others as well. Again, rhythms of drama and morality override formal regularities.

Thus even here, where narrative rhythmic organization is perhaps most coherent, there is certainly no absolute coherence. This passage—and this story—lead me to suggest that in fact Arapaho storytelling is not fundamentally ordered by "verses" in the sense that many have claimed for Native American verbal traditions. Rather, the story reveals a tendency towards "nodes" of greater rhythmic coherence that alternate with stretches of lesser coherence. This is not to say that linguistically and

paralinguistically defined and marked verses and lines do not exist in the narrative as one ordering rhythm; they clearly do. Nor am I suggesting that previous studies that have concentrated on these elements of narratives are in any way "wrong." But I do believe that they are incomplete in that they recognize simply one component of the overall ordering structure of the narratives. Especially in fully realized performances, verse and line will be merely one contributing organizational structure among many. The tendency to see verse as the dominant feature may ultimately derive from its very powerful—and very visual—role in literate poetic traditions, where the realities of sound and bodily motion truly are overridden by the lines on the page.

The nodes, however, are quite complex and operate on several planes: two or three rhythms may cohere to produce smaller-scale nodes (as in 13-15 above), but longer passages may involve intensified coherences between several different rhythms, thus producing more complex nodal phenomena, as in 1-15 above. And we have not even discussed the potential contributions of kinesic rhythms, which would add several potential layers of complexity. Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to me to imagine that this is the case with at least some other Native American narrative traditions as well. In such cases, one tempting form of textualization might be in a format alternating prose and verse.[27] But whatever the format, we should recognize that not all verbal genres will be characterized by strictly regular formal patterns of line and verse (though some clearly are). Several scholars, especially Joel Sherzer, have noted such "informal" patterns in storytelling traditions as opposed to genres such as prayer, song, or sacred narrative.[28] Here "informal" should be understood specifically in terms of a relative decrease in the "structuring" and "predictability" of the narrative, to

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[27] "Cantefable" in Andrew Wiget's terms (1987:308).

[28] See Sherzer and Woodbury 1987:4; Sherzer 1987:114, 124; Tedlock 1987:154-58 and 1983:3, 50-51; Toelken and Scott 1997:10; and Hymes 1992:112. Certainly one could virtually always find some form of "equivalence" (Hymes 1997:332) between lines in the context of linguistic analysis, I believe. This is one of Dell Hymes' three fundamental principles regarding the poetic organization of Native American texts. But such equivalences perhaps need to be nuanced in terms of "stronger" and "weaker" equivalences. As the Arapaho passage above illustrates, weak (linguistic) equivalences are often overwhelmed as organizing features by other, often paralinguistic, features. A strict and regular "line and verse" textualization in such cases would seem misleading.

use Judith Irvine's terms.[29] Both the linguistic and paralinguistic features of this narrative lack the tighter structure and predictability that one finds in Arapaho songs, for example. But it is ironically the relative malleability of structure and predictability in this genre that Paul Moss exploited performatively in order to produce the "emergence of a focus," to use another of Irvine's terms. Thus in terms of focus—moral message in this case—and in terms of Moss' "invoking of positional identity"—as elder and moral messenger—the performance reaches a high degree of formality not so much despite as *because of* its structural informality. It seems in fact to be far more formal in these latter two senses than older Arapaho transcribed texts, which are, however, far more "formally" organized on the level of structure and predictability, as we will soon see.[30]

Part Three: Salvaging Texts from the Past

The question of full versus perfunctory performance

All of the rhythms discussed above can be found in the other stories told by Paul Moss as well, and are thus broadly representative of Arapaho oral poetics (bearing in mind as well the judgments expressed by other Arapaho about the "correctness" of Moss' stories). In fact, there is a remarkable general stylistic regularity (as well as complexity) in Moss' stories that suggests both his long practice in this art and also the existence of a controlling cultural poetics. With a knowledge of this poetics, what are we now to make of earlier textualizations of Arapaho stories?

A recent book by William Clements (1996) has reviewed previous efforts at textualization as well as their failures. He takes a position inspired by Dell Hymes, suggesting that one should use everything one has (see Hymes 1992:112). Certainly I would agree that it is foolish to dismiss out of hand sources that are the records of perfunctory performances or inadequate textualizations, but it is important to understand as clearly as possible the exact nature of their limitations. For the sake of comparison, I will cite one

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[29] See Irvine 1978. She defines "formality" as consisting of four aspects: "increased structuring and predictability," "consistency (of social connotation, for example)," "invoking positional identities," and "emergence of a focus."

[30] In the remainder of the paper, I will continue to use "formal" to discuss linguistic features more or less unrelated to "content." I will, however, distinguish between different types of "formality," of which one will be a structural formality that subsumes the formal linguistic features in question.

text whose conditions of collection replicate those of many other Native American texts. The text was collected by Zdenek Salzmann in 1950 for expressly linguistic purposes (Salzmann 1956a). An acoustic version of it was recorded, but that version involves the storyteller repeating phrases read back to him from a transcription. Thus it has little utility for the purposes of understanding a verbal performance.[31]

Two other factors mitigate against the utility of this text. The first is the fact that Salzmann was expressly interested in grammatical features, particularly obsolescent ones, in the recording (personal communication). The informant may well have been aware of this, and such an awareness certainly could have altered the way he told the story (see Sarris 1993:185). Second, Alonzo Moss notes that many of the narratives Salzmann recorded contained elements of sexual humor that might prove embarrassing to a traditionally oriented Arapaho—in particular, that having one's name associated with the story in print might embarrass female relatives (the Arapaho had a son-in-law/mother-in-law taboo, and also generally avoided contact between brothers and sisters). These elements were glossed over or treated perfunctorily in the tales since the informants knew that their names would be attached to the texts in print.

It thus seems unlikely that the text in question could be taken as representative of anything approaching a full performance. Given the emphasis placed on performance in current folklore and ethnopoetic studies, this would seem to represent a major defect in the utility of the text for such studies.[32] But the question of a text's status as a true record of performance could be posed for literally hundreds of other texts in Native American languages, and in many cases the answer to this question is far from clear. Is there a way to help make a determination on this question, given what is now known about the characteristics of fully emergent performances? If this earlier Arapaho text is the product of the same general oral poetics as the one that produced Paul Moss' narrative, and if this text is broadly representative of similar perhaps perfunctory performances, then a series of very interesting comparisons could be made between this text and that of

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[31] Nor was it intended to, as Salzmann noted in a personal communication, and what follows should not be taken as a criticism of Salzmann's work or intentions as a linguist. His invaluable work on Arapaho is the foundation of all future research.

[32] See Clements 1996:32-40 for a good discussion of some of the difficulties involved in using "condensed" texts. See also Hymes 1981:79-133 on tellings and reportings versus performances and Tedlock 1983:237 for his comments on this distinction.

Paul Moss' narrative. I will argue that both of these conditions are met, and that such a comparison can be made. Before demonstrating this, however, we need to briefly characterize John Goggles' narrative from Salzmann's collection.

A perfunctory performance: the poetics of plot summary

I give below a translation of the entire story, with relevant words in Arapaho as well. In what follows, I maintain the line divisions as they appear in Salzmann's text (numbered 1-45), where they largely correspond to sentence divisions. The published translation has been altered by me to more closely correspond to the literal Arapaho. Here then is John Goggles' story "White Man and the Ghost":

1. White Man [traditional trickster figure] and the Ghost
2. White Man was walking around [root "isee": "to go"]
3. They say[33] he went down along the river ["isee"]
4. They say he went a long way ["isee"]
5. They say he couldn't find any place where he could stop for the night
6. They say he was still walking ["isee"] and it was already dark
7. They say he saw a tepee
8. They say it was light inside
9. They say he went to it
10. Where one enters this tepee, they say he stood there
11. A person, they say he was walking around
12. "I'm here," said White Man
13. They say out came a woman
14. "I'm tired, I'm hungry, can I stop here?" said White Man
15. "I don't accept any visitors," she said
16. "But you can come in and stay overnight," said this woman
17. They say in went White Man
18. They say he was fed
19. "Where are you going?" she said
20. "I'm looking for a woman to live with"
21. "I don't want to get married; that's why I'm always alone; you might leave me again," said this woman
22. "I'll stay with you, I'll help you along," said White Man
23. "If you mean it, I'll take you," said this woman
24. "I mean it, I'll marry you," said White Man

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[33] "They say" is the translation of the narrative prefix "hee′ih-." "Said" is the translation of "hee3eihok" and related forms.

25. "All right, you can marry me," said this woman
26. "I want to go to sleep soon," said White Man
27. They say they went to bed
28. "Tell me stories, tell me about your life"
29. They say he told her stories, just a few
30. White Man, they say he fell asleep
31. They say he woke up when it was morning
32. They say he looked around; a skeleton they say he saw
33. They say he ran out. They say he was scared. They say he started to run
34. They say some place he stopped
35. They say he heard a person. They say [the person] was walking toward him
36. "White Man, I'm coming after you," said this woman
37. White Man, they say he was scared
38. They say this woman laughed
39. "I fooled you," said this woman
40. They say White Man came to where people lived
41. That's where he slept
42. They say he was watched
43. That's ("nee′ees") the way of this life
44. That's ("ne′") why people get married in the right way
45. That's ("nee′ei′") how this story ends.

Note that the word "wohei" is missing. The forms "niiyou," "niine′eeno′" ("here it is"), and their equivalents are missing. The form "nee′ees" ("thus") and its variants are present only in the conclusion (used twice). The use of parallel verbal repetitions with small variation is virtually missing (it appears once). The various lengthened forms of verbal prefixes are missing. In addition, recognizable grammatical parallelisms of two, three, and five lines are largely missing, with their consequent verse-building patterns (one instance). And of course, none of the verbal/aural rhythms are present either, for obvious reasons. So what is left? What is left is essentially the plot outline of a story that could have potentially been performed.

Given the differences noted here, it might be objected that the poetics of Paul Moss' narrative is finally only one, personal poetic style. If this is the case, then the absence of the features characteristic of his own style should not be taken as an indictment of the text recorded by Salzmann. Goggles' text might simply reflect a different poetics, and we would be comparing apples and oranges. I do not believe that is the case, however. Rather, Goggles' text contains enough traces of the poetics outlined in parts one and two above to be able to be seen as a "remnant" of that same poetics—as one endpoint on a continuum of performative elaboration, whose other endpoint is Paul Moss' narrative. I use the term "continuum"

very specifically here: we will see that the variations under consideration between the two texts do not amount to "free variation," but represent the systematic reduction (in Goggles' narrative) of the same generalized poetics seen in Moss' narrative. Goggles' text is not an alternate style, but a reduction of the same style.

The implication of this claim is that Goggles' narrative is an example of a perfunctory performance, and furthermore that it is not acceptable to a traditional Arapaho audience as a narrative; thus its poetics (to the extent that we define one for the text) is not "alternative" but "defective" in the sense of incomplete. This is the opinion of Alonzo Moss as well. He does not claim that the text contains no meaning, but rejects it as a valid poetic performance, noting in particular that "there are too many 'hee′ih′'s in there" and that "nobody [no Arapaho] told stories that way" when he heard them as a child and as a young man.

More generally, Goggles' text is remarkably short compared to much traditional Arapaho material. All of the narratives of Paul Moss are over ten minutes in length, whereas Goggles' narrative can be read in two minutes. Even the vast majority of the Arapaho material in Dorsey and Kroeber's English-language publication, collected via dictation, far exceeds the length of Goggles' narrative. Alonzo Moss notes that even his father's twenty-minute narrative of the "Eagles" was shortened and compressed for various reasons, and that he did not have time to fully elaborate all of the story. The value accorded to such lengthy elaborations is a widespread feature of verbal narratives from around the world and among Plains Indian tribes as well. To take simply one representative example, Robert Lowie notes of Crow verbal traditions that "a good raconteur is one who tells the stories not in mere outline but with epic breadth, lingering on interesting details" (1935:110). To give one final example, when I asked Paul Moss' son to retell the five-line "believe it or not" tale in Salzmann (3.5), I got a three and one-half-minute version, even though I was the only one present and he was speaking mainly for the tape recorder. What is finally interesting about Goggles' narrative is what happens when such "epic breadth" is reduced.

Certainly poetic markers remain, including the use of the narrative past tense "they say that/it is said that" ("hee′ih-" prefix); the use of a special "he/she said" verb particular to narrations ("hee3eihok" and its reflexes); the careful alternation of speakers in the central dialogue; the division into thematic sections of roughly equal extent; and the especially long length of the central dialogue section. All of these (essentially formalistic) features are characteristic of Paul Moss' narrative as well. There is in fact not a single organizing feature or poetic element in Goggles' text that does not also occur in Moss' narrative (though, as shown above, there are many in

Moss' narrative that do not occur here). However, forms such as "hee′ih-"
or "hee3eihok" do not turn up nearly so regularly in Moss as they do here,
where they occur in virtually every line. All of these poetic devices are
present in Paul Moss' narration but diluted by intervening material or by
"elaboration." This is the essence of Alonzo Moss' observation that there
are "too many 'hee′ih′'s in there."

        Based on the observations above, one could in fact elaborate a poetics
for this text, as is often done in salvage work. Lines could be defined by the
presence of "hee′ih," or "hee3eihok" in the case of dialogue, though this
would involve some minor changes in the lines as given above. Sections of
alternating dialogue lines might form verses. Alternately, the introduction of
new referents might constitute the beginning of new verses in non-dialogue
parts of the narrative. Using just these few criteria, one could come up with
a more poetic arrangement on the page that would be remarkably regular.
The changes in the lines affected by a rule of "hee′ih [+ verb]" = line would
also tend to make the various sections of the story of more equal length and
even more regular.

        In contrast to this regularity, Goggles' story also contains isolated
examples of other features characteristic of Paul Moss' narrative. These
include the foregrounding of new referents by placing them at the beginning
of a sentence (2, 11, 32; recalling Moss' "wohei, here they are, these . . .");
the use of rapid groups of three verbs (14, 33)[34]; the use of the verse-building
pattern of repetition with variation on a single root (2-4); the use of the
demonstrative "nee′ees" ("thus") for moral purposes of underlining (43-
45)[35]; and the use of a restricted vocabulary, often in parallel series of
responses and actions. Note that in contrast to the poetic devices already
mentioned in preceding paragraphs, the ones here are much more common
in Paul Moss' narrative. (The relative lack of "wohei" is noted by Alonzo
Moss as being particularly striking). In John Goggles' narrative, they can be
seen as traces or remnants of a potentially more highly elaborated poetics.

        Thus we see in Goggles' story a curious mixture of more intensely
used and regularized devices, as if Moss' narrative had been "boiled down"
from a more "diluted" and "irregular" form; at the same time, we see

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[34] The fact that these groups occur in a single line would appear to be an artifact of
Goggles' preservation of the aural unity of these triplets in a single sentence without
pause, a feature characteristic of Moss' narrative as well.

[35] Note that the typical "verse-building" pattern occurs at the beginning of the
narrative, while the "verse-ending" use of demonstrative "nee′-" and its variants occurs at
the end, as if the narrative demanded the presence of these poetic elements to begin and
end, and to signal its status as traditional narrative.

seemingly random traces of the devices that in Moss' narrative constitute some of the main organizing features of that narrative's complex performative intermingling of speed and incantation, accent and pause.

It should be added here that Goggles' other narratives in the Salzmann collection, as well as the narratives in Kroeber (1916), follow a very similar pattern in their use of "hee3eihok," "hee′ih-," and other terms.[36] Goggles' 1950 style is no more "personal" than Moss' in terms of the poetic repertoire that he employs. His style is just as consistent from story to story, and given his stories' similarity to those of 1900, his style seems just as constrained by a traditional poetics as that of Moss. Given that there are basically no formal or content-based organizing features of the earlier narratives that are not also in Paul Moss' story, it seems reasonable to assume that his narrative reflects a continuation of traditional Arapaho poetics, as members of the tribe have themselves claimed. It also seems reasonable to assume that the lack of unique elements in the earlier narratives means that they do not represent some alternative poetics, but participate in the same general poetics as Moss' later text. The poetics that produced these narratives seems to be the same in all cases, and the pattern of "reduction" that occurs in the shorter narratives, in relation to Moss' longer one, also seems to be always broadly the same. The same features are present each time, and the same features are lost each time.

Performance, narrative drama, and meaning

It is important to notice that the "remnants" in Goggles' text, rather than being purely formal "measure" devices, are used most typically in Moss' story to heighten narrative and moral content. As we saw earlier, the "rhythm" of narration and moral lesson is far more irregular than the formal rhythm of measure and the basic architectural framework. In the virtual absence of the former, Goggles' narrative does show a far clearer formal organization than that of Paul Moss, with far more regularity. On the other hand, it retains only remnants of the narrative and moral emphases that would aid in fully grasping the meaning, and it has also lost the complex musical rhythms that constitute the "art" of verbal performance. Looking at Goggles' narrative after examining that of Moss, it is as if one had a musical composition in which only the first beat of each measure remained (or the

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[36] Compare Text II in Kroeber, where "hee′ih" is ubiquitous, and Text III, where "he′ne'" (= "then," "next" and common in Moss' story) is nearly equally dominant, especially in the latter half.

harmonic chords underlying the missing melody), leaving a narrative dominated by "they say that" and "he/she said" attached to single, rhythmically monotonous verbs. It would seem that the closer a narrative moves towards plot summary and perfunctory performance, the more clearly the formal organization will be revealed and will come to dominate the patterns of the narrative. Conversely, the more a narrative approaches full, authoritative performance, the more the formal "measure" will be obscured by elements emphasizing literal and symbolic content and meaning.[37]

Of course, though I have been using musical metaphors, our comparision of Moss' and Goggles' narratives has to this point been based on purely linguistic features, since Goggles' text allows us no meaningful access to paralinguistic elements. The "music" of the voice itself is missing. But while Goggles' narrative lacks the paralinguistics of performance, it also lacks the linguistic features that most closely coincide with paralinguistic ones in Arapaho oral poetics. It is as if the missing paralinguistic elements "took with them" the missing linguistic ones.

Given our findings in parts one and two above, this is not surprising. It is the "meaning" of these stories that is important: Alonzo Moss insisted to me over and over that the meaning must be drawn out and emphasized fully through repetitions, detailed elaborations, and the like (he specifically pointed to "repetition" and "details" as keys to meaning). But the linguistic features of the narrative most attuned to this task are ironically the small-scale rhythmic features and larger-scale alternation of incantation and advance; these elements most disrupt the orderly formal "measure" of "wohei" and "niiyou" and "niine'eeno´."[38] These particular linguistic features are also the ones most closely attuned to paralinguistic features—which are also predominantly oriented towards content and meaning, and which also tend to disrupt the more ordered formal rhythms of the narrative. The linguistic elements that remain in Goggles' narrative are precisely those that correspond least well to the paralinguistic organization of Arapaho narratives, and that have the least in common with those linguistic features whose emphasis tends to be on narrative and moral content.

What emerges from this analysis is the fundamental connection between performance, aesthetics, and meaning, all three of which can be seen as fully or partially missing from Goggles' text. It is clear that the

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[37] See Tedlock 1983:38-39 on the dynamics of dictation and the kinds of shortenings and deletions that occur in this context.

[38] See Bauman and Briggs 1990:63 on the connections between parallelism and illocutionary force.

elements that contribute to, and even constitute, the "meaning" of the narrative for Alonzo Moss are precisely the elements most connected to fully emergent performance.[39] Thus what many folklorists have in the past characterized as the "aesthetic" component of the performance (as opposed to the "communicative" component) turns out to be the central communicator of meaning. Full "meaning," from this perspective, comes only through performance. Thus Moss rejects, through his comments, the structuralist tendency to distinguish between aesthetics and communication. Furthermore, he embraces a more radical notion of performance as being the full emergence not of "art" alone but of both art and meaning, which are finally one and the same.[40] The way in which verbal performance in oral culture is linked to both aesthetics and meaning holds the key to understanding the pattern of reduction seen between Paul Moss' and John Goggles' narratives, and also reveals the potential complementarity of linguistic and paralinguistic analyses, provided that one is working with a text that is a record of a truly emergent performance. It also suggests their non-complementarity where this is not the case, as well as their insufficiency as single modes of analysis even where it is the case.

Implications for textualization

Perhaps the most surprising implication of the above analysis is that the "cantefable" or some other "irregular" form is, on one level, truest to the deeper sense of "performance" for informal genres. Richard Bauman has noted that the essence of examining folklore as performance lies in recognizing that its "symbolic forms" are "tools for living" that are "available to actors" to be used in socially transformative ways.[41] The same is true of folklore's linguistic and paralinguistic forms as well. We noted above that Paul Moss' narrative was structurally informal in comparison to song, being characterized by nodes of greater or lesser rhythmic coherence.

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[39] See Bauman and Briggs 1990:63 for a similar argument.

[40] Note, however, that Moss rejects a fairly widespread postmodern notion of performance as intimately linked to play. Play still contains meaning, he suggests. In this regard, see Randall Hill's critique (1997:134) of Gerald Vizenor's notion of performance. See Wiget 1987:314 for a similar argument and *ibid*:317-18 for a similar analysis of Hopi performance.

[41] Bauman and Briggs 1990:177; see also Kapchan 1995:479: "the notion of agency is implicit in performance."

But it was precisely due to his refusal to be bound by or settle for formality of structure and predictability—by tightly defined patterns of line and verse, for example—that Paul Moss was able to produce a fully emergent performance with its fully realized nodes of individual, social, and moral communicativity.   To textualize in the form of cantefable would symbolically capture not only the relative—and shifting—structural informality of Moss' narrative, but also the ways in which this varying formality/informality reflects the essence of emergent performance in this particular genre.   To perform a story is to use the traditional repertoire of Arapaho linguistic and paralinguistic tools in uniquely individual—and, structurally, relatively informal—ways to create narratives and contexts of high social and moral formality that are rich with meaning.   Conversely, the ease with which John Goggles' story can be textualized as regular verse points to that story's lack of structural informality, and consequently to its lack of the use of language "performatively" as a tool for constructing moments of rich individual and social communication.   Performance and nodality are intimately related in informal genres.

All of this must be kept in mind when studying the poetics and meaning of Native American texts.   One cannot study what is not there, and it is extremely helpful to be able to surmise exactly what probably is not there, as well as how that absence may distort the form and content of what is there.   This study suggests that in the case of many short texts a concern with the subtle texture of the translation may be ultimately futile, since the original may likely be relatively lacking in artistic texture itself.[42]   What one finds is a "poetics" of plot summary, as notable for what is missing as for the organization one finds in the narrative.

This is not to say that there is no value in such textualizations; indeed, as we have seen, they offer important (even if "skeletal") clues to the more fully elaborated techniques of performance, as well as to the central structure that undergirds the more fully realized narratives.   And in a certain sense, a "perfunctory" performance could be thought of as a unique genre or style of its own, with its own particular poetics.   But we should not fool ourselves into thinking that such a poetics is "the" typical or representative poetics of a given Native American tradition.

Of course, such a decision about the inadequacies of a text should never be made lightly and hopefully never without comparative evidence from actual performances.   Cultural information on the relative structural

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[42] In speaking of "short texts" I expressly exclude those that are the products of inherently short and compacted genres, and that use devices other than nodes of varying structural formality and informality to communicate meanings.

formality or informality of a given genre will be crucial, as well as knowledge about genres that might be intentionally compact and hermetic. I do not wish to understate the ability of even quite short or "plain" Native American texts (including Goggles' text) to hold far more meaning than English-speaking academics of the early twenty-first century are capable of recapturing. But the ability to recognize situations where paralinguistic texture and its accompanying linguistic guides to meaning are absent seems an important initiative as well, in order to avoid attempts to add or find meanings and artistic expressions that simply are not there. Clements has suggested that one aim of using old texts would be to "tell us something about the narratives' oral features" as opposed to textualizations based on oral recordings, which seek to "recover or reproduce" the oral itself in the textualization (1996:13). It would seem that many old texts may tell us relatively little about oral features, but they may at least provide us with an overarching organizational framework, if correctly textualized: a framework into which many of the unique features that characterize full performances could have once been inserted. Potentially (and more research is needed on this question), the kinds of poetic characteristics that we located in John Goggles' narrative, even in the absence of comparative performance data, may serve to index the true status of such texts in relation to an idealized performance. Is there, one would like to know, a "poetics of plot summation" that could be found cross-culturally (or even, more modestly, among Plains Indian traditions)? And between full performance and minimal summary, which features of traditional Arapaho poetics are most "fragile" and drop out most easily as narratives are less elaborated? Likewise, which features are more persistent? We have looked here at only the two extremes of what must be a very complex process, but one that could perhaps be characterized in a somewhat more regular fashion. That information would be even more useful for those working with native language texts.

University of Colorado at Boulder

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Oral Tradition and Contemporary Critical Theory. I
Mark C. Amodio, Guest Editor

This is the first of two clusters of essays devoted to exploring the ways in which oral theory intersects with, informs, and is in turn informed by other schools of contemporary criticism. Those of us who are regular readers of this journal and who work in the field know how extremely valuable and flexible an interpretive strategy oral theory is: its fundamentally interdisciplinary nature, its reliance upon comparative and crosscultural methodologies, and its ability to shed light upon the complex processes involved in the composition and reception of works of verbal art produced in cultures situated at various points along the oral-literate continuum have led to oral theory being productively applied to an extraordinary range of texts, oral and written, from ancient times up through the present day. But even though it has been a vital part of the critical landscape since the early decades of the twentieth century—a remarkable but often unremarked upon fact in its own right, especially given what Wendy Steiner has aptly characterized as the "frantic succession of critical theories" over the past three decades—, oral theory continues in many ways to be very much a specialized critical discourse spoken chiefly by oralists to other oralists. It is precisely the project of this cluster and the one that will follow in *Oral Tradition* 17/2 to cross the boundaries that often serve to segregate schools of critical thought, even as they define them, and to call attention to some of the very many important points of contact that oral theory shares with other critical approaches.

In keeping with this aim, the essays in these clusters all work, either explicitly or implicitly, to traverse the borders of field and specialty and to put oral theory into dialogue with other theories. One of the strengths of these clusters is that they not only include essays by oralists who look out towards other fields and theories (Kelber and DuBois in this cluster, Bradbury and Watson in the next) but also essays by scholars who look from different critical perspectives in towards oral theory (McBratney and McLane in this cluster; Hill, Joyce, and Zacher in the next). The multiplicity of views and the plurality of voices in these clusters are offered as the first step in what we hope will be an ongoing conversation, one that will be further enriched as more colleagues from more fields join the discussion.

Mark C. Amodio
Vassar College

The Case of the Gospels:
Memory's Desire and the Limits of Historical Criticism

Werner H. Kelber

In der Erinnerung wird Vergangenheit rekonstruiert.[1]
<div align="right">(J. Assmann 1992:31)</div>

Memory and remembering are presently much in vogue in humanistic and social science discourse. We are experiencing the revival of a topos that played a principal role throughout antiquity and the Middle Ages both in the orally and scribally processed formations of thought. In our time a rapidly growing body of disciplinary and interdisciplinary studies seeks to trace and reconstruct multiple forms and processes of remembering and forgetting, past and present. For example, renewed attention is being paid to ancient and medieval practices of visually processed forms of remembering. Conceivably, insight into a mnemonic craft of thought that stored much that was considered worthy of remembering in iconic style may cast an illuminating light on our present media situation, which—in part at least—is characterized by an extreme inundation of images.

In what has become a classic, Frances Yates (1966) surveyed the ancient and medieval art of mnemotechnique—ranging from memory as a set of waxed tablets to an architectural design functioning as storehouse or inventory—and produced in effect a handbook on ancient Western memorial commonplaces. Yates deserves credit for having raised awareness about the cognitive role of a visually based memory, recognition of which since the eighteenth century had receded into oblivion. Some of her subsequent publications created the unsupportable impression that iconic conventions and techniques of memorization were cultivated in predominantly esoteric circles (1972, 1979, 1982). However, recent contributions by Mary Carruthers (1990, 1998) and Janet Coleman (1992) have expanded the scope of Yates' work and corrected the one-sided hermetic predisposition.

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[1] "In remembering the past we reconstruct it."

Carruthers' *Book of Memory* (1990) may be described as a study of the nature and activities of medieval thought, including practices of composing and reading texts, appropriating pictures, envisioning words and events, "eating" and "digesting" words, and modes of meditation and prayer. She has unfolded a culture extending from late antiquity into the Renaissance in which thought was deeply rooted in the human sensorium of touching, smelling, hearing, and varying forms of visualization. Her work suggests, by implication more than by definitional explicitness, that some of our central Western metaphors did not mean what they have come to mean to us today. Among those concepts we had thought we knew, but which require rethinking in ancient and medieval terms, are text and textuality, author and tradition, reading and writing, and logic and cognition, to name but a few. Most importantly, Carruthers arrives at the conclusion that the culture of late antiquity and the Middle Ages—notwithstanding its steadily increasing manufacture of manuscripts—was predominantly a memorial culture rather than a purely documentary, textual one. Coleman's *Ancient and Medieval Memories* (1992) distinguishes itself by a superior knowledge of ancient philosophy and medieval theology, and by uncommonly subtle representations of philosophical argumentation. Her hugely impressive inventory of ancient and medieval theories of memory, which encompasses almost 2000 years of Western intellectual history, principally makes the argument that the measure of remembering was not historical verification as such, but rhetorical persuasiveness. One was inclined to remember primarily what was deemed worthy of remembering, and what merited remembering depended on the bearing it had for present time and circumstances. Only with the advent of the Enlightenment, she claims, were concerted efforts made to reconstruct the past as past.

Since the 1980s an interdisciplinary group of scholars under the leadership of Jan Assmann (1992) and Aleida Assmann (1999) has produced a steadily growing body of work that carries on the legacy of the pioneering work on memory by Maurice Halbwachs (1925, 1941, 1992, 1997). Memory is here entirely allied with the group and with group identity—a concept that will prove pertinent to the case of the gospels. Once again, the process of remembering does not work purely for the benefit of what is deemed worthy of recollecting; that is to say, it is not primarily fed by needs for preservation of the past in a state of authenticity. Rather, memory selects and modifies subjects and figures of the past in order to make them serviceable to the image the community wishes to cultivate of itself. Socialization and memory mutually condition each other, seeking in the last analysis preservation not of the remembered past but of group identity. The emphasis is decidedly on the sociological dimension of memory.

This concept of cultural memory, which entails the construction of the symbolic and historical stability of group identity, in some ways resembles our current notion of tradition. But the Assmanns and their colleagues shy away from the metaphor of tradition, arguing that it overemphasizes the elements of continuity and evolutionary progression. A vital point that appears to be frequently slighted by the notion of tradition is memory's regressive gesture toward the past. The memory work of the group consists in constructing a new image from elements it retrieves from the past. At the same time, this gesturing toward the past is deliberately oriented toward the present. In using the past selectively, memory retains not the past as such but in a sense creates a new past that speaks to the needs of the present. In sum, memory is conceived less as a storage or archive, and more as a dynamic operation that reappropriates the past in the interest of communal identities. The isolated user who calls up ready-made memories is replaced by the social interaction of a community within which memories are produced. Again, this concept may be relevant for the gospel compositions if, as will be argued, each gospel constructs a new representation of the sacred past in order to meet the demands of a changing present.

The contemporary work on memory can be linked with and greatly enriched by current media studies. I refer to the classic contributions by Albert Bates Lord (1960, 1991), Eric A. Havelock (1963, 1978), Walter J. Ong (1967, 1977, 1982), Jack Goody (1968, 1977), John Miles Foley (1987, 1990, 1991), and many others. Orality is speech that actualizes itself in the act of speaking performances. To be efficacious oral discourse has to make audience adjustments; but faced with the risks of forgetting it also needs to resort to memorable forms and subject matters. Scribality, on the other hand, may dodge immediate responsibilities toward hearers. Due to its temporal and physical distance from audiences, it can disregard the pressures hearers put on speakers and the expectations they bring to oral performance. Owing to this new media constellation, scribality may exercise greater freedom vis-à-vis both audience/readership and tradition. Scribality, being more loosely dependent on audiences than orality, may thus not merely reinforce identities groups hold of themselves but effectively reshape them. In a classic article Ong (1977:53-81) has described this phenomenon as the fictionalizing of the writer's audience. Insofar as writers construct in their imagination a readership cast in certain roles, readers in turn are expected to relive the roles in which they are cast "which seldom coincide[s] with . . . [their] role[s] in the rest of actual life" (61). Likewise, scribality's disengagement from oral tradition may produce precisely the kind of alienation that will prove productive for creative reassessments of tradition in ways primary oral cultures cannot ordinarily tolerate (*ibid.*:17-49).

Scribally effected memory, therefore, may develop new possibilities of reappropriating the past and engender thought in new ways. Especially in times of radical change and disaster, when prevailing paradigms have lost all persuasive powers, the medium of scribality is entirely suitable for undertaking a productive retrieval of the past so as to point a way out of the crisis. The textualization of a tradition is therefore by no means a guarantor of stability and continuity. In the case of the gospels one needs to take into account the medium of scribal technology and the potential it harbors for reshaping tradition. To be sure, scribality, due to its storing function, appears to have solved the problem of forgetting, but its scribally enforced distance from hearers may facilitate innovative thought and in a sense bring about an intensified form of forgetfulness.[2]

In view of the interest presently being devoted to various aspects of memory in the humanistic and social sciences, one cannot escape the impression that *mnemosyne* has been promoted to virtually paradigmatic significance. In its most general sense, the rediscovery of memory induces us to reconsider basic premises of the ancient and medieval manuscript culture. Memory, memorial processes, and their interfacing with social realities, expectations, and identities suggest that extratextual thought processes cannot be excluded from the composition of the gospel manuscripts.[3] Our concept of the scribal culture that produced the gospel texts should not, therefore, be confined to textuality, intertextuality, written sources, and source dependencies without consideration of the memorial operations that are implied in the gospels' diverse reappropriations of the past. It is in this sense that the current work on memory will be integrated into our reflections on the gospel compositions.

Concepts of Tradition

When we turn our attention to New Testament scholarship, we observe that memory and memory studies—with one exception—play an insignificant role in the contemporary scholarly apperception of the canonical gospels. In most quarters of the scholarly guild *mnemosyne* simply is not a relevant issue. I see no, or next to no, serious influence of

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[2] "Das kulturelle Gedächtnis . . . birgt Risiken des Vergessens und Verschwindens, Veraltens und Verstaubens, die der mündlichen Überlieferung fremd sind, und bedeutet eher Bruch als Kontinuität" (J. Assmann 1992:101).

[3] Excluded from consideration are manuscripts that are the result of simple copying techniques and practices.

the memorial work being done in the humanistic and social sciences over the last half-century. Nor have the by now classic studies on orality and textuality produced over the past five decades by Lord, Havelock, Ong, Goody, Foley, and others made any appreciable impact on New Testament studies. Deeply grounded in our humanistic legacy and profoundly insightful about the implications of the communications media, these studies, if applied judiciously and knowledgeably, could prove beneficial for the health of biblical studies.

To the extent that a discourse on memory has taken place at all in New Testament scholarship, it has been decisively shaped by Birger Gerhardsson. His monumental work, aptly entitled *Memory and Manuscript* (1961), will remain an unsurpassed classic of biblical studies in the twentieth century. The book developed a model of early Christian traditioning processes on the analogy of rabbinic Judaism of the Tannaitic and Amoraic period, dated roughly from the catastrophe of 70 CE to the fifth century. In Gerhardsson's view, memorization was practiced both in the Pharisaic, rabbinic school tradition and in early Christianity as a mechanical commitment of materials to memory by way of continual repetition. In the Christian tradition, the carriers were primarily authority figures, with Jesus himself as the inaugurating authority, and the twelve apostles as the first and crucial link in the chain of tradition. Changes that did occur in the traditioning processes were confined to interpretive adaptations. On the whole, tradition was, therefore, characterized by fixity, stability, and continuity, and the primary purpose of transmission was the deliberate act of communicating information for its own sake, without serious regard for matters of interpretation and application. As a result, the tradition never radically altered sayings of and stories about Jesus. Based on the assumed model of Pharisaic, rabbinic transmission techniques, the synoptic materials, cast in memorable modes of communication, were repeated many times over, until they arrived, more or less intact, in the narrative gospels.[4]

It is worth observing that the first and virtually only time in modern biblical scholarship that memory is introduced as a key concept into the study of Christian origins, it is presented as cold memory, highlighting its retentive function and reducing it to strictly preservative purposes. One may ask whether projecting memory as the grand stabilizing agent reflects the

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[4] In subsequent publications Gerhardsson has minimally modified his thesis, making small concessions both to changes in the processes of the tradition and to the gospels' autonomous narrative identities vis-à-vis tradition. By and large, however, he has adhered to the thesis of a virtually unbroken continuity of tradition from Jesus into the gospels.

anxieties of modernity and its historical consciousness that seeks to safeguard the factual reliability of the gospels.

Critics of Gerhardsson's erudite work have frequently observed a precarious backdating of rabbinic pedagogics into the period before the conflagration of the second temple. Undoubtedly, the watershed significance of 70 CE both for Jewish and for Christian hermeneutics is difficult to overrate. Backdating was also the major issue raised by Jacob Neusner (1972) in one of the harshest pieces of criticism directed against memory and manuscript. However, we need to mention here that Neusner has recently "recanted" and in a dramatic gesture of intellectual repentance endorsed the new edition of *Memory and Manuscript* (Gerhardsson 1998). With the greatest respect for Neusner's unparalleled knowledge of rabbinics, I remain unconvinced that memorization—if indeed it was the prevailing method of rabbinic transmission in the first century of the common era—serves as the appropriate mode for early synoptic transmission processes.

While the rabbinic tradition enjoyed a distinct appreciation for the accuracy of the transmission, its written legacy does not entirely support the idea of accuracy as the sole determinant of traditioning. The Mishnah is characterized by a multitude of traditions and a variability of certain themes. To be sure, it does not concede the same interpretive space to each theme and tradition. As a rule, halakig exegesis tends to be more stable than the haggadic one. But the overall impression provided by Mishnaic texts is that single entities of the tradition are revised and provided with glosses, expanded as well as shortened. Is all this the result of the textualization of oral traditions, or do we not gain some insight here into what oral composition in performance might have been like?

That many dominical sayings in the synoptic tradition are mnemonically shaped so as to acoustically effect an oral and, we should add, visual apperception among hearers is self-evident. But we distance ourselves from the assumption that mnemonics *eo ipso* entail memorization. That information is couched in mnemonically usable patterns is a commonplace of ancient and medieval rhetorical conventions. Customarily, mnemonics operate in the interest of assisting memory and of facilitating remembering in the oral processing of knowledge and information. They allow for, indeed thrive on, hermeneutical inventiveness and compositional freedom in performance. Memorization, by contrast, enforces the inculcation of words through ceaseless repetition, and displays little interest in accommodation to social contexts and live audiences. The issue raised by Gerhardsson comes down to the question of whether early Christian memorial culture transpired as passive transmission under the aegis of cold

memory, or as hot memory, propelled by active remembering and socialization.

Perhaps the difficult issue of tradition can be further illuminated from the larger perspective of Jewish-Christian hermeneutics. Both in rabbinics and in Christianity a similar concept emerged that became virtually canonical as far as the comprehension and status of their respective traditions were concerned. In early Christianity the idea emerged that the disciples/apostles had been appointed to be eyewitnesses of Jesus' life, from baptism to resurrection, and were therefore both destined and qualified to function as reliable guarantors of the tradition. In the rabbinic tradition scribal scholars between 80 and 200 CE generated the theory that Moses had transmitted a depository of revelatory words that were meant to supplement the Torah; they were handed down, more or less intact, all the way into the rabbinic present. The rabbinic thesis resembles the Christian postulate, and both originated at a moment in Jewish-Christian post-war history when the two faiths were in dire need of self-legitimation. At this point in history both Judaism and Christianity grew self-conscious about the tradition as tradition by anchoring it in the sacred origin and by further securing it via the thesis of an unbroken continuity. In both instances, tradition, or all subsequent remembrance of tradition, is, so to speak, canonized. In other words, the myth of tradition tells us how tradition as a whole was remembered. It deserves to be appreciated as the core element of the tradition's receptionist history, and must not be used as a starting point, let alone core element, for the reconstruction of the historical processes of the tradition.

More recently, Rainer Riesner has contributed a major work that in many ways is indebted to and carries forward Gerhardsson's pioneering study. In *Jesus als Lehrer* (1984) Riesner, not unlike Gerhardssson, argues that Jesus practiced the method of memorization and systematic repetition to make sure that his hearers preserved his message intact. Moreover, following his teaching activity in Galilee and in view of steadily increasing threats to his life, Jesus, according to Riesner, confined himself to the circle of the twelve and imparted esoteric information to them. This development enabled the circle of the twelve to function as "guarantors of the continuity of tradition."[5] Mnemonically shaped sayings, deliberate teaching

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[5] Riesner 1984:485: "Selbst wenn eine Funktion des Zwölferkreises als Garanten der Traditionskontinuität von Jesus nicht beabsichtigt gewesen sein sollte, so erfüllte die Gruppe doch faktisch diese Aufgabe."

summaries, esoteric teaching, and frequent repetitions created favorable conditions for "a reliable post-Easter transmission of the logia materials."[6]

As far as the esoteric feature is concerned, it needs to be pointed out that Jesus' retreat to the circle of the twelve constitutes a narrative element that is intricately linked with other narrative features and must not, therefore, tempt us to draw far-reaching historical conclusions. Caution is all the more called for since the Nag Hammadi gospels have demonstrated that esoteric teaching can be a genre indicator. This points up a basic problem in the work of Riesner as well as in that of Gerhardsson. They move uncritically from issues of genre and narrative to history, or, to be more precise, they fail to explore sufficiently the genre indicators and narrative dynamics of the gospels. They have not, that is, made the well-known turn to language, rhetoric, and narrative that has distinguished much of the work in the humanities during the last century.

In summarizing the work of Gerhardsson and Riesner with a view toward memory, it is striking that the concept has been reduced strictly to its retentive, reproductive, and preservative function. Tradition functions in what essentially are iterative operations that emanate without noteworthy alterations into the pleroma of the gospel narratives. In other words, memory acts as the stalwart of stability, safeguarding an unchanging tradition and thus guaranteeing the historical reliability of the gospels. For this is what seems to matter most: overcoming historical skepticism.[7] It is possible that the highly restrictive concept of memory made fashionable by Gerhardsson and Riesner has contributed to the repression of a discourse on the broader and more dynamic role of memory in gospel studies. This is regrettable because "memory and manuscript" remain key issues for our understanding of the composition processes leading up to the gospels, and, I should think, of the formation of early Christian texts more widely.

It would seem to be a matter of some importance that neither Gerhardsson nor Riesner has undertaken an in-depth analysis of the gospels' sayings materials, the most valuable piece of evidence available as far as the synoptic tradition is concerned. With regard to our understanding of the nature and operation of the pre-gospel tradition, their work does not move us beyond that of Rudolf Bultmann, whose 1921 publication of *The History of*

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[6] *Ibid*.:430: "Bereits dadurch waren gute Voraussetzungen für eine zuverlässige nachösterliche Tradierung des Logienstoffes geschaffen."

[7] *Ibid*.:502: "Sollte auch der in der vorliegenden Arbeit nur skizzierte nachösterliche Verlauf des Überlieferungsprozesses in den Grundzügen zutreffen, so kann die historische Skepsis der 'klassischen' Formgeschichte überwunden werden."

the Synoptic Tradition had marked an earlier twentieth-century landmark in biblical studies (see Bultmann 1995, Theissen and Vielhauer 1971).

In this classic work, Bultmann examined such excruciatingly difficult issues as the oral tradition assumed to have preceded gospel textuality, that tradition's component particles, the laws of oral transmission, and the relation between tradition and gospel. For the first time in modern biblical scholarship the synoptic sayings and stories were subjected to a thoroughgoing examination. The author's principal argument stated that tradition lay in the background of the written gospels, that it was largely oral in character, and that the gospels were deeply implicated in this oral matrix. In the most general terms, the case he made was based on the observation that many of the individual component parts of the gospel narratives—different types of sayings and miniature stories—carried the hallmarks of oral composition and performance. When isolated from their involvement in the gospel's mega-narrative, these individual units were analyzable, their original form reconstructable, and their performance in particular social settings imaginable. By examining a myriad of data and by recreating the developmental pattern of oral processes, Bultmann sought to write a history of the oral synoptic tradition preceding the narrative gospels. Whatever else his work accomplished, it seemed to have demonstrated that the gospels were the products of a history of the transmission of oral traditions, rather than a direct transcription of the events surrounding Jesus' life and death. The gospels were nourished by, at least partially composed of, and above all intelligible as reservoirs of tradition.

Bultmann's project was informed by a trinity of theoretical principles: the original form of oral units, the dominance of directional growth processes, and the intrinsic causality of the tradition. First, the simplest form of a unit was usually taken to be the original form, constituting a basis for observing secondary developments. Second, the dominant trend, generally, was assumed to have been from purity and simplicity toward complexity, manifesting a quasi-evolutionary ascent of oral tradition culminating in the narrative gospels. Third, as far as the motivating forces of oral transmission were concerned, it was assumed that tradition itself exerted pressures toward ever more comprehensive manifestations. Propelled by their own gravity, the multiple pre-gospel springs, streams, and rivers had little choice but to flow into the reservoir of the gospel narrative.

This model of the tradition's evolutionary ascent from simplicity to complexity, propelled by the law of intrinsic causation, suggests a thought pattern so utterly persuasive to the human imagination, so conveniently logical (not to say intellectually seductive), and so deeply comforting and diagrammatically visualizable that it may seem difficult to imagine any other

mode of tradition. And yet, Bultmann's model is burdened with significant problems stemming from a lack of understanding of orality, gospel narrativity, and, last but not least, memory.

First, there is no such thing as "the original form" in oral speech. When the charismatic speaker pronounced a saying at one place and subsequently chose to deliver it elsewhere, neither he nor his hearers could have understood this other rendition as a secondhand version of the first one. And when the second rendition, delivered before a different audience, was at variance with the first one, neither the speaker nor his audience would have thought of differentiating between the primary, original wording and its secondary, derivative version. Instead, each proclamation was an autonomous speech act. There exists, therefore, in oral speech a multiplicity of original speech acts, or, to use a Heideggerian term, an equiprimordiality[8] of multiple speech acts, which suggests a principle entirely different from and indeed contrary to the notion of the one, original form.

Second, there is no spatial directionality inherent in speech. Words spoken are not spatial phenomena that lend themselves to representation in directional patterns. Speech is bound up with temporality, and therein lies the greatest difficulty we have in imagining it. Not only are spoken words inaccessible to developmental patterns, but they are un-imaginable in any diagrammatic form or fashion. Oral tradition is constituted by discrete acts of speaking, separated by intervals of non-speaking and silence, and partially retained and resignified in memories—altogether not as items that are connectable by sequential tracts. Speech, in other words, does not flow in this or that direction, nor does it by a law of intrinsic oral causality irresistibly build up toward textuality.

Third, it is evident that Bultmann cannot attribute constructive powers and narrative creativity to the final gospel productions. As he views them, they are almost entirely the outworkings of tradition. Mark, generally considered the oldest of the canonical gospels, merely brings to fruition what in the tradition had already been well on the way toward the gospel formation. Because the gospels are considered the expected summations of pre-gospel processes, they offer in principle little new information over and above tradition, and are for this reason unworthy of any attentive narrative consideration.

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8   Heidegger 1986:131: "Das Phänomen der Gleichursprünglichkeit der konstitutiven Momente ist in der Ontologie oft missachtet worden zufolge einer methodisch ungezügelten Tendenz zur Herkunftsnachweisung von allem und jedem aus einem einfachen 'Urgrund'."

Although Bultmann's concept of the synoptic tradition is utterly different from that developed by Gerhardsson, both are ironically agreed in their depreciation of gospel narrativity. Neither model manages to account for and appreciate the gospels' distinct narrative designs. If for Bultmann the gospels as narratives are uninteresting because they represent the expected outcome of an evolutionary, expanding tradition, for Gerhardsson the gospels lack innovation because the genetic code of their basic structure had been inscribed into tradition at its very inception. And so it happened that each of the two major models that have been developed in the twentieth century about the relation between gospel and oral tradition were incapable of appreciating the literary, poetic autonomy of the synoptic gospels.

Fourth, Bultmann's monumental scholarly contributions, which span New Testament texts and their historical environment, hermeneutics, and theology, display no sustained reflection on memory. The concept is without mention in his scholarly work. This vacuum seems to be related to his inadequate understanding of both orality and gospel textuality. The phenomenon of orality, this irreducibly interlocutionary practice of communication—including aspects such as speech and performance, orally patterned discourse and the interaction of *aides-mémoire* with cognition, the role of audiences, the somatic components of memory, and remembering versus memorization—constitutes a syndrome that did not occupy his scholarly thought. While he was fully aware of the mnemonic functioning of many sayings and stories, he never pursued this basic insight in the direction of what Ong has referred to as "the oral noetic processes" (1982:64), or what we might call an oral hermeneutics. His focus was entirely on determining the original form of a saying or story and its setting in the life of the community, and not on the rhetorical, performative, memorial aspects of speech. As far as the phenomenon of synoptic gospel textuality was concerned, he could not bring himself to acknowledge inventive, productive, memorial activity on the level of narrative construction. The gospel of John was different because it seemed obviously shaped by a particular theological idea. But in the case of the synoptics, tradition was the creative agent and the gospel its natural outcome.

More than half a century after Bultmann's history of the synoptic tradition John D. Crossan published another comprehensive analysis of dominical sayings. As far as taxonomic clarity and classificatory exactitude are concerned, *In Fragments* (1983) by far eclipses the pioneering studies of Bultmann, Gerhardsson, and Riesner. Juxtaposing words and their variant versions in parallel columns, Crossan provides useful insights into the vast and variegated scope of the dominical sayings. However, it needs to be pointed out that *In Fragments* is far from being an exhaustive inventory of

all the available materials. His study, which is limited to Jesus sayings or aphorisms in Mark and Q[9] and their parallels in Matthew and Luke, as well as to some extracanonical sources, comprises altogether 113 items. Three years later Crossan published *Sayings Parallels* (1986), a workbook designed for the study of Jesus' parables, aphorisms, dialogues (discursive interactions with interlocutors), and stories (provided they contain sayings). In addition to the sources previously used, his new work consulted the fourth gospel, all New Testament texts, fragments of apocryphal gospels, the Nag Hammadi texts, the Apostolic Fathers, and the early patristic tradition. The sum total of sayings accounted for in the *Sayings Parallels* is 503, more than four times as many as Crossan had inventoried in *In Fragments*. One needs to get a sense of the vastness of the sayings tradition, all the more so since Gerhardsson and Riesner, who opted for continuity of tradition and cold memory, failed to examine the sayings in detail.

What is striking, apart from the sheer quantity of sayings, is the scope of their variability. There seem to be no real limits to the plural modes of modification, mutation, and interpretation. Abbreviations and expansions, substitutions and transpositions, in short all kinds of changes are observable. Now it is self-evident that these observations are made on the basis of written materials. This is a matter of some import because the thesis advocated by Gerhardsson and Riesner views the gospels as the written repositories of a tradition that was subject to relatively minor changes. Crossan's comprehensive analysis of the dominical sayings does not support this thesis.

From the perspective of media dynamics it is entirely possible that textuality traffics more freely with the sayings than oral tradition. As we observed earlier, scribality's detached status from direct accountability vis-à-vis hearers may engender greater compositional productivity. And yet, one may ask whether the scribally accessible sayings materials should not look different if indeed they were rooted in mnemotechnical procedures that were committed to the principle of verbatim reproduction and retention. Is it in fact imaginable that Jesus expounded his message with rote regularity and pedantic repetitiveness, and without any regard for the diversity of audiences and circumstances? If that were the case he would have operated in violation of one of the basic principles of ancient rhetoric, namely that the relationship of speaker and hearers inevitably influences what is said and how it is said. Is it possible, historically and theologically, to think of Jesus'

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[9] The symbol Q stands for a hypothetically reconstructed source (or gospel) of sayings (or discourses) that may have been used by Matthew and Luke in the composition of their respective gospels.

personal proclamation as having reached his hearers in a state of timeless neutrality and removed from direct existential engagement? Undoubtedly, remembering was a crucial concern for speaker and hearers alike, but the culture of remembering is entirely compatible with active memorial composition and appropriation, and does not as a rule imply rote memorization.

The Eclipse of Gospel Narrativity

As we turn from tradition to gospel composition we remember that Bultmann, Gerhardsson, and Riesner had made little allowance for the compositional integrity of the gospel narratives. This exposes a malaise in biblical studies that points to yet another repression of the dynamic role of memory.

Long before Bultmann, Gerhardsson, and Riesner, the gospels as narratives have been the cause of great difficulties for interpreters. While narrative has proven to be fertile ground for theoretical issues such as fictionalizing versus factuality, revealing versus concealing, content versus form, foundationalism versus revisionism, story versus discourse, myth versus history, and so forth, the immanent world of the gospels has—until recently—remained strangely inaccessible. Despite intense scholarly attention to the gospels, the history of gospel scholarship over the last 250 years could be negatively judged as an escape from narrativity.

In a noted book entitled *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* (1974), Hans Frei has documented with painstaking precision the inability of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century biblical scholarship to capture the narrative shape and logic of the gospels. This loss of narrative comprehension, the so-called eclipse, occurred because priority was given not to narrative itself, but to what narrative was assumed to be referencing.

Whether biblical narrative was considered to have been constructed on the logic of history, in which case narrative significance was equated with external events, or whether it was seen to be encapsulated in ideas and ethical counsel, meaning was in each case held to be separable from the narrative plot. In one instance, narrative pointed to what was assumed to matter above all else, namely the history of the narrative's subject matter, while in the other case narrative was understood to refer to what was theologically superior, namely ideas. In each instance, what was assumed to be the essential core was extrapolated from what was downgraded to an inessential frame, and the result was a loss of narrative reading. One failed to grasp the narrative realism and to take narrative seriously not merely as a

clue to historical and ideational references, but as a literary entity in its own right.

Frei chose to interpret historical and ideational referentiality with a very broad compass. In principle, any reading of narrative that prioritized a narrative-neutral world above, beneath, or in front of the biblical narrative was suspect, whether that world was constituted by "historical events, the general consciousness or form of life of an era, a system of ideas, the author's intention, the inward moral experience of individuals, the structure of human existence, or some combination of them" (1974:278). What he objected to was a reading that subordinated the narrative configuration to its assumed subject matter—whatever that may be.

In bemoaning the loss of narrative reading and in invoking the ideal of the narratological *sensus literalis* of the gospels, Frei appeared to champion what in the Anglo-American literary world came to be called the New Criticism, a rigorous type of formalist aesthetics that insisted on the autonomous, internally unified organism of the text as the bearer of meaning. Notably, however, Frei's professed intellectual sympathies did not lie with Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren, W.K. Wimsatt, and other representative advocates and practitioners of the New Criticism, but rather with Derridean deconstructionism. At least as he came to view his eclipse of biblical narrative ex post facto, it appeared that he intended to expose what in postmodern terminology would be called the logocentric passion of biblical studies. Logocentrism, this deep-rooted desire to attribute transcendental significance to the referents of language, be they historical or ideational, was at fault for distracting attention away from the narrative signifiers toward assumed signifieds, the alleged carriers of full presence. Because Derridean deconstructionism had refocused attention to the internal play of signifiers, and was therefore treating narrative with greater respect than either historical or phenomenological hermeneutics, Frei, when pushed for his own intellectual identity, would be inclined to side with Derrida: "It is this displacement or divestment of a signified world into the intertextuality of an indefinite sequence of signifiers—a focal insistence of the Deconstructionists—that is so apt in their critique of phenomenological hermeneutics" (1986:56). Frei's project concerning the rehabilitation of narrative was not, therefore, an outgrowth of the New Criticism and its often observed resemblance to classical Christian theology, which, it is said, endowed the sacred text with the stature of a complete and authoritative presence of meaning, embodying a literary correspondence to the dogma of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, incarnated as divine Word. Rather, what Frei was up against was the eclipse of biblical narrative that, he seemed to suggest, was effected by a logocentric thirst for ideational purity or factual

correctness, a striving after underived origin, which in its desire to abstract ideas or historicity from the assumed narrative frame was compelled to view a strictly narrative reading of the gospels as superficial or simply wrongheaded.

It may be said, therefore, that Frei's intellectual endeavor, which documented the history and rationality of the eclipse of biblical narrative more than it illuminated the nature of narrative itself, exposed, willingly or unwillingly, a theological complicity with the eclipse of biblical narrative. Theological rationalists and superrationalists alike aspired to divest the text of its narrative "framework" in order to retrieve its quintessential reality. All tended to view form as an impediment to epiphany.

Even though Frei did not, as far as I can see, lean on classical antiquity or medieval hermeneutics and their considered treatment of the linguistic sign (Manetti 1993; Eco and Marmo 1989), it may be claimed that his study exposed the implications of the signs' character of language as the underlying linguistic, philosophical, and theological crux with regard to the interpretation of biblical narrative. Exemplarily formulated by Augustine, the theory states that all words, written and spoken, refer to or signify corresponding realities; words "merely intimate that we should look for realities; they do not present them to us for our knowledge."[10] Deeply entrenched in the ancient linguistic method of knowing, the Augustinian signs theory had it within its powers to induce readers and interpreters of the gospels to focus less on narratives themselves and more on what they were assumed to be referring to. Conceivably, Frei's project to deconstruct referentiality shows a closer affinity to Derrida's relentlessly elaborate deconstruction of his beloved North African compatriot's signs theory than to the Christian romanticism of the New Critics.

We have seen that the eclipse of biblical narrative, which Frei had documented through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, extended deeply into the twentieth century. Whether one approached the gospels from the perspective of form criticism[11] (Bultmann), or from a view opposing form criticism (Gerhardsson), or with an interest in and equipped with the tools of historical criticism (Riesner), understanding of the interior consistency of narrative reality was almost always lacking. It appeared to be

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[10] *De Magistro* 11.36.1-3: hactaenus verba valerunt, quibus ut plurimum tribuam, admonent tantum, ut quaeramus res, non exhibent, ut norimus.

[11] The objective of form criticism is to isolate what presumably were orally operating sayings and stories from their gospel contexts, to locate their function in early Christian communal settings, and to reconstruct a history of the transmission of oral traditions.

exceedingly difficult to come to terms with the notion that the gospels' narrative emplotments did not merely illustrate or point to meaning but constituted meaning in their entirety. The eclipse of biblical, and especially gospel, narrative was regularly accompanied by a loss of memorial sensibilities. For if one views the gospels primarily as an outgrowth of tradition, or as carrier of history, and if one focuses meaning on underlying ideas or history, one will never come to appreciate the gospels' literarily plotted configurations, which are to a considerable extent, as we shall see, the result of socially engaged and productive memorial activities.

The Typographic Captivity

There is every indication that the eclipse of gospel narrative and its accompanying loss of memorial sensibilities had become institutionalized in biblical studies. While it is true, as we shall see below, that greater appreciation for the narrative nature of the gospels has recently been developed in gospel studies, the discipline remains beholden to basic heuristic tools and models without which we cannot imagine the scholarly work of gospel studies, and which are profoundly insensitive to memory as a productive arbiter in the composition of the gospel narratives.

For the most part biblical studies are being conducted as a fiercely text-centered discipline. This is a commonplace given the fact that the Bible, including its compositional and receptionist histories, is constituted as a textual enterprise of staggering proportions. But as far as the very concept of text is concerned, we are laboring under a cultural discrepancy that separates the ancient media world from modernity's communications culture. On the one hand, biblical texts without exception came into existence as chirographically produced papyri, scrolls, and codices. Modern biblical scholarship, on the other hand, is a child of the typographic age. The typographic technology deeply affected both interpretations of and attitudes toward the Bible. On the one hand, the print Bible, the first major mechanically standardized book of early modernity, helped pave the way for humanistic and ultimately historical-critical scholarship and its fixation on original intent and individualized authorship. On the other hand, the printed text's systematic orderliness, which "effectively reified the word" (Ong 1982:119), pointed toward categorical literalism, culminating in Protestant fundamentalism—a modern, not an ancient or medieval phenomenon (Kelber 1999). Modern biblical studies largely learned its basic trade on the technologically transformed print Bible. As a consequence, a typographic consciousness has deeply penetrated biblical studies, and an ingrained print

mentality has shaped basic assumptions, methods, and even theories—a development that has proven hostile toward gospel narrativity and memorial practices.

The so-called Two-Source Hypothesis can conveniently be used to demonstrate the point. Since the middle of the nineteenth century, this hypothesis has become a fundamental explanatory model in gospel scholarship. It is widely, although not universally, accepted as the most plausible theory that accounts for the interrelationship among the synoptic gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke. Because these three synoptic gospels are remarkably similar, to the point of exhibiting verbatim versions, but also remarkably different as far as the existent wording, themes, and arrangements are concerned, scholars have assumed some kind of interrelationship among the three. What in scholarship is known as the Synoptic Problem concerns issues such as the compositional priority of one of the synoptics, and the literary interrelationship among all three. It is one of those problems in the humanities that appears ever more puzzling and virtually irresolvable the more deeply one looks into the textual evidence. The Two-Source Hypothesis argues that Matthew and Luke independently used Mark as their basic narrative source, to which they added teaching materials drawn from a second, hypothetically reconstructed document known as Q, which consisted largely of Jesus sayings.

It would be difficult to consult an introduction to the New Testament that does not display the theory in diagrammatic fashion, displaying the view that Matthew and Luke each used two sources, Mark and Q, in the composition of their respective gospels. To account for Matthean and Lukan materials not covered by Mark and Q, one often resorts to additional sources labeled SM and SL respectively, thus in effect postulating a Four-Source Hypothesis. The assumed connections between gospels and other gospels or literary sources are represented in straight lines, displaying an unwavering directionality and finality. In their full implementation these diagrammatic models attribute the texts of Matthew and Luke in their entirety to literary sources, thereby conveying the impression that the composers of these gospel texts are intelligible largely as ingenious jugglers of sources, and that their compositions result from the combination of other texts. There is no room in this model for orality, for memorial processes, for social engagement, for mental compositional activities, and for extratextual sensibilities of any kind.

The problematic nature of this model has not escaped the attention of some observers. Willi Marxsen, who took the lead in the modern rediscovery of the gospels' narrative emplotment, articulated an entirely appropriate criticism vis-à-vis the Two-Source Hypothesis (1968:116):

> We also need to note that the Two-Source theory looks at the connections between Mk. and the other Synoptics merely from the angle of literary dependence. But we now know that in their writing Matthew and Luke were influenced by definite theological concepts, which often resulted in a very independent treatment of their models.

While it is widely conceded that Matthew and Luke use their sources flexibly, even creatively, the explanatory model for Matthean and Lukan compositions nonetheless relies exclusively on literary sources. One would never guess, from pondering these diagrams, that Matthew and Luke represent autosemantic narrative constructions whose inventive center of composition lies outside their respective literary sources. But when we claim here that the explanatory model of the Two-Source Hypothesis does not take Matthew's and Luke's active treatment of their sources into account, are we not then conceding that it fails to represent crucial compositional activities, and hence is inadequate at best and seriously misleading at most?

The second example concerns the so-called gospel parallels, a universally popular teaching and research tool that lines up the synoptic gospels (and John) in parallel fashion, allowing students to undertake critically comparative studies. Few paradigms have more deeply impacted our habits of thought than this systematic organization of gospel texts into parallel columns. In laying out the gospels into tidy columns one next to the other, study habits that nurture a growing conviction that a gospel text is comprehensible largely or exclusively in relation to other gospel texts have been internalized, and a mental image of a closed textual system of gospel relations has been canonized. Texts are made to operate in a textual universe, deriving from and feeding into new texts, hence finding their raison d'être in an exclusively textual universe. So deeply engrafted in our mindset is this model that we need reminding of the artificiality of this arrangement, which is designed to feed our analytical needs but in no way corresponds to the oral and chirographic dynamics of the ancient marketplace of communications. But if absolutely basic research models and teaching tools are as seriously flawed as we claim they are, what does that mean for gospel scholarship and its results?

In further exemplifying the consequential typographic bias, I shall briefly digress into a different medium. I will reflect on an oil painting, produced by a Valentin de Boulogne and dated around 1600. The painting

represents the apostle Paul and is entitled "Saint Paul Writing his Epistles."[12] The apostle is sitting at a desk, dipping his quill into an inkwell. He is surrounded by books, manuscripts, and a notebook, all of which he appears to consult in composing his letter. Produced approximately 150 years after the invention of printing and the publication of the Gutenberg Bible, the painting's dominant impression is one of the omnipresence of texts. At a time when the duplicating effects of the print medium had dramatically increased the availability of texts, it seemed entirely unimaginable that Paul could have composed his letters without ample recourse to texts.

The only concession to ancient scribality is a scroll in the right corner of the table. But the overwhelming impression the painting conveys is that of Paul as textual scholar, who reads, compares, and reflects on different texts—one of them being a printed text (presumably the Hebrew Bible)—in order to compose his own text. This is how the typographic imagination of the late sixteenth century, a thoroughly literary, text-centered imagination, conceived of the composition of the Pauline letters: texts, even letters, grow out of other texts.

Under the impact of this artistic imagination it requires a strenuous act of historical imagination to recall that the Paul of the first century did not write but dictated his letters, that all his writings, including the most intricate theological arguments in Galatians and Romans, were mentally composed, and that large segments of his arguments are structured according to the conventions of Jewish-Hellenistic rhetoric. The painting has succeeded in displacing Paul's oral, rhetorical, scribal culture with the exclusively literary, textual, typographical culture of the sixteenth to seventeenth century, and it did so around the same time that rhetoric was eliminated from the curriculum of most European universities.

We may look upon this painting as a metaphor for the kind of cultural displacement I see happening in biblical studies, and also, I should like to add, in parts of classical and medieval studies. The two explanatory and research models I have submitted for discussion exhibit not simply the issue of intertextuality (Clayton and Rothstein 1991; Buchanan 1994; Genette 1982; Culler 1975)—a commonplace in literary criticism that expresses awareness of the fact that texts cannot be created simply out of lived experience. The crux of these models is that they represent diagrammatically constructed closed worlds, systems within which every item of the tradition has been assigned its due place. This is no longer ancient or medieval intertextuality, which always recognized interfaces and

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[12] I could easily have selected one of many stylized pictures of an evangelist as writer, but the Pauline example seemed to me even more persuasive.

permeable boundaries, but modernity's print mentality with a vengeance, a mentality that locks all items into typographic space, relentlessly strives after finality, totality even, and seems oblivious to worlds outside its boundaries. Together these two models confine the gospels and their sources to a tightly configured textual space that leaves little room for particular narrative formations and no room for memorial activity.

The Poetics of Gospel Narrativity

It was only during the last four decades that some biblical scholars began to approach the gospels with the kind of literary-narratological singlemindedness that Hans Frei had envisioned (Wilder 1964; Petersen 1978; Rhoads 1982; Rhoads and Michie 1982; Poland 1985; Moore 1989; Fowler 1991). The most significant outcome of these efforts has been the recovery of separate Markan, Matthean, Lukan, and Johannine literary identities. At this point, the literary exploration has progressed far enough that we can speak of the narrative poetics of a Mark, Matthew, Luke, or John. It is now clearly demonstrable that distinctive narrative points of view are mediated by thematic, rhetorical, and literary devices such as the particular arrangements of episodes, distinct plot causalities, the casting and typecasting of characters, framing devices of various kinds, ring compositions and intercalations, strategies of misunderstanding and role reversals, multiple forms of redundancies, pointedly executed polemics, topological-geographical configurations, and so forth. Many, although by no means all, aspects of the gospels show evidence of intended selectivity, valuation, and composition. It is, therefore, increasingly apparent that each gospel is the result of a deliberate compositional volition and a distinctly focused rhetorical outreach. In other words, a growing number of biblical scholars have come to the realization that each canonical gospel is composed with an individual literary integrity.

Once we are cognizant of the plotted nature of the gospels, we can no longer attribute the sole motivating agency for the gospel narratives to the forces of tradition. Bultmann's assumption that the gospels in their entirety are the outworking of tradition has now become untenable.[13] Indeed, once

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[13] Bultmann's basic assumptions about the gospels have been continued in our generation by Helmut Koester. For him Mark "was more of a collector than an author" (1990:286) or, as he put it elsewhere, Mark was "primarily a faithful collector" (289). He appears to have overlooked at least four decades of fruitful work on the narrative nature of Mark.

we make allowance for the gospels' narrative intentionality, e.g., their ability to score dramatic points, to channel discernible values, and to dramatize corrective views, the paradigm of source theories as the basic rationale for gospel compositions loses a good deal of its explanatory value. This is not, of course, to deny the shaping influence of pre-gospel traditions, including so-called sources. But the weight of tradition notwithstanding, in the last analysis it is the final compositional volition that shaped tradition, and not vice versa.

Nor will recognition of the plotted nature of the gospels henceforth permit us to honor the prevalent convention of privileging ideas over their narrative elaboration, and of separating content from form. Because in narrative meaning is constituted by narrative, a conscientious narrative appreciation will refrain from abstracting theological ideas from their narrative enlistment. For example, as far as the gospels are concerned, there is, strictly speaking, no so-called christology apart from narrative, because the protagonist comes to life, acquires identity, pursues his focused career, and submits to execution within the coordinates of a narrative world, which is composed of the interfacing of all the words and incidents that make up the narrative.

This is not to say that the gospels are fully plotted narratives in the sense of a detective story in which every single detail turns out to be crucial. Story has a history, and the gospel narratives are in large part episodic with many elements not fully under authorial control. Nor do we endorse a narrative poetics that is synonymous with full narrative closure. Undeniably, the gospels are compositions with deep diachronic roots in oral and written traditions. From the perspective of both production and of consumption, they open out to realities outside their narrative boundaries. They are, we shall see, informed by issues that are current in their respective communal settings and therefore deliberately audience-oriented. The point, however, is that there are overarching thematic plot constructions that have a way of subsuming the episodes into a semblance of narrative unity.

By way of example, let us see what a narrative interpretation of the classic theological concept of eschatology may look like. To begin with, one may view narrative as the genre that is exceptionally fitted to mediate the human experience of temporality and to constitute time-consciousness (Ricoeur 1984-88). The gospels, like all narratives, explore miscellaneous potentials for configuring temporality and indulge in fictional experiments with time. Instead of extrapolating the theological idea of eschatology from its narrative implications, we will trace temporality through its narrative engagement.

What is immediately evident in reading the gospels is an unequal distribution of time. The narrator controls the tempo of time, speeding up the story of the protagonist's life through a rapid succession of episodes quickened by the staccato rhythm of strong, swift temporal beats, and slowing time down in the death story, whose narrative length seems out of proportion to the narrated few days. The effect of the decelerating narrative tempo is an intensification of the solemnity of the last days.[14]

As far as the narration of eschatology is concerned, the apocalyptic speech of Mark 13 offers insight into a dramatic reinvention of time. Notably, the speech "disrupts" the narrative sequence precisely at the neuralgic point that gave rise to the aporia of time, namely the destruction of the sacred center. Strategically placed at the peak of an elaborate anti-temple narrative build-up that culminates in the protagonist's prediction of the destruction of the temple, the discourse is constructed to respond to the temple disaster and the crisis it has engendered. It deviates from the story line of Jesus' life because the severity of the crisis calls for novel temporal modalities that appear not fully explicable via the narrative mechanism that mediates the protagonist's own time.

Rupturing the narrative mediation of the protagonist's life, the speech conjures the specter of wars and rumors of wars, of conflict among political kingdoms, of earthquakes, famines, and persecution. Here the protagonist's voice more emphatically than in other discourses is the narrator's, speaking above the heads of the listening disciples and addressing the readers of the gospel (13:14: "Let the reader understand"). The central event around which the speech is constructed is signified as "the desolating sacrilege" (13:14), a metaphor that summons the reader to search for clues in the informing context of Daniel. Yet physical destruction is not what is said to account for the extremity of the crisis and the depth of grief. The crux of tribulation is that it disconfirms a time that had been pregnant with signs and omens, and crowded with prophets and Christs. Saturated with promises and full of expectations, it was perceived to be eschatological prime time, messianic time, the *kairos*. But contrary to dreams and expectations, all signs of full time were consumed in the conflagration of war and in the horrors of flight, in killings and homelessness. And so, full time is shown to have been lost time, not simply in the sense of having been a time of destruction, or time deleted and abolished, or simply time past, but in the sense of having been a

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[14] A narrative assessment of the passion narrative will, therefore, conclude that the obvious discrepancy that exists between the episodic life story of Jesus and the more coherently flowing story of his death may be due to a narrative rationale more than to sources. See Kelber 1976.

time misunderstood and misconstrued. Deconstructing full time, the speech also denounces the presumptions of the present, and discredits all claims to a metaphysics of present, viewing the presence as a blessing in disguise at best and time of absence at worst. Extricating *kairos* from the ruins of a misconstrued history, full time, if it is to be had at all, is projected into the future. Time lost is the thing to be gained. In an almost Proustian sense, redemption is the regaining of lost time.

The readers of Mark's gospel are advised to integrate this specific temporal reconceptualization with the gospel's fuller narrative mediation of time, and to synchronize all narrative configurations of time with their own time. In particular, they need to connect the crisis of time and its narrated resolution in Mark 13 with Jesus' announcement of the *kairos* and the speech's anticipation of full time in the future (13:24-26). This comprehensive synchronization of the narrative's temporal emplotment, including the aporia of time, with the readers' time would appear to position both the crisis of time and the readers' time in an interim period framed by the fullness of the *kairos* in Jesus' past and the future coming of the Son of Man. This is what a reading of the gospel that has undertaken the shift from the classic theological concept of eschatology to an informed appreciation of the narrative construction of temporality may look like.

Memorial Arbitration

To grasp the full implications of the poetics of gospel narrativity, we need to recognize that all four narratives take up and address topics that are live issues in tradition and/or in their respective communal settings. For example, Mark unambiguously endorses the tradition concerning Jesus' resurrection, yet chooses to withhold a resurrection appearance story both from the disciples in the narrative and from the readers of the narrative (16:1-8). He is clearly aware of the traditional theme of Jesus' resurrection appearance legitimating apostolic authority, but he chooses to dissociate himself (and his readers) from it. This is an example illustrating that narrative's deep engagement with and deconstructive attitude toward tradition. Luke is known for his inclination to further enhance pro-Roman proclivities that are already in evidence in Mark. For example, three times the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate announces Jesus' innocence (Lk 23:4, 14, 22). Clearly, the narrative shows keen awareness of and strives to negotiate a rapprochement with the political realities of the Roman Empire. The gospel of John dramatizes a rivalry between Peter and the Beloved Disciple, the latter, carrying the unqualified blessing of the narrator, ever so

often surpassing Peter. It suggests a prior and informed knowledge of a
Petrine type of tradition that, from the narrator's viewpoint, is in tension
with his own religious and communal identity, represented by the Beloved
Disciples. Matthew, finally, to cite one of the more notorious examples,
wages an unmitigated polemic against the Pharisees. This—by far the most
Jewish gospel, counseling not merely Torah observance but Torah
radicalization à la Qumran—is also the one gospel that makes anti-
Pharisaism a deliberate narrative theme. There is a broad-based scholarly
consensus that Matthew's narrative mirrors the post-70 CE conflict between
a Pharisaic, rabbinic type of Judaism and Matthew's dissident, messianic
Judaism. The debate between these two representatives of Judaism will
have reached a new level of intensity in the aftermath of the colossal
catastrophe of the temple's conflagration. This event forced a debate both in
Judaism and among the followers of Jesus with a view toward the future of
post-70 CE Judaism. In this context, the gospel's vituperative language is
designed to delegitimate a Pharisaically guided Judaism, and to carve out
and sanction the social and religious identity of Matthew's messianic
Judaism. Within a short time, Matthew lost the battle for Judaism. These
examples, which can easily be multiplied, demonstrate the gospels' agility in
critically and creatively molding their narratives as they appropriate and
respond to issues that are live concerns both in their respective communal
settings and in the larger Greco-Roman-Jewish historical environment.

From this particular insight into gospel narration, let us now probe the
issues of gospel versus tradition, gospel composition, gospel
interrelationships, and stable versus dynamic memorial processes—all issues
that are at the heart of this essay. Once we have taken full cognizance of the
compositional artistry and respective narrative autonomy of each canonical
gospel, we are bound to acknowledge that gospel parallels and source
diagrams are at best formalistic propositions that beg, indeed cover up, vital
questions about the nature of the gospels.

When we consider, first, that there is a deliberate and creative
imagination at work in the formation of the gospels that gives them distinct
narrative profiles; and when, second, we observe the gospels' plural
implications in traditions both past and present, and in voices and themes
that far exceed one or two identifiable literary sources; and when, third, we
pay particular attention to the gospels' polemical postures, which are as a
rule ad hoc constructions more than products of simple word-by-word
rewritings of sources, must we not inevitably come to the conclusion that
there cannot be a single unified field theory capable of explaining gospel
compositions and gospel relations entirely in terms of literary relations,
literary dependencies, and copying processes? Must we not think

then—quite apart from, or in addition to, or perhaps over and above literary sources—of a cultural matrix other than literary sources, of, for example, a memorial arbitration that retrieved and reproduced, selected and adapted tradition with a view toward one's own present?

With this question we return to our introductory review of current studies on memory and imagination ranging from Carruthers and Coleman all the way to Halbwachs and the Assmanns. While the modern scholar is brought up on the inviolate authority of texts and their relation to other texts, many ancient and medieval writers were more interested in the dynamics of reception and internalization. Both processes of composition and reading aloud were frequently described through metaphors of digestive activity (Carruthers 1990:164-69,192-94). Memory *inter alia* served the purpose of producing texts by way of composition, and of making it one's own by way of consumption. One of memory's deepest mysteries was its unfathomably immense capacity for storage. In the tenth book of his *Confessions* Augustine offers a sustained meditation on memory, going into rapture over this "large and boundless chamber," replete with "numberless secret and inexpressible windings," "the plains and caves and caverns, innumerable and innumerably full of innumerable kinds of things."[15] But when Augustine and the ancients praised memory, they were thinking not solely of the memorial powers of retrieval, memory's retentive, preservative, and iterative faculties. The proof of a superior memory lay also in its ability to mentally collect and store the items, to scan all stored materials, to call them up in their mental locations, to move them about and to reshuffle them. In the technical nomenclature of rhetoric, mnemonic storage existed in the interest of *inventio*, namely, the collecting and arranging of materials for the purpose of composing both speeches and texts.

To think of the gospels as ultimately works of productive memorial processes is to cultivate extratextual sensitivities, and to think of a cultural tissue at once more copious and more elusive than our linear perception of literary sources will allow. Consideration of the inventive role of memory suggests a judicious plugging into the web of cultural memory, retaining, collating, and adapting traditional items, reclaiming and citing some, responding critically and even deconstructively to others, while recontextualizing many so as to make them serviceable to the present. Last but not least, the model of productive memory also assigns forgetfulness its appropriate place. For forgetfulness, far from being an insignificant

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[15] *Confessiones* 10.8.15: penetrale amplum et infinitum; 10.8.13: qui secreti atque ineffabiles sinus eius; 10.17.26: campis et antris at cavernis innumerabilibus atque innumerabiliter plenis innumerabilium rerum.

appendix to tradition, is an essential correlate of remembering. In bringing the gospel narrative to present remembrance, its compositional processes are bound to function selectively, consigning to oblivion some memories while foregrounding others.

The deepest impulse driving the memorial composition of the gospels is the retrieval of the past for the benefit of the present. Transmission for the sake of preservation is not the only, or even most important, function of memory. Rather than aspiring to preserve the precious past as past, the cultural memory that we see operating in the formation of the gospels proceeds from the perspectives of the present because it seeks to legitimate the past as present. By drawing on the past from the perspective of the present, one retains not the past itself, but a recreated new past that accomodates present circumstances. In the words of Jan Assmann that serve as the epigraph to this piece: "In der Erinnerung wird Vergangenheit rekonstruiert."

This is why the gospel narratives as cultural memories always reflect the condition of their production. Selection, organization, and composition of materials are informed not predominantly by responsibility vis-à-vis the past, but more by ethical, communicative, and rhetorical accountability toward the present. And if this seems an exaggerated view, let us modify the wording by claiming that the gospels as memorial compositions seek to maintain an impossibly precarious balance between a simultaneous responsibility toward the past and toward the present, with a view as well toward the future. But what matters most in the literary-memorial composition of the gospels, I would insist, is not the preservation of tradition per se, but rather the maintenance of tradition for the purpose of shaping and preserving group identity.

Significantly impacted by the disaster of 70 CE, the gospel narrators regressed into tradition's sacred past. They remembered the beginnings of the renewal movement, focusing on the life and death of the unforgettable charismatic, and they did so in narrative form that accounted for and provided guidance under new and difficult circumstances. Viewed from this perspective, the gospels are neither the products of stable mnemonics, nor the result of strictly intra-gospel scribality, but symptoms of the selective functioning of scribal and memorial processes.

Epilogue: The Dilemma of Memory and Manuscript

In the thousands of pages I have read on the so-called Synoptic Problem, rarely ever is the issue of the materiality of communication taken

into account. It is simply taken for granted that the issue is a literary one that is susceptible to an exclusively literary solution. And yet no theory of the gospels' literary nature and composition will ever be valid unless it is imaginable in terms of ancient media realities that are by no means exhausted in literary terms. How can one imagine—technically, scribally, orally, memorially, compositionally—a scribal authority plugging into multiple social, ideational, and historical matrices, while at the same time engaging in near-verbatim copying of some texts (in the case of Matthew and Luke at least), while all the while engaging in a fairly focused compositional activity?

Technically, the production of many ancient and medieval manuscripts was the result of a division of labor. Often a scribal expert in charge of the chirographic production wrote from dictation. He had little or no authority over the formulation of the text. That was the business of the dictator. Since simple scribal copying will fall short of an explanation for the gospel compositions, may we conceive of a process of mental composition, and of the dictator as the intellectual, imaginative locus from which the gospels unfolded? In other words, can one imagine the dictator mentally in control of texts to the point of verbatim remembering, and versed as well in multiple traditions, themes, and social networkings, and also able to reshape written and unwritten traditions with a view toward both the present and the future? Or should one think of a process of composition in the process of writing, and view both the scribe and scribality as the locus of inventive production? Here we have reached the limits of how we can presently envision the nature and composition of the gospels. But this much does seem clear to me: memory and manuscript are the twin categories that are critical for our understanding of the gospels and their narrative compositions. Deeper knowledge of the dynamic interfacing of memory and manuscript would bring us closer to finding a resolution to the intricate issues that lie at the heart of the Synoptic Problem.

Rice University

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Interpreting Lyric Meaning in Irish Tradition: Love and Death in the Shadow of Tralee

Thomas A. DuBois

In the study of oral poetics, progressively greater attention and accord have been paid to the capacities of the traditional audience, that group of knowledgeable individuals for whom or before whom a poem or song was originally performed. Past research on oral or oral-derived works, conditioned by certain fundamental assumptions regarding texts and authors, focused on the text itself or on the skills or identity of a reconstructed author/performer. The audience involved—not seldom long lost in the past—was often simply assumed, its interpretative arsenal and methods subsumed under tabulations of information with which audience members were said to have been familiar: "folklore," "native lays and traditions," "analogues," "traditional matter," "vernacular learning." In his seminal 1936 essay on *Beowulf*, J. R. R. Tolkien used just these terms to describe a set of information shared between author and audience that he found implied by the rich fabric of allusions and contrasts of imagery inherent in the Old English poem. In describing these, he was able to conclude that "the whole must have succeeded admirably in creating in the minds of the poet's contemporaries the illusion of surveying a past, pagan but noble and fraught with deep significance . . ." (107). Dorothy Whitelock's *The Audience of Beowulf* (1951) took these assumptions regarding the "minds of the poet's contemporaries" further by trying to establish what backgrounds, gender, and livelihoods the "alert and intelligent" audience of the work was likely to have had in the first place. But as scholarship revealed ever-greater complexities in both the composition and performance of oral works, some scholars refused to accord an equal sophistication to their audiences: Paull F. Baum (1960), for instance, roundly rejected Whitelock's assumptions, preferring instead to see *Beowulf* as the product of a genius poet writing largely only for himself and probably comprehensible to barely a handful of highly gifted readers. And although modern reception theory has rekindled scholarly interest in the audience as a significant part of the performance of

verbal art (Jauss 1974, Iser 1989), it remains true that relatively little ethnographic work has aimed at elucidating the role(s) of competent audience members in the act of interpreting a given performance.

In a critical climate such as this, scholarship that explores audience competence in the interpretation of oral poetry, termed variously "oral literary criticism" (Dundes 1966, Narayan 1995), "traditional referentiality" (Foley 1991), or "native hermeneutics" (DuBois 1996), offers valuable insights. It allows us to deepen and expand the arc of knowledge that we may assume of a traditional audience to encompass not only the exact "traditional matter" with which the audience was familiar but also the *manner* in which such an audience approached the interpretative challenges of the work as performed. And although we may never know with absolute certainty just how much or just *how* the original audience of a work like *Beowulf* actually understood the *Beowulf* text, we may look to living oral traditions today for some inkling of the actual interpretative competencies expected of native audiences in receiving performances of oral poetry or song. If these can be shown to be complex—as complex, indeed, as the genres they accompany—then we are in a position to accord past audiences the esteem evinced by Tolkien and Whitelock rather than the apparent disdain shown by Baum.

Since the appearance of Albert Lord's *Singer of Tales* (1960) a degree of scholarly consensus has developed regarding the kinds of knowledge commanded by singers and, perhaps more passively, by their audiences. Among scholars in the field, it is generally granted that audiences share with their performers not only stores of common knowledge (particular plot or character details, and distinctive turns of phrase) but also broader narrative patterns and assumptions regarding how such elements will be combined into overall performances. These audience expectations can be termed "generic" in the sense that they are based on shared (but ever negotiated) assumptions about how one performs a given *genre*: what works for an audience in a myth or epic performance, in other words, may differ from what the same audience is likely to expect or accept in the performance of a different genre. Further, any genre is likely to possess hermeneutic conventions concerning how an audience ought to interpret the choices and achievements of any given performance within the tradition. In a very real sense, because performers share these conventions with their audiences, they become members of their own audience, evaluating their own distinctive contributions along lines conditioned by past performances, by the weight of tradition. An audience as such is not *a priori* inferior to the author/performer: it exerts influence over the performance as constituted, it

sustains the performance in its execution, and ultimately it shares in deciding the meaning that the performance is said to express.

It is in this light that I present the following analysis of the apparent negotiated meaning of two lyric songs performed in 1998 by Michael Lyne of Tandragee, County Meath, Ireland. This study is part of a larger research project that focuses on North European lyric songs: a genre characterized by its focus not on an explicit plot (as in narrative songs) but on the depiction of feelings, personalities, or situations glimpsed in the persona of an inscribed lyric "speaker," whose words or perceptions make up the fabric of the song. In their freedom from the immediate strictures of erecting and furthering a narrative plot, lyric songs represent startlingly open texts, ones surprisingly indeterminate in their overt meanings. To a listener from outside the tradition, the song may appear cryptic or confused and the question of what a "knowing audience" would make of it springs readily to mind. Yet within the local lyric tradition itself, this openness is artfully filled by normative modes of interpretation that, along with the songs themselves, constitute the tradition. A lyric may be glossed by means of a narrative contained partly within the lines of the song or absent entirely from the text at hand and provided only subsequently in a prose explication (a "narrativizing" hermeneutics). Alternatively, the lyric may be explained with reference to the general lot of persons within a given situation, e.g., the "typical" plight of a daughter-in-law or orphan (a "proverbializing" hermeneutics). At the same time, or in contrast, the song may become meaningful to an audience or even to the singer through reference to its supposed creator, supposed recipient, or personal experiences or resonances evoked by the song. These generic hermeneutic strategies appear to vary from culture to culture, although it may be possible to offer an overall etic typology of them (DuBois 1996). By attending to them in a given lyric performance, we may arrive at some understanding of the complexities inherent in the traditional audience role and of the mechanisms by which a tradition selects and organizes the likely interpretations of an audience into a manageable set of norms. In so doing, we may take stock of the sophistication a living oral tradition may expect of its audience.

Mick Lyne's Performance

> When there's brighter days in Ireland,
> I'll come back and marry thee . . . .

Mick Lyne's voice rises in a thin quaver, embellished by the nearly endless gracenotes typical of Kerry Gaeltach *sean-nos* singing. At high points in his rendition, his voice mingles with the earthier, robust tones of Lizzy, Mick's West Meath bride of 27 years. It is a second marriage for them both: their courtship began in pubs after the deaths of their first spouses and when all of Mick's six children and Lizzy's two sons were raised and had moved away. Tape recorder in hand, I sit in their parlor by the grandson of Mick's eldest sister Noney, who emigrated to America when he was only fourteen. Mick, Noney's youngest brother, is singing me his repertoire. The date is July 17, 1998.

Few performative genres delineate the passage from normal discourse into performance as clearly and cogently as Irish lyric singing. The performer closes his eyes or stares off toward some otherwordly spot, his voice, mannerisms, and tone all transformed. He maintains this performative frame until the final syllables of his song, when he slips, tired but seemingly fulfilled, back into the conversational tone of the ordinary world. Yet elements trail Mick from this world to the next, and he would be a poor performer in Irish eyes if they did not. Mick takes stock of his audience, of himself, and of the issues of the day, creating a performance that uses a stable repertoire but comments on various issues germane to the moment at hand. This particular moment involved me as Mick and Lizzy's guest as well as political events then occurring in Northern Ireland, and the wider context of a changing Ireland. As we shall see, Mick's performance finds some of its meaning in each of these contextual factors, but only with the cooperation and collaboration of audience members.

I follow Margaret Mills (1991) in adopting a reflexive approach in this description, including myself as a factor and force in the performance. I was, after all, part of the audience that evening. Further, Mills shows in her study of Afghani storytellers the sometimes subtle, sometimes strident commentary on political situations that may occur within performances directed at ethnographers. Such turns out to be the case with the present performance as well.

Michael Lyne was born in 1912 in the tiny village of Ballinskelligs, a small cluster of farmsteads and fishing cottages on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean in the far west of County Kerry. He grew up in an Irish-speaking household of seven children and distinguished himself in early manhood as a

champion rower as well as a fine singer. He moved to County Meath in 1960 as part of a government resettlement program that gave Westerners from heavily populated areas tracts of redistributed farmland in Ireland's most productive agricultural regions. This program aided farmers like Mick, although it also caused some friction, particularly between newcomers to the region and local farmers or farmworkers, many of whom remained unable to acquire land of their own. Regional and linguistic differences, too, sometimes caused conflicts: Mick and his five daughters attest today to the hostility they faced in Meath when they first arrived. Perhaps partly in response to these conflicts, Mick maintained close ties with his family in Kerry, through letters and visits and eventually by telephone.

Mick visited America twice during my childhood and always made a point of singing his songs for the assembled families of his sister's children. When I visited Mick as a college student in the early 1980s, I was able to see him perform his songs in their primary context, the various pubs and homes of the area surrounding Tandragee. I remember during those visits that Mick's repertoire was well known to his friends and that they called for particular songs of his by name, rewarding performances (as was customary) with pints of porter. Favorite among these locals was Mick's rendering of *Little Thatched Cabin*, a song that relates the mournful nostalgia of a Kerryman remembering his humble childhood home. Clearly, people from Meath liked to hear their Kerryman friend sing a song that embodied his experience of migration to their region. They even enjoyed the songs Mick sang in Irish, itself a shining symbol of the unique Irish identity of Kerry and a symbol of Irish culture throughout the land. People asked what the Irish songs were about or they simply knew from previous performances. Quite often, they simply seemed to enjoy the sound of the language, but were also glad when the singing returned to English. When I wrote to Uncle Mick to ask if I could come and record his songs in 1998, it was important to Mick and Lizzy both that I requested the songs by name: I had to show an interest in and cognizance of his repertoire, it seemed, before I would be granted the performance I requested. In this way, Mick and Lizzy seemed to assimilate my request into the same category as that of pub friends' requests I had witnessed years before.

That locals of Mick and Lizzy's generation equated Mick with his repertoire on some very essential level was evident from a number of comments I heard during my stay in 1998. For most people in Mick and Lizzy's acquaintance, Mick's particular life experiences as a migrant to the region are crystallized and embodied in his songs, even when they usually refer to emigration to America rather than migration within Ireland. When a friend mistakenly heard that Mick had died, for instance, she called Lizzy on

the phone, playing her recording of Mick's singing while she spoke tearful condolences to the supposed widow. Lizzy simply laughed and said that she could hear the same from the living Mick, sitting beside her in the house. For both women, it was the singing that characterized Mick and expressed his essence to others.

Mick, too, shares this view of his singing and accords his core repertoire of some twelve lyric songs—two in Irish and ten in English—great respect and seriousness. He will not sing other songs besides them. At one point during my visit, when Lizzy tried to get Mick to sing a song from outside his active repertoire, he snapped:

> M: "I don't have that song!"
> L: "Sure, but you *know* the song anyway, don't ya, Mick?
>   How does it go again?"
> M: "By God, Lizzy girl, I can't be bothered remembering that one!"

Being "bothered remembering a song" seems to mean that somehow the song resonates with Mick's own life: only then is it worth the work of learning and maintaining. Songs in this way are like "the company we keep": shapers as well as emblems of the selves we would like to be.

Lizzy, the former proprietor of a pub, has a lighter view of song, one that is, however, equally prevalent in the locale. Her own forte in years past was humorous songs, which contrasted markedly with the seriousness and sorrow of Mick's Kerry lyrics. When the two would drive to pubs in the 1980s, Mick would sing his sad songs of exile, battle dead, and tragic love, and Lizzy would lighten the tone with a performance or two of her own. In an analogous fashion, Lizzy regarded these songs as encapsulating her particular views on life and enjoyed expressing these to a circle of friends who would recognize in them Lizzy's own personality. The traditional becomes in both singers a vehicle for expressing the personal.

While Mick has obviously worked to select, learn, and develop his repertoire, asking and learning about songs are also viewed as important parts of a youth's role in folkloric performance. Mick and Lizzy expected me to ask questions about Mick's songs so that I could learn from him about Ireland and about my family. "You've come back to Ireland to learn about your family," Lizzy told me, "and you'll hear it all and then some in your uncle's songs." Whenever Lizzy herself gave information, she checked on whether I had committed it to memory. When driving in the region, she pointed to different houses and recalled residents and families who had lived there one or two generations ago. Then she drove the same way back and quizzed me on who lived where. At other points in our drives together

through the maze of small lanes between Trim, Longwood, Rath Maloyne, and Tandragee, Lizzy would stop the car and ask: "Now, Tommy, which is the right turn home?" When I pointed out the correct turn, Lizzy cheered with approval. But then she turned in the opposite direction, just to show me that we could get home by other ways as well. "Lizzy knows all the roads in these parts!" she said with delight. In traditional Irish learning, as modeled by Mick and Lizzy, elders impart knowledge that youth, if smart, seek out. As Meath is Lizzy's land, she can purvey knowledge of its history by pointing out its landmarks and recounting personal narratives and legends. As Mick's land is the absent Kerry, he must convey knowledge of it only through songs. The local is not really his, even if he owns land there and had by that time resided in the county for 38 years.

Since Mick's lyrics tend to focus on either love or war, I present one of each below. The songs are presented in text form alone in order to focus attention on their comparability with other genres of oral poetry. After each song, I discuss the interpretations Mick and Lizzy brought to bear upon it and what these can tell us about hermeneutic traditions within their culture. Mick and Lizzy preferred to switch the tape recorder off between song performances, an act that indicates a clear differentiation in their minds between the performance of a song (which is to be recorded and esteemed) and the interpretative discourse that follows (which is merely to be received). In several cases, however, I was able to leave the tape running, and these allow for the detailed presentations of the discussions that follow the songs below.

The first song is amply familiar to fans of Irish folksong: *The Rose of Tralee*. It will illustrate the narrativizing hermeneutics that Mick and Lizzy (and Irish tradition in general: see Shields 1991) favor in interpreting lyric songs.

> The pale moon was rising upon the green mountains,
> The sun was declining beneath the blue sea,
> When I strayed with my love to the pure crystal fountain,
> That stands in the beautiful Vale of Tralee.
>
> She was lovely and fair like the roses and the summer,
> It was not her beauty alone that won me;
> Oh no, it was the truth in her eyes, they were darling,
> That made me love Mary, the Rose of Tralee.
>
> The cold shades of evening her mantle were spreading,
> And Mary all smiling was listening to me;
> The moon through the valley her pale ray was shedding,

When I won the heart of the Rose of Tralee.

[Mick and Lizzy together]
She was lovely and fair like the roses and the summer,
It was not her beauty alone that won me;
Oh no, it was the truth in her eyes, they were darling,
That made me love Mary, the Rose of Tralee.[1]

The song as such appears to recount the moment at which the lyric speaker won the heart of a girl named Mary, the Rose of Tralee. The evening and location are depicted with some specificity, but the force of all the natural imagery—the weather, the valley, the rose—appears deployed as a commentary on the human emotion and moment at hand. The moment is depicted as in a nostalgic reminiscence, somehow removed in time from the narrative moment depicted. Within Irish lyric hermeneutics, the audience is expected to be interested in the identity of these two characters and to call for a narrative explication of the song if it is not yet known. Immediately following the song, Lizzy proceeded to supply me with her version of this narrative:

L: This was, you're asking about a folksong.
T: Yes.
L: This was a very high society sort of fellow. He was his uncle's son of
     the house, and she was a maid in the house.
T: Aha.
L: Right. And he was courting her.
M: Ah, my.
L: She started, I think she had a child from him. And I'm not terrible sure
     what they, *his* family was very much against it. But, eh, when she
     died, she died in Kerry. When she died, he was poor. He was the
     only son of this fairly wealthy house. And he wrote that song
     about her. But she has, eh . . . Nobody knows where the Rose of
     Tralee is buried.
M: No, somewhere in Kerry. She's buried in an unmarked grave and
     there's—
L: Even though *every* year there's the Rose of Tralee [beauty pageant]
     there's nobody knows where Mary the Rose of Tralee is buried.
     The song was composed by the boyfriend.
M: That's right.
L: "The truth in her eyes" that were—

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[1] As with *Valley of Knockanure*, the words to this song are transcribed as performed by Mick Lyne, and vary slightly from published versions of the songs.

> M: That's right, [*sings*] "That made me love Mary."   He gave her—she
>   died of *grief*.
> L: Yeah.
> M: Poor Mary.
> L: I don't know what she died of, but nobody knows where she's buried.
> M: And every year there's a big celebration down in Kerry—
> L: And nobody knows.
> M: They can't find out where she is buried—a mystery.

Mick and Lizzy's explication offers an entirely different tone to the song as performed. Now, rather than the portrayal of a lover's fond memory, the song becomes an ironic contrast to the tragedy that will eventually befall Mary and her beau. Although the tale of class difference, familial pressures, out-of-wedlock birth, and death lies outside of the lyric's words, Mick and Lizzy found it evidenced in the phrases they quoted from the text: "the truth in her eyes" and "that made me love Mary." Just how these phrases are tied to the narrative events is left unclear in their rendering of them to me, but it is clear that for Mick and Lizzy lyric and narrative are inextricably linked.

As *The Rose of Tralee* is a very well known Irish song, the prose narrative that accompanies it is also familiar to many. On the website for the Rose of Tralee festival (www.roseoftralee.ie), the event organizers present both the song and its narrative explanation for interested readers to peruse. Their account differs somewhat from that of Mick and Lizzy's. For one thing, the published version provides more explicit information—the characters, for example, are named: William Pembroke Mulchinock and Mary O'Connor. And they pass through a variety of travails, though these do not include the birth of an illegitimate child. The lovers are separated at the moment of their engagement by the news that William is wanted (wrongly) for murder. He flees to India, where he is bolstered by his memories of his faithfully waiting bride-to-be. An additional stanza is included in the website's version to substantiate these narrative events:

> In the far fields of India, 'mid war's dreadful thunders,
> Her voice was a solace and comfort to me,
> But the chill hand of death has now rent us asunder,
> I'm lonely tonight for the Rose of Tralee.

William returns to Tralee just in time to see Mary's funeral procession (the cause of her death is unspecified), eventually marries another woman, emigrates to America, divorces, returns to Ireland, and lives his last years by Mary's grave at Clogherbrien, dogged by her memory and a resultant

addiction to alcohol. The pageant's version, then, lacks the detail of the child or Mary's broken heart and remains silent concerning the point about which Mick and Lizzy were most adamant: the missing grave.

Mick and Lizzy's stress on the lost unmarked grave (a detail that would support the idea that Mary's child was illegitimate) somehow accords the song greater efficacy in their eyes. The only evidence we have of these lovers' tragedy lies in the existence of the song and its accompanying narrative explication. They have left no other mark upon the world. In this sense, Mick and Lizzy's understanding of *The Rose of Tralee* is quite different from what we might expect in the case of a historical ballad. In the latter, we would presume, physical evidence that ties the song unambiguously to the historical record would be seen to enhance the credibility and quality of the song. In *The Rose of Tralee*, in contrast, it is the very lack of evidence that intensifies the poignancy and effect of the lyric. The fact that millions of people know the song today and that a major festival takes its name from it attests to the power of this song to encapsulate enduring emotions, ones somehow emblematic of the Kerry experience.

It is also noteworthy that Mick's version leaves out the stanza that ties the song most concretely to its supporting narrative, namely the one that mentions India and Mary's death. Even by the website's account, this stanza must have been composed later than the rest—after William's return to Ireland and discovery of his true love's demise. Yet its absence in the case of Mick's version demonstrates that the lyric need have little explicit textual relation to its explanatory narrative. If the stanza were really necessary to an audience's understanding, it would not be left out, not at least by a singer who takes as much care about his repertoire as does Mick Lyne. It is, perhaps, the resultant abbreviated song's tone of optimism and stasis that gives it its force in Mick and Lizzy's eyes: the fond memory tinged by an unstated coming tragedy. This same notion of foreboding is reflected in the published narrative, in which the young Mary, upon hearing the song for the first time, is made to exclaim:

> Oh William, it's the most beautiful song I've ever heard in my life. It's so beautiful that somehow—somehow . . . it somehow makes me afraid.

Mary's explanation for her fear is that music haunts the O'Connor family as an ill omen. Yet the explanation may arise equally from the interpretive tendencies of the lyric genre: even when a song relates seemingly happy events, the knowing audience recognizes a submerged narrative of sorrow.

In addition to this explanatory narrative, however, Mick and Lizzy rely on a further basis for interpreting this song: its relation to Mick. Lizzy introduced the song to me as follows:

> L: Would you like him singing *The Rose of Tralee*?
> T: Sure. Yeah.
> L: Well, seeing's he had had a daughter in it.

Now, given the sad content of the song's explanatory narrative, this remark would be difficult to understand if one were unaware of the Rose of Tralee beauty pageant. In fact, for decades, this annual festival has expressed a cogent aspect of Kerry culture by staging a beauty pageant open to all women who have Kerry roots, regardless of where they currently live. This transnational local pageant draws women from as far afield as the United States and England, demonstrating the continuing legacy of leave-taking and absentation depicted in the song. In the early 1970s, Mick's daughter Noreen—then living in Liverpool—won the contest. This fact entitles Mick, in Lizzy's eyes, to an even greater right to perform the song than were he just an ordinary Kerryman. Here again, we find the notion that one's repertoire must be consonant with one's persona: Mick should sing lyrics that emblematize experiences in his life or in that of his family. The fact that the pageant itself is named after the lyric and that the pageant's rules stipulate a Kerry background indicates that this association is widespread within Irish tradition. The song—its narrative explication and its personal resonances in the life of the performer—become enmeshed in a single complex whole through the act of performance and its reception by a knowing audience.

The second song I present here reflects another side of Mick's repertoire: songs of war. Mick sang several such lyrics during his performance that evening and these appear equally as important to him as his songs of love.

> You may come and speak about Easter week and the heroes of '98,
> Of the gallant men who roamed the glen
> In victory or defeat;
> Their names were placed in history's page,
> Their memories will endure;
> Not a song was sung for our darling sons
>   In the Valley of Knockanure.
>
> They were Walshe, Lynes, and Dalton,
> Men that were in their prime.

In every house, in every town
They were always side by side.
The Republic bold, they did uphold,
They outlawed on the moor,
But side by side, they fought and died,
        In the Valley of Knockanure.

At Gortnagleanna's rugged height,
Three gallant men took shape,
They viewed the soft sweet wheat
As the summer breeze did play.
It was not long until Lynes came on
Saying, "Time is not mine nor yours,"
But it was too late, they met their fate,
        In the Valley of Knockanure.

They took them then beside a fence
Where the furze did bloom.
And like brothers so, they faced the foe,
To meet with their dreadful doom.
And when Dalton was dying, aloud he cried
With a fashion proud and true:
"For our land we're dying, as we face the sky,
        In the Valley of Knockanure."

It was by a neighboring hillside
They listened in calm dismay.
In every house, in every town,
A maiden knelt and prayed.
"They are closing in around us, with a rifle fire so sure,"
And Dalton is dead and Lynes is down,
        In the Valley of Knockanure.

There they lay in the hillside's clay
For the love of Ireland's cause.
The cowardly clan, the Black-and-Tans,
They showed them English law.
No more they'll feel the soft wild steel
Over uplands fair and high,
For side by side, they fought and died,
        In the Valley of Knockanure.

I then met Dalton's mother and those words to me did say:
"May the Lord have mercy on those boys
Who died in that glen today,
Oh but I would kiss their cold, cold lips
My aching heart would cure

> And we laid them down to rest
>> In the Valley of Knockanure."
>
> The golden sun was sinking,
> far beyond Feilinlee.
> The pale, pale moon was shining,
> Far beyond Tralee.
> The dismal stars and clouds afar
> Had darkened over the moor,
> And the banshee cried, where our heroes died,
>> In the Valley of Knockanure.

At first glance, this song would appear to contain more narrative clues to its interpretation than *The Rose of Tralee*. It clearly memorializes a specific battle and set of executions of Irish nationalists during an uprising. The prime heroes—Walshe, Lynes, and Dalton—are named, as are the places of the tragedy: Knockanure, Gortnagleanna, and Feilinlee. Yet the focus of the song is more on the emotional effects of the event than on the event itself. And the explication offered by Mick and Lizzy, as we shall see, moves away from the explicit narrative toward a more proverbialized rendering of Irish suffering over time. Thus the expected narrative explanation, once given, proves only part of the means by which Mick and Lizzy interpret the song.

In terms of structure, we may note that the song's first three stanzas are devoted to depicting the heroes amid their community and ideals, closing with the men's capture and execution. Stanza 4 depicts the heroes' noble words at the execution itself. The final four stanzas portray the mourning of the community and landscape after their deaths, with a narrator persona and first-person quotations emerging in stanza 7, where the lyric speaker seems identical to Dalton's mother. She entones a familiar sentiment of sorrow for her son ("If I could kiss those cold, cold lips"), one paralleled by the other standard images of prayer, banshees, and sorrowful landscape. The final image of the land and nature here is one of silence and desolation: without the human spark brought by the noble heroes, the land stands mute and static. We may note that Mick's version of the song is more lyrical and less narrative than some collected variants; whereas Mick's song goes into detail on the emotional aftermath of the deaths, some versions[2] devote much more attention to the narrative events of the ambush and battle only alluded to in Mick's rendition. Mick's song appears in this light as a highly lyricized version of a formerly explicitly narrative song.

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[2] E.g., that collected from Mrs. Bridget Howard Gladree of Co. Mayo in 1955 and conserved at the Department of Irish Folklore at University College Dublin.

Given the specificity of the narrative surrounding *The Rose of Tralee*, one would perhaps expect an even more detailed narrative in a song that announces its historicity in its very first lines and that relates events connected with an uprising. Yet the degree of detail of the text itself appears sufficient for Mick and Lizzy, and their explication provides few further points:

T: What year was that?
L: I think 1917 or 1918.
T: Okay.
L: That's what he's giving you a lesson in history for—
M: The Black-and-Tans would kill people like you.
L: Sure they had hooks and chains with them and they'd shoot you for fun
     at the sight of you.
M: Ah my, quite a fight with the Black-and-Tans.

In this short response to my question, then, Mick and Lizzy locate the events of the song in the aftermath of the 1916 East Uprising, perhaps during the May 1917 executions, an event that galvanized Irish sentiment against the continuation of British rule (McCartney 1967). This event proved pivotal in modern Irish history, and Mick and Lizzy fully expected me to know about it already, as Lizzy's half-critical remark about history lessons made clear. Following the 1918 parliamentary elections, British authorities clashed with Irishmen bent on independence in the fierce Anglo-Irish War or War of Independence. McCartney characterizes the period as follows (331):

> The Anglo-Irish war from 1919 to July 1921, or the "troubles" as the people euphemistically called it, seriously embittered Anglo-Irish relations. It was a struggle characterised by guerilla warfare, ambushes, raids on police barracks and planned assasination on the one side; and reprisals, the shooting-up and burning-up of towns, executions and terrorizing on the other, as the "flying columns" of the Volunteers took on the "black-and-tans" and Auxiliaries of the British.

Mick has considerable personal connection with these events, as his only brother died of head injuries sustained in one of the later Kerry clashes. As Lizzy put it later in the evening: "See. He's *steeped* in the Troubles." Yet it was not these personal events that the couple used in the subsequent discussion to further explicate the song. Rather, they broadened the focus from the particular war to the entirety of English oppression, and then to the specific fates of Kerry and Meath within this larger history. This discussion eventually led to their collaborative account of Mick's resettlement in Meath, a topic that thus became tied to the narrative events of the song,

however unforeseen that may have seemed at the outset of the discussion. By analyzing their talk in detail, we can follow the thread of this discussion and the ways in which the song's meaning becomes negotiated by the singer, his audience, and the context of performance.

I initiated the competitive portion of this explanatory process through a simple question, as the transcript shows:

> T: Where did they [the Black-and-Tans] come into first?
> M: Well, they came into the South.
> L: They came into *all* Ireland.
> M: Into Kerry most of all.
> L: Into Kerry.
> M: Into Kerry. They came in boats into Kerry. They didn't come into the
>   Midlands as bad; they slaughtered them before, long before.

In this exchange, then, Mick has been able to erect his home district as the prime victim of Black-and-Tan aggression, as described in the song, thereby edging out Lizzy's assertion of all Ireland (including the Midlands) suffering equally. This small victory is important, because Mick's authority as a singer of tragic songs hinges in part on his identity as a native Kerryman. Therefore, Kerry must be shown (as in the song itself) to have suffered considerably in the war.

But Lizzy, native to Meath and equally proud of her county, quickly seeks to turn the attention away from Kerry and toward the district in which she and Mick currently reside:

> L: You know why they didn't come into the Midlands?
> T: Why?
> M: Don't tell him.
> L: Because, eh, this is the best land—

At this point, audience and singer appear equally in control of formulating the interpretive response to the song. Mick would maintain focus on Kerry, but in practice he is only one of the creators of the enunciated meaning. As Lizzy gains control of the floor, she initiates a new line of argument that will put Kerry, Meath, and the song in a broader historical perspective:

> L: Meath was, as you went through Trim and saw all the castles, King
>   John's Castle—
> M: English, English had them all.
> L: The English had this land.
> M: And Tom, they were hunted down across the Shannon by Cromwell.
> L: Yeah, with a pitchfork.

> M: With a pitchfork. Ah, the Lord save us, they murdered.
> L: "To Hell or to Cork!"

At this point, then, the discussion has somehow shifted to the seventeenth century, when English troops overran Ireland and imposed a repressive martial law. In the process, the story of the executions at Knockanure has become one with the struggles of the 1600s, and both have become integrally tied to the county of Mick's birth, the refuge of resisters in both eras. Meath figures as the prize for which the English vied; Kerry and Cork as the marginal tracts to which the Irish opposition fled. Mick again asserts his personal connection with these events by noting, "My relatives came from Shannon." This is an important element in his family's history, as Mick's ancestors, dispossessed by landlords, are known to have migrated to Ballinskelligs in Kerry from Clare, across the Shannon, in the seventeenth century. The family's Kerry life of small farming and fishing is thus represented as the victimized perseverance of a family following the loss of desirable farmland, a product of Cromwell's reign.

From here, Lizzy reprises the argument, drawing in greater detail the contrast between Kerry and Meath in a manner that places the images of landscape in *The Valley of Knockanure* in an uncompromisingly negative light:

> L: The land was *so* good in the County Meath, all the *kings*, Strongbow,
>   and all the king's children wanted it. It was Leinster. Leinster.
>   And Meath's the—
> M: Land of the world, Lizzy.
> L: Meath's the last word in agriculture. The rich was in Meath. And all
>   there was down in Kerry was mountains and rocks and stones and
>   everything. [...] It was "to Hell or to Cork."

This topic shift, then, has turned Kerry, the shining refuge of Mick's telling, into an inferior wasteland to which disempowered Irishmen clung. Since in both Mick and Lizzy's eyes, the song is about Kerry in particular, this characterization comments directly on the song as well. We can see in it, as in Mick's words, varying interpretations of the lyric's imagery of "dismal stars and clouds afar / had darkened over the moor." But we can also see a very present vying between the relative stature of Meath and Kerry, the two counties closest to the hearts of the people assembled.

The turn in the argument has also served a deeper purpose in Mick and Lizzy's interpretive work, for it leads them directly to their tying of the song to Mick's experience of resettlement. The couple continues the discussion:

> M: They were giving land to anyone; that's why they were very populated
>   back then. But they had to leave it all, and go *straight* back to
>   America, because they had no living at all there—no, no, no living.
> L: The living, the living was in Leinster. In Leinster. This is Leinster.

In this commentary, then, Mick acknowledges the custom of partible inheritance in the West—the practice of heirs dividing their father's farm between them, making ever smaller holdings until virtually none could support themselves on their own lands. He also enunciates the theme of out-migration, crucial to Kerry identity (as we saw with *The Rose of Tralee*) and material to me personally, since my grandmother (Mick's sister) and grandfather both left Kerry for America in direct response to this situation. In this discussion, then, my history as well as Mick's own relocation to Meath are somehow merged with the history of oppression that brought people to Kerry and the history of perseverance emblematized in the song. From here, the discussion turns directly to Mick's resettlement:

> M: Now, where we're living there was 800 acres.
> L: This here.
> M: It was divided between Meath and Kerry. I'm the only Kerryman.

Mick's assertion of a binary Meath/Kerry split of the previous estate of 800 acres arises from the contrasts drawn by Lizzy in the discussion to this point and does not fit the facts of the resettlement process exactly. Historical accuracy compels Lizzy to correct the statement and note that migrants from other counties were given land there as well: "Yes, and Mayo and Clare." What is most important to the discussion at hand, however, is that the situation of injustice described in the song has finally been undone, with Mick's family (dispossessed by Cromwell centuries before) finally being restored to a workable plot of land and peace restored on the island.

Undoubtedly, the discussion that night might have proceeded differently if the audience had been differently constituted and/or in a different context. It reflected Mick and Lizzy's differing native tracts and the presence of a young relative from America. And it took place in July, 1998, while Ireland mourned the death of three Catholic children killed by a Protestant firebomb in the County Down. The Reverend Ian Paisley preached a message of Protestant defiance and aggression to devoted Orangemen encamped by the Garvaghy Road. And all these sad events were occurring mere weeks after national referendums in both the North and the South on the Good Friday accords. The ongoing "Troubles" of the North impinged in silent but menacing fashion on the discussion of the past

Troubles of the Anglo-Irish war, reminding all three of us that the song's narrative was not so distant after all.

In following the discussion of *The Valley of Knockanure* with the accuracy afforded by modern recording technology, one might well conclude that the "real" discussion of the meaning of the song ended with Mick and Lizzy's initial characterization of the Black-and-Tans. But ending the analysis there would truncate the elaborate rite of interpretation that spirals out from the specific lyric and its supporting narrative to a more proverbialized discussion of the situation the song emblematizes and finally toward the ways in which this situation finds expression in the present audience's lives. It is the balance of narrative specificity, proverbial generality, and personal resonance that gives depth to the meaning of a song and that ultimately includes all of the performance's participants, singer and audience alike. To refrain from that process would be to refrain from the important and empowered role of the traditional audience.

And if Mick and Lizzy's discussion can be said to "ramble," we must note that it rambles with a purpose—toward an ending of inclusion and ultimate relevance for the song and its attendant audience. Yet the tether on this rambling is relatively short after all: in fact, the content of the song and its localization in Kerry create limits on the directions the discussion can take. Indeed, because Mick's repertoire is so honed toward the twin themes of tragic love and other sorrows, his songs afford him—or his audience—little opportunity to discuss other topics of concern to Mick and Lizzy that evening in 1998: a burgeoning Irish economy, new traffic perils on the improved road from Dublin, a cooling of popular sentiment toward the Catholic church, and a general loosening of public views on moral issues. On these issues Mick's repertoire offers few openings, and so our discussions were led by the content of the songs as performed.

Nor could the discussion take place if Mick's songs failed to draw an audience. It is not in the performance of the songs but in the accompanying discussions that they are made relevant to the moment at hand and the listeners present. If listeners fail to listen and to discuss—as is increasingly the case in a modern Ireland taken with standardized, prerecorded music, made passive by the norms of concerts and absent performers, or accustomed to treating music as a background entertainment—this matrix of meaning is lost. And that shift in audience role—so familiar to folklorists in most of the West but relatively recent in Ireland—is a reality about which Mick's repertoire falls silent. Mick, like the tradition he performs, relies on an audience as eager to interpret as the performer is to perform.

Even when the performative genre in question, then, entails a fixed text that varies little from performance to performance (as opposed to genres

that permit more flexible combinations of lines or images), elaborate rules for interpretation may be shared by performers and audiences to achieve and to alter the meaning of a song. In the case of Mick Lyne's lyric songs, this shared hermeneutic tradition relies on narrative, but the narratives themselves take on both more general proverbialized significance and personal meanings tied to the performer, the audience, and the moment. *The Rose of Tralee* "tells the story" of a particular love relationship, yet it also comes to represent the ironies of life in general and the particular lot of wandering Kerry people in history. Mick's relation to the song—recognized by singer and audience alike—is deepened not only by his Kerry heritage but also by his daughter's status as a former Rose of Tralee pageant winner. *The Valley of Knockanure* "tells the story" of a particular set of wartime executions, yet it also comes to represent the broader history of oppression that has touched Kerry, Ireland in general, and Mick's own personal life, a life linked at some fundamental level with the resettlement that changed Mick's life nearly four decades earlier. The way in which Mick and Lizzy relate to the songs is conditioned by traditions of interpretation, which they enact, along with the actual performance of the songs themselves. Being a good audience member involves expecting these interpretive lines, asking for them if their details are not yet known, or acknowledging them if they are already familiar. In the pubs where Mick used to sing, the details I was told were probably most often already known. Yet they were always implicit in the performance, even if a given audience did not need to have them spelled out again at the moment.

Mick's singing and the discourse it provoked sheds valuable light on the issue of audience competence in oral traditions. From their example, we can see that the creator or performer of an oral poem may indeed be able to expect a great deal from an audience. Portions of the work's meaning adhere directly to the text and its (submerged) narrative, while other portions adhere to the communally recognized persona or experiences of the singer and audience. Neither is entirely predictable on the basis of the text alone, yet the competent audience is expected to discern both.

That such a rich and normative fabric of interpretation surrounds one genre should awaken us to the possibility that genres in oral traditions in general may possess similarly complex hermeneutic norms. The relation of these norms to each other and to other more formalized modes of interpretation within the culture (e.g., biblical exegesis in the case of medieval traditions, precedence in the case of modern American legal traditions, or literary criticism in the modern appraisal of literature) represents a valuable and little studied area of research for scholars. Whether or not we can ever know, then, the actual interpretive moves of the

original audience of a work like *Beowulf,* we can guess that they may well have been complex, multiple, and yet somehow also normative, contributions worthy of an audience who could comprehend and appreciate the oral poem as performed.[3]

University of Wisconsin, Madison

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India's "Hundred Voices": Subaltern Oral Performance in Forster's *A Passage to India*

John McBratney

Both within and without oral studies, scholars have begun to examine the intimate relations between what have seemed to some strange bedfellows: oral theory and critical theory. Mark C. Amodio has recently called attention to these relations, observing that "Oral theory and contemporary critical theory share many basic principles, engage many similar issues, and ask many closely related questions" (1998:97). Amodio acknowledges that this sense of commonality has been slow to emerge, a fact he attributes to two main causes: the narrowness of some oral-formulaic work and ignorance about oral theory among non-specialists (96). A major obstacle to a wider awareness of shared interests has been the long-held belief, among oralists and non-oralists alike, in the "Great Divide": the chasm that supposedly divides oral art and culture from literate art and culture (103). With the bridging of this divide by such scholars as A. N. Doane, John Miles Foley, Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe, Alain Renoir, Brian Stock, and others, a new perception of the relation between the oral and the literate has begun to gain currency, one "that acknowledges that orality and literacy exist along a continuum and are deeply interrelated and interdependent cultural forces" (96). As a result of placing the oral and the literate upon this continuum, these scholars have encouraged others to see that oral and literate art fall within a common linguistic, aesthetic, and cultural domain to which both oral theory and contemporary critical theory may usefully address themselves.

I would like to push Amodio's argument one step further. I wish to argue that oral theory and contemporary critical theory not only share similar "principles," "issues," and "questions," but may profitably inform each other under these shared headings. As a newcomer to oral studies, I would be presumptuous to say how critical theory might contribute to the development and refinement of oral theory. However, as a student of colonial literature, I see clear ways in which oral theory might enable the practice of one kind of

critical theory—that is, colonial/postcolonial theory: how it might help define its terms, shape its lines of inquiry, sharpen its methodology, and, most important, engage with other kinds of theory in useful cross-disciplinary work. I do not wish to generalize about either kind of theory, both of which, in their breadth, ever-shifting variety, even heterogeneity, defy easy generalization. Instead, I will attempt something more modest, pointed, and concrete, concerning a single, broad theoretical question and a single literary text. The question I will address—a vexed one in colonial/postcolonial circles—is whether the "subaltern" (or subordinate) subject can "speak" in the discourse of the colonial text. The colonial text against which I will test this question is E. M. Forster's 1924 novel, *A Passage to India*, in which Indian subjects often express their aspirations—indeed, in which the "hundred voices" of the subcontinent clamor for attention[1]—but in which the power of those voices to make themselves heard above the roar of Britain's discourse about India has been a matter of controversy. Since oral theory focuses with a special closeness on the power of voice (particularly the performative voice in traditional settings), I have chosen to draw upon its insights to revisit this controversy, and if not settle it outright, then at least examine it anew in relation to Forster's novel.

To those readers who question the relevance of oral theory to a text so distant in time from an English oral tradition, I remind them that the oral and the literate exist together on a "continuum." Foley and others have noted the wide persistence of the oral—what Walter J. Ong refers to as "residual orality" (1982:160)—even in linguistic performances within literate twentieth-century European and North American cultures.[2] Why should this persistence not register itself in the composition of a High Modernist text? Forster himself enjoined readers to heed the power of the oral in texts: "Listen to the voice of the writer speaking to you; that is the only guide. Listen to him as if he was a man, actually present in the room."[3] As I will argue below, *A Passage to India* shows vividly Forster's sensitivity to the capacity of the oral to complicate the form and meaning of literary texts.

I will begin with a consideration of the question of the subaltern voice in the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak and Benita Parry, two

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[1] Forster 1952:136, 322. All further references to this text will be to this edition and will be cited internally.

[2] Foley 1995:72. See also Ong 1982:160.

[3] Quoted in Wood 1994:146.

postcolonial critics who have disagreed sharply on this issue and whose work will provide a theoretical context within which to study the question. I will then invoke oral theory, first, to show how *A Passage to India* works to unsettle the authority of Western literacy as embodied in British discourses about India and, second, to evaluate the aesthetic and political implications of three instances of subaltern oral performance that assist in this unsettling. In the first instance, I will draw upon Ong's insights into the differences between oral and literate cultures to reveal that, in the confrontation between the predominantly oral culture of Indians and the predominantly literate culture of Anglo-Indians,[4] the novel often shows the failure of the latter to represent adequately the rich, interwoven complexity of the former. In the second instance, I will call upon Foley's concept of "word-power" to analyze the emergence of an indigenous alternative to British writings about India, an alternative that will reveal the capacity of Indian voices to enact both a dynamic, ever-changing Indian oral tradition and the rise from "below" of an Indian nationalist movement. Although I will focus on a single literary work for much of this essay, I hope to illuminate larger literary theoretical issues in ways that may encourage other scholars to examine the potential for cross-fertilization between oral theory and contemporary critical theory.

The Voice of the Subaltern

In asking the question "Can the subaltern speak?" Spivak sparked a fierce debate inside and outside literary studies about the power of subordinate voices to speak in colonial and postcolonial texts. Although she first posed the question in a seminal 1988 essay, it is fair to say that she had been concerned with it well before 1988 and has returned to it often since then.[5] Indeed, in scholarship of astounding range across a number of

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[4] Up until the 1911 all-India census, "Anglo-Indian" referred to Britons living in India. With that census, the government of India declared "Anglo-Indian" to be the official designation for persons of British and Indian descent. This title replaced that of "Eurasian." However, the British in India continued to use the old labels until India gained its independence. To avoid confusion, I use "Anglo-Indian" throughout this essay as Forster's contemporaries would have understood it—that is, in its pre-1911 sense. On the change in meaning of "Anglo-Indian," see Naidis 1963:408.

[5] Spivak first broached this question in a 1983 lecture. In a manner characteristic of her restlessly self-interrogating method, she has revised the 1988 essay, in some ways dissenting from its conclusions, in her most recent book (1999:248-311).

disciplinary boundaries, scholarship that has yielded important advances in fields as disparate as deconstruction, feminist theory, Marxism, Continental philosophy, subaltern historiography, nineteenth- and twentieth-century British and Anglophone literature, and contemporary Bengali literature, the problem of the subaltern's voice, subjectivity, and agency has for Spivak been paramount. The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci coined the term "subaltern" (from *subalterno*, meaning "subordinate," or "dependent") to refer to those members of the non-elite classes who lack economic and political agency in a society dominated by hegemonic elites. The term was adopted by the Subaltern Studies group, originally a loose coalition of Indian and British historians under the leadership of Ranajit Guha, who since the early 1980s have dedicated themselves to offering a radical alternative to traditional colonial and elite nationalist versions of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Indian history.[6] Whereas conventional histories have typically focused upon the dominant role of elites, whether colonial or nationalist, in the pre- and post-Independence history of India, the historiography of the Subaltern Studies group has concentrated on recovering the voice and agency, largely erased from traditional historical accounts, of members of subaltern groups including peasants, tenant farmers, urban workers, tribals, shudras, untouchables, and women in these groups.[7] As a non-historian, Spivak considers herself a satellite of the Subaltern Studies group;[8] however, despite her laywoman's status, she has contributed actively to the larger Subaltern Studies project, which includes historians, anthropologists, political scientists, and literary critics, and has helped to define the current direction of this ramifying enterprise. More persistently, ingeniously, and scrupulously than any other Subalternist scholar, she has addressed the particular question of the subaltern's voice: its power (or lack thereof) to enunciate its experience meaningfully within colonial and postcolonial texts.

　　"Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) is a subtle, wide-ranging, and at times highly abstruse critique of attempts by elite Europeans and Asians to posit an essentialized subaltern subject who can speak on his or her behalf.

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[6] For an inaugural enunciation of the platform of the Subaltern Studies group, see Guha 2000.

[7] "Shudra" refers to the lowest order within the traditional four-fold division of the caste system in India. Untouchables, technically, lie outside this system.

[8] As Spivak herself puts it (2000:329), "I am hampered . . . by not being a scholar of subalternist work, but rather a sort of subalternist on the fringe of the main movement."

The essay criticizes four groups of writers who err in asserting that the subaltern can speak in any full and straightforward way: the philosophers Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, members of the Subaltern Studies collective, contemporary Western feminists, and nineteenth-century British and Indian writers about *sati*, or ritual widow-burning in traditional Hindu India.

We might expect that Foucault and Deleuze, who have reputations as politically progressive thinkers, would write perceptively about the subaltern Asian. Yet Spivak argues that these "best prophets of heterogeneity and the Other" (272) in fact reproduce the expansionist tendencies of a colonialism and neocolonialism they would otherwise wish to repudiate. In blithely asserting that the Asian Other "*can speak and know their conditions*" (Spivak's emphasis; 283), they posit an Asian subject who sounds and thinks much like the Western minority subjects with whom they are familiar. In doing so, they in effect appropriate the Asian Other to the West, constituting the sovereign Western subject anew and thereby effacing an Asian subaltern subject violently fractured and dislocated by the West. Although these philosophers have often worked to deconstruct the idea of an essentialized, unified European subject, they fail to apply these methods to the Asian subject because they neglect their complicity in the history of colonialism. "The much publicized critique of the sovereign subject," Spivak writes, "thus actually inaugurates a Subject" (272).

Unlike Foucault and Deleuze, the scholars of the Subaltern Studies project take into serious account the ideological effects of colonialism on the subaltern subject. Spivak is generally more sympathetic to their endeavor than that of Foucault and Deleuze. However, she finds the Subaltern Studies approach hobbled by its own kind of contradiction. Whereas, for the two European intellectuals, "a postrepresentationalist vocabulary hides an essentialist agenda," in the work of the Subaltern collective, the opposite obtains: "a project understood in essentialist terms must traffic in a radical textual practice of differences" (285). Despite the dissimilarities between the two philosophers and the Subaltern group, "All three are united in the assumption that there *is* a pure form of consciousness" as embodied in the subaltern subject (286). All three, then, are guilty of a false and misleading belief in the idea of an essential, unified, and autonomous subaltern subject that their methods otherwise wish to disavow or complicate. Among major Western intellectuals whom Spivak esteems, only Marx and Derrida are free of this disabling essentialism, this nostalgic belief in a subaltern who can speak in his or her own voice free of the distorting effects of colonialism and neocolonialism.

In her examination of Western feminism, Spivak identifies the subaltern Asian woman as exemplary of the subaltern condition. Confronted by this figure, European and North American feminists understandably seek to make common cause with her. Spivak, however, is wary of "benevolent," well-meaning First-World feminists who attempt to combat the oppression of women in the Third World only to find themselves participating in the very patriarchal exploitation they wish to oppose. For Spivak, they are no more resistant than their First-World male counterparts to the tendency to condescend to subaltern women, to make of these women self-confirming versions of themselves. In a plea directed as much to herself as to elite women in the West, Spivak urges feminists to speak *to* rather than *for* subaltern women; in this way, "the postcolonial intellectual *systematically* 'unlearns' female privilege" (295).

In the final part of her essay, Spivak, determined to remain vigilant about her own elite "positionality," studies the subaltern figure of the *sati*, the woman who, according to Hindu tradition, immolates herself on the funeral pyre of her dead husband as an act of piety and fidelity.[9] Spivak analyzes this figure in the context of British attempts to abolish the rite during the nineteenth century—a campaign that she encapsulates in the proposition "'White men are saving brown women from brown men'" (296). Spivak interrogates the writings of both the "white" reformers and the "brown" (Hindu) defenders of the ritual, finding in both discourses constructions of the *sati*'s intention that miss the mark. The British abolitionists argued that the widows did not want to die but were forced to perish to satisfy the wishes of their hidebound male relatives. For their part, Hindu apologists claimed just as invidiously that the widows wished to die of their own volition without any prompting from or coercion by male relatives. Although both formulations of the *sati* implied the freedom of widows to choose, in both "The dubious place of the free will of the constituted sexed subject as female was successfully effaced" (302). Spivak sees the effacing of the *sati* as paradigmatic for all subaltern women: "Between [Hindu] patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the woman disappears, not into pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the 'third-world woman' caught between tradition and modernization" (306). Although Spivak ends her essay with an example of a more modern *sati*,

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[9] In Western parlance, *sati*, or the more archaic *suttee*, is taken to refer to the ritual of female self-immolation itself. As Spivak explains, the substitution of the rite for the woman who performs it rests on "a grammatical error on the part of the British." In Hindi, *sati* "simply means 'good wife'" (1988:305).

Bhuvaneswari Bhaduri, whose self-destruction may, according to one reading, represent "an unemphatic, ad hoc, subaltern rewriting of the social text of *sati*-suicide" (308), she implicitly dismisses this interpretation as too hopeful. She sums up: "The subaltern cannot speak" (308).[10]

For Spivak, the subaltern is finally too heterogeneous to the homogenizing textualities of all four groups of elite writers to make its small, distinctive voice heard above the din of these dominant discourses. By insisting on essentializing the subaltern woman, all four miss the radically decentered, particularized, and elusive subjectivity of this figure. Under these circumstances, the female Asian tribal, untouchable, peasant, or urban worker cannot possibly speak in any meaningful sense.

In "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse" (1987), Parry criticizes Spivak for what she takes to be her unnecessarily restrictive and pessimistic account of the possibilities for political resistance embodied in subaltern vocality. Parry considers Spivak together with Homi Bhabha as practitioners of a deconstructive brand of colonial discourse analysis that "either erase[s] the voice of the native or limit[s] native resistance to devices circumventing and interrogating colonial authority" (33-34). Parry finds these tendencies particularly disquieting when they result in "a downgrading of the anti-imperialist texts written by national liberation movements," thereby "obliterat[ing] the role of the native as historical subject and combatant, possessor of an-other knowledge and producer of alternative traditions" (34). Parry, *pace* Spivak, argues that it ought to be possible to find "traces and testimony of women's voice" in the enunciations of "healers, ascetics, singers of sacred songs, artizans and artists" and thereby find the vocal subaltern where Spivak reads only silence (35). For Parry, Spivak's unwillingness to acknowledge the vocal subaltern brings with it a second problem: "the exorbitation [displacement] of the role allotted to the post-colonial woman intellectual" (35). In both instances, Spivak, according to Parry, fails to acknowledge the power of the subaltern voice not only to disrupt elite discourses but to create for itself a vital "counter-discourse" (38).

In this all-too-rapid survey of debate about the subaltern, I do not wish, at this point, to embrace either Spivak's or Parry's methods or

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[10] In a 1996 interview, Spivak glosses what she means by "speak" in this formulation. She does not mean "talk," or "make an utterance." Rather, she means something more meaningful and efficacious, "a transaction between the speaker and the listener" (1996:289) in which the speaker not only speaks but is heard—heard, moreover, not simply along conventional hegemonic lines but along lines that deviate from the hegemonic into the counter-hegemonic. This definition of speech will be pertinent to the examples of oral performance I analyze below.

conclusions. Rather, I want to establish a set of terms and concepts within which to place my own investigations of native vocality. Using the language developed by Spivak and Parry, I will address this double question: Is the voice of the subaltern inevitably muted by the dominant discourses that seek to incorporate it, as Spivak asserts? Or is the subaltern able, as in Parry's view, to move beyond a condition of silence in order to enunciate a counter-discourse of broad ethical and political agency? In addressing these questions, I will draw upon the insights of recent work in oral studies to aid me. At the intersection of oral and colonial/postcolonial theory, I will offer a reading of *A Passage to India* that, I hope, will shed light on the crux of subaltern vocality.

Orality, Literacy, and *A Passage to India*

E. M. Forster's *A Passage to India* has a long history of being read as a novel about colonialism. Although it has been read thematically in many other ways (as a work of High Modernist art, an investigation of the possibilities of cross-cultural friendship, an exploration of the unconscious mind, an examination of the success or failure of the liberal imagination, a meditation on Indian religion, and more recently a treatment of sexuality with rich implications for feminist and queer theories), it has been most persistently viewed as a text about the British Empire in India. From early charges by Anglo-Indian readers that Forster grossly misunderstood the British Raj to analyses by contemporary scholars working in colonial/postcolonial studies, *A Passage to India* has been seen to refract, fairly or unfairly, the events of the early twentieth century in India, when an increasingly popular nationalist movement began to oppose the paramountcy of the British Indian Empire. Although the novel certainly concerns a fraught political encounter between a colonial power and its subject population, it is also true that it registers a tense *cultural* engagement between a predominantly literate colonizer and a predominantly oral populace. The confrontation between literate and oral cultures as an aspect of colonial relations has been little noted among critics, yet it is a salient feature of those relations, and one that deserves close study.

Some readers may object that my formulation of this confrontation smacks of the very habit of dichotomous thinking that recent work among oralists and others has been trying to overcome. I would dispute this claim. I disagree with those poststructuralist critics who insist that binary oppositions must, in every case, be called into question. In a critical movement that has been hostile to grand narratives, some poststructuralists

are guilty of making of their deconstructive mode the very kind of grand, totalizing method they wish to displace. A more subtle, flexible, and comprehensive model of the relation between the oral and the literate is the one Amodio and others have suggested: "the continuum."[11] In some instances, the oral and the literate may be poles apart along this continuum; in most instances, they will be more closely associated. Yet even in the latter cases, one aspect is apt to predominate over the other. In claiming that the Indians portrayed in *A Passage to India* live mainly within an oral culture and that the Anglo-Indians move mainly within a literate culture, I do not wish to suggest that Indians in the novel know nothing of writing nor that Britons in the novel lack any experience of the oral; the depictions of both cultures show a mingling of the two phenomena. However, I do stress a difference in emphasis; to that extent, I posit a binary relation between the oral and the literate in my reading of *A Passage to India*.[12]

In the aftermath of Aziz's alleged rape of Adela Quested, Superintendent of Police McBryde reveals the basis on which he judges Indian character. He enjoins the schoolteacher Fielding: "'Read any of the Mutiny records; which, rather than the Bhagavad Gita, should be your Bible in this country'" (169). McBryde's reliance on British texts, rather than indigenous song, to understand India reflects the chiefly literate nature of British epistemology about the Indian subcontinent. That the Mutiny records should be "your Bible in this country" implies the sacrosanct authority that, for Anglo-Indian officialdom, inheres in British writings about India. As Bernard Cohn and others have pointed out, from the early days of the British East India Company to the departure of the Raj from India in 1947, the British built up an enormous archive about India comprising a wide range of textual forms of knowledge—legal, linguistic, cartographical, historical, archaeological, ethnological, and demographic. The accumulation of this archive reflected many aims, but chief among them was the desire to master India discursively as a way of ruling it

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[11] In his use of the concept of a "spectrum," Foley describes a similar model of relation between the oral and the literate (1995:138, 212).

[12] R. Parthasarathy writes: "To the Hindus, the Vedas are divine revelation spoken by God and heard by human beings. The spoken word has greater authority than the written: it is invested with sacred power. No such power is attributed to the written word, which is seen as an interloper. Indian society to this day remains essentially phonocentric rather than graphocentric" (1998:240).

economically, politically, and culturally.[13] The British impulse to know India textually required that Indians be seen to fall clearly into well-defined and easily classifiable categories in an endlessly ramifying taxonomy of human specimens. As a result, Indians in all their human complexity were reduced to a series of types—a reduction that allowed administrators, who consulted the many tables, gazetteers, handbooks, and censuses in which Indians were described, to think of their subjects as readily amenable to arrangement and rule. Implicit in this typing was a binary, us-versus-them thinking that yielded a pernicious racial and political hierarchy: the Britons on top and the Indians on the bottom. The consequence, according to Cohn, was a "reified and objectified vision of India" that justified the rule of its British governors (1983:183).

Ong suggests that it should be no surprise that an empire so driven by the "technology" of literacy should see the world in this way. Whereas oral communication is generally "close to the human lifeworld" (1982:42-43) and is "empathetic and participatory" (45-46), written communication tends toward that reification, objectification, and binary stratification Cohn finds in the British archive about India. According to Ong, the apparatus of literacy, by fixing language in space and time, permits a greater abstractness of communication that aids, on the one hand, the productive manipulation of language through listing, categorization, hierarchization, and analysis, but that invites, on the other, separation from the warm, human-centered, interactive lifeworld within which orality thrives (78-138). In his language (if not in his argument per se), Ong corroborates Cohn's view of the British discourse about India in seeing literacy as an empire of signs when he asserts that "Writing . . . is a particularly pre-emptive and imperialist activity that tends to assimilate other things to itself. . . . Though words are grounded in oral speech, writing tyrannically locks them into a visual field forever" (12).

A Passage to India provides many instances of the close link between literacy and empire that Ong suggests, instances that show the tyranny of abstraction pervading British literate culture in India. We see this will to mastery especially in the conventional Anglo-Indians' knee-jerk references to Indian types. The callow Ronny Heaslop thinks that he knows Indians like Aziz better than his newly arrived mother, Mrs. Moore, who has just met the doctor: "he knew the type; he knew all the types, and this [Aziz] was the spoilt Westernized" (77). The penchant for disciplinary ordering leaks,

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[13] On the British attempt to control India through various forms of colonial knowledge, see especially Cohn 1996 and Dirks 2001. See also Arnold 1986:138-47; Cohn 1983:182-83; Inden 1990:7-48; Metcalf 1994:113-59; and Richards 1993:1-9, 11-44.

like an enervating poison, into all aspects of Anglo-Indian lives. As Aziz rides on his bicycle toward the British civil lines, he is depressed by their "arid tidiness": "The roads, named after victorious generals and intersecting at right angles, were symbolic of the net Great Britain had thrown over India" (16). Even the liberal, humane, and sensitive Fielding, whose allegiance to English forms is decidedly lukewarm, shows, according to Aziz, a very English tidiness of feeling. When the English teacher scolds his Indian doctor-friend for failing to have emotions "in proportion to their objects," Aziz snaps, "Is emotion a sack of potatoes, so much the pound, to be measured out? Am I a machine?" (254). The Britons' cool rage for order culminates, after Adela's alleged attack in a Marabar cave, in the laughable plan to have the "extraordinary" and innumerable caves "numbered in sequence with white paint" to prevent further trouble (199).

These examples are not meant to suggest that literacy is the sole or even chief reason for the deadening rationalism of the British Raj as seen in the novel. We could easily adduce other reasons: the rising use of calculative reason in post-Enlightenment Europe, the increasing rationalization of the bureaucratic state in the modern West, the introduction of Utilitarian methods into British governance beginning in the late eighteenth century, the turn toward a liberal authoritarianism in British Indian administration after the Indian Uprising of 1857-58, and the spread of pseudo-scientific racial theories in the latter part of the nineteenth century, to name just a few. Indeed, all of these phenomena are, along with the spread of literate culture, of a piece. Literacy, printing, and discursive production have acted as powerful concomitants of the development of Western national and imperial states. Literacy is simply the aspect I have chosen to study here.

The problem with British literate culture as it is portrayed in Forster's novel is that, given its reification, objectification, and binary stratification, that culture misses the human subject—that subject in intimate relation to other human subjects and in close connection with his or her wider environment. When the missionary Mr. Sorley is asked whether the many mansions of heaven contain not only human beings and monkeys but also wasps, oranges, cactuses, crystals, mud and even "the bacteria inside Mr. Sorley," he balks: "No, no, this is going too far. We must exclude someone from our gathering, or we shall be left with nothing" (38). The expanding perspective of this passage—from the familiarly human to the ever more distantly inhuman—is a recurrent epistemological motif in the novel, one that calls attention to the limitations of British vision: its failure to make sense of a large universe and its inevitable recoil upon the small world of its exclusions. The blinkered quality of British perception is especially acute in

regard to the unseen, to the realm of the spiritual beyond ratiocination. When Adela suggests to Fielding that perhaps telepathy allowed Mrs. Moore to understand what had happened in the caves, the narrator scoffs, "The pert, meagre word fell to the ground. Telepathy? What an explanation! Better withdraw it, and Adela did so. She was at the end of her spiritual tether, and so was he. Were there worlds beyond which they could never touch, or did all that is possible enter their consciousness? They could not tell. . . . They had not the apparatus for judging" (263).

The narrator, who shares with Fielding a liberal belief in proportion, also shares his ignorance about matters beyond the apparatus of reason. "How can the mind take hold of such a country?" the narrator cries out in frustration (136). There is more than a hint of Orientalist cliché in this question. India as a land of immensity, monstrosity, and inscrutability has been a pervasive image within the Western repertoire of representations—or misrepresentations—of the East: the "Orient [as] destined to bear its foreignness as a mark of its permanent estrangement from the West."[14] Yet there is more than Orientalist cliché-mongering going on here. Again and again in his novel, Forster points up the fundamental tautology of Western writing about India, including his own: its inadequacy to reflect anything about India other than its own poor stock of received ideas. About the Gokul Ashtami festival in celebration of the birth of Krishna, the narrator comments: "they [the celebrants] did not one thing which the non-Hindu would feel dramatically correct; this approaching triumph of India was a muddle (as we call it), a frustration of reason and form" (284-85). The novel exposes its own impoverished cultural and discursive devices here. The parenthetical "as we call it" quietly indicts the narrowness inherent in aesthetic and cultural judgments based solely on an Aristotelian norm. India may strike the Western observer as a "muddle," but that word points up a Western inability to transcend its own ethnocentric descriptions rather than any Indian failure to make dramatic sense.

Because the novel so frequently undermines its own discursive strategies, Parry has called *A Passage to India* "the limit text of the Raj discourse, existing on its edges, sharing aspects of its idiom while disputing the language of colonial authority." Claiming that criticism has focused for too long on Forster "as the archetypal practitioner of the domestic, liberal-humanist, realist English novel," she argues that "it should now address itself to the counter-discourse generated by the text, which in its global perspective refuses the received representation of the relationship between the metropolitan culture and its peripheries, and interrogates the premises,

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[14] Said 1978:244.

purposes and goals of a civilisation dedicated to world hegemony"
(1985:30). Parry catches well the self-reflexive, self-unraveling method of
the novel. However, I would like to offer one important modification of her
claim. She declares that "the counter-discourse" originates in "the text."
This is obviously so. However, it can also be argued that the text
ventriloquizes the counter-discourses of India, that it acts as a medium for
indigenous voices on the "periphery" that speak through it and against it.
Parry is largely silent about these Indian voices, yet they constitute a dense,
vital, and potentially subversive polyphony. Godbole's song to Krishna; the
Marabar caves' echo; the "hundred voices" that speak to Mrs. Moore as she
leaves Bombay; the roar of the Indian crowd at Aziz's trial; the song of the
Indian worshipers at Gokul Ashtami; Aziz's poem to internationalism;
Aziz's cry at the end, when he prophecies that Indians will "'drive every
blasted Englishman into the sea'" (332)—all of these voices show an
uncanny power to interrupt the novel's discourse, to announce not only their
intervention but their abiding presence, and to suggest a power, more
effective than that of any single British voice or medley of voices, to
determine future political events. As this list suggests, these voices are
frequently oral. Indeed, the novel shows, with remarkable tact, the capacity
of Indian oral performance to unsettle English literate forms—the types,
categories, binary hierarchies, and other literate structures that compose the
British archive about India. The novel also suggests that, taken together,
these oral performances make up an emergent subaltern counter-discourse to
the dominant British discourse—a dynamic, indigenous oral tradition that
constitutes a cultural and political alternative to a literate tradition of
imperial rule.

Oral Performance in *A Passage to India*

To identify the particular cultural and political agency of this oral
tradition, I will examine three instances of oral performance in *A Passage to
India*: Godbole's hymn to Krishna, the Indian crowd's chant to Mrs. Moore
at Aziz's trial, and the Hindu devotees' song to Tukaram at Gokul
Ashtami.[15] These are obviously not instances of oral performance per se but

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[15] For a wide-ranging discussion of Indian women's song and story as oral
performance, see the special edition on South Asian Oral Traditions in *Oral Tradition*
(12.1), guest-edited by Gloria Goodwin Raheja. On hymns to Krishna in the Indian epic
tradition, see Koskikallio 1996:148-51.

are, instead, textually rendered versions of oral performance intercalated within a fictional narrative; however, I would argue that they are still amenable to the concepts and methods of oral theory. To ascertain the nature of agency in these performances, I will draw upon John Miles Foley's concept of "word-power," as developed in his *The Singer of Tales in Performance* (1995). This book represents an ambitious attempt to synthesize recent research in oral art in two areas: "the Oral-Formulaic Theory associated with Milman Parry and Albert Lord, and the Performance/Ethnography of Speaking/Ethnopoetics school linked closely with Roger Abrahams, Keith Basso, Richard Bauman, Dan Ben-Amos, Charles Briggs, Robert Georges, Dell Hymes, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, Dennis Tedlock, Barre Toelken, and many others" (xiii). For this synthesis, the idea of word-power is central. According to Foley, "*word-power derives from the enabling event of performance and the enabling referent of tradition*" (Foley's emphasis; 208). Foley is particularly interested here in analyzing the first of these terms. He contends that the enabling event of performance depends on three phenomena: "*performance arena, register, and communicative economy*" (Foley's emphasis; 29). The "performance arena" is not so much a physical arena as "an abstract site or recurrent forum for a specific verbal activity, a place (defined abstractly and ritualistically rather than empirically) where participants go to transact the business of performance" (209). "Register" refers to the dedicated set of metonymic and associative devices immanent within a tradition upon which the oral performer draws for his performance and upon which the audience also draws to receive the performance in the fullness of its authority and power. "Communicative economy" occurs when "both performer and reader/audience enter the same arena and have recourse strictly to the dedicated language and presentational mode of the speech act they are undertaking . . ." (53). Within this arena, "signals are decoded and gaps [in reception] are bridged with extraordinary fluency, that is, economy" (53). The idea of the bridging of interpretive gaps, a concept that Foley borrows from the Receptionalist theory of Hans-Robert Jauss and Wolfgang Iser, will be important in understanding the particular agency of oral performance in *A Passage to India*.[16]

In the first instance of oral performance, Professor Godbole sings a hymn to Krishna, the god and divine lover, at the end of Fielding's informal party for Adela and Mrs. Moore. The song mystifies the Forsterian narrator and the Anglo-Indian guests (79):

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[16] For a fuller analysis of the uses of Receptionalism in oral studies, see Foley 1991:espec. 38-60.

> At times there seemed a melody, at times there was the illusion of a Western melody. But the ear, baffled repeatedly, soon lost any clue, and wandered in a maze of noises, none harsh or unpleasant, none intelligible. It was the song of an unknown bird. . . . The sounds continued and ceased after a few moments as casually as they had begun—apparently half through a bar, and upon the sub-dominant.

The hymn, a Hindu song of *bhakti* (or devotion), supplicates the god to come so that the worshiper may unite with him, but, as Godbole explains, "'He refuses to come'" (80). Indeed, although Krishnavite devotees never cease to invite him, he never deigns to come. The performance represents another instance of that "frustration of reason and form" that Gokul Ashtami embodies for the European. But the problem, as the text makes clear, is not with the song itself but with a Western sensibility that fails to make sense of it. Unlike their British counterparts, the Indian auditors apprehend the meaning of the song instantly: "They began to whisper to one another. The man who was gathering water chestnut came naked out of the tank, his lips parted with delight, disclosing his scarlet tongue" (79). The scene bears all the signs of an enabling performance: the quasi-sacral performance arena, the dedicated register of words and tones that constitutes the matter and meaning of the song, and the communicative economy that unites performer and audience in a full sharing of an immanent oral tradition. Through deep familiarity with the ancient conventions of the Hindu song of *bhakti*, the Indian listeners are able to overcome those indeterminacies of interpretation that stymie the Western auditors and apprehend the rich word-power of the tradition.

Although disturbing to Western aesthetic norms, the hymn shows little overt subversion of British political orders. Though the political ramifications of the *bhakti* tradition have been heatedly debated, the song here seems to bear little of the political freight that is sometimes associated with *bhakti* devotionalism.[17] It can be more plausibly argued that the hymn holds a particular political significance within Forster's vision of queer coalition-building. The implicit homoeroticism of the song's reception (the servant's scarlet tongue)—a homoeroticism underscored by the later

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[17] An extensive literature exists on this subject, for which I can offer only a partial survey. On the *bhakti* tradition as expressing the political aspirations of the subaltern for freedom from caste and/or colonial oppression, see Bayly 2000:123-24, Clarke 1998, Gokhale-Turner 1981, Hay 1988:130-39, Lele 1981, and Pandey 1982:169. Conversely, on the *bhakti* tradition as a religious sublimation of political aspirations, see Embree 1988:342-43, Ishwaran 1981, and Guha 1997:39-55.

appearance of another genre of sacral-erotic Indian song, the ephebophilic *ghazal*—suggests Forster's promotion of a same-sex cosmopolitanism as a substitute for imperialism.[18] However, in itself Godbole's song adumbrates only faintly the potential power of a subaltern anti-colonialism. Only in the context of later oral performances will the intimations of political subversion in Godbole's recital grow clearer.

The crowd's chant during Aziz's trial brings the political ramifications of indigenous oral performance immediately to the fore. When the lawyer Mahmoud Ali shouts out the name of Mrs. Moore during the trial, the throng outside the courtroom takes up an Indianized version of her name as a prayer and a rallying cry (225):

> "Esmiss Esmoor
> Esmiss Esmoor
> Esmiss Esmoor
> Esmiss Esmoor. . . ."

As in the case of Godbole's hymn, the English audience is befuddled, even maddened, by the chant. Ronny thinks: "It was revolting to hear his mother travestied into Esmiss Esmoor, a Hindu goddess" (225). The impotence of the British extends beyond their failure to interpret the nature of the chant adequately to include their inability to control its noisy reception within the courtroom: "In vain the [British-appointed] Magistrate threatened and expelled. Until the magic exhausted itself, he was powerless" (225). Caught up in the word-power of the chant, the crowd is able to find an inspiring meaning in their collective performance that the British can neither fathom nor stop.

Although this chant is a crude, evanescent example of oral performance, it has a lingering effect on the people of the town: "The death [of Mrs. Moore] took subtler and more lasting shapes in Chandrapore" (256). A legend arises about an Englishman who had killed his mother for attempting to save an Indian's life. Also, "At one period two distinct tombs containing Esmiss Esmoor's remains were reported. . . . Mr. McBryde visited them both and saw signs of the beginning of a cult—earthenware saucers and so on" (256-57). As the narrator observes, in the history of British India it has not been unusual for deceased Britons to become minor deities—"not a whole god, perhaps, but part of one, adding an epithet or gesture to what already existed, just as the gods contribute to the great gods,

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[18] On the ephebophilic associations of the *ghazal*, see Rahman 1988. On Forster's vision of a queer alternative to empire, see Bakshi 1994, Bredbeck 1997, Malik 1997, Suleri 1992:132-48, and Touval 1997.

and they to the philosophic Brahm" (257). Here, the narrator downplays the historical significance of Mrs. Moore's deification by stressing its mythological overtones. Elsewhere, however, the text emphasizes the historical resonances of the phenomenon, and the chant that marks its origin, by linking them to a series of events that reflects an incipient nationalist movement within Chandrapore. Before the trial, "a new spirit seemed abroad, a rearrangement, which no one in the stern little band of whites could explain" (214). Both elites (a group of Muslim women who refuse to eat until Aziz is released) and subalterns (the lowly sweepers of the latrines, who go on strike) are part of this "new spirit." After the trial, the insurgent spirit spreads: the native police strike, the Nawab Bahadur gives up his British-conferred title, and Aziz, embittered by the injustice with which the Anglo-Indian authorities have treated him, departs British India to live in the Native State of Mau.

The narrator admonishes us not to exaggerate the importance of this new "rearrangement": the incident of the Marabar caves "did not break up a continent or even dislocate a district" (237). However, the details of the novel's depiction of Indian protest—especially the *hartals*, or work stoppages—closely parallel those associated with Gandhi's Non-cooperation Movement of the early 1920s, of which Forster was able to catch a glimpse when he was in India. In its mixture of spontaneity and provisional organization, of the carnivalesque and the purposeful, the anti-colonial activity of the fictional Chandrapore mirrors that of many towns and villages of India during this time, as scholars of the Subaltern Studies group have documented.[19] In its reliance upon the oral, particularly as a part of religious practice, the insurgency in Chandrapore replicates the wave of unrest that accompanied Gandhi's emergence as leader of the Indian nationalist movement. The fictional chant to Esmiss Esmoor is *mutatis mutandis* an aesthetic and political correlative of the hymns to a divinized Gandhi sung by Indian protestors in the 1920s.[20] Despite its deflating irony, Forster's novel renders sensitively the integral function of orality in the political protest that arose among both elite and subaltern townspeople in early twentieth-century India.[21]

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[19] On subaltern militancy in Indian villages during Gandhi's Non-cooperation Movement, see Amin 1984, Guha 1997:122-31, Pandey 1982, and Sarkar 1984.

[20] On the singing of hymns to Gandhi at this time, see Amin 1984:16.

[21] I am not interested here in analyzing the relevance of Forster's novel to disputes among historians on the question of subaltern agency in modern Indian history. Nationalist histories tend to ignore the role of subaltern agents in the rise of Indian

In the third and final instance of oral performance, Godbole leads the celebrants at Gokul Ashtami in a song of devotion to Tukaram, the great seventeenth-century *bhakti* poet whose *abhangs* and *kirtans* to Krishna remain immensely popular today not only in his native Maharashtra but throughout India.[22] The devotees sing (283):

> "Tukaram, Tukaram,
> Thou art my father and mother and everybody.
> Tukaram, Tukaram,
> Thou are my father and mother and everybody. . . ."

Two other outbursts of song—a repetition of this apostrophe to Tukaram and a snatch of song to Krishna—punctuate the narrative of Part III, reminding us of the centrality of oral performance in the depiction of the temple rituals at Mau. Non-Hindus in the novel can make little sense of these songs. We have already seen the Western narrator's puzzlement at a ceremony that to him lacks any recognizable form. Even Aziz, a Muslim, fails to comprehend the proceedings. But the word-power of the hymns communicates itself to the temple worshipers, all of whom share in the dissolution of personal boundaries that the song to Tukaram invites. When they behold the image of Krishna, "a most beautiful and radiant expression came into their faces, a beauty in which there was nothing personal, for it caused them all to resemble one another during the moment of indwelling. . . ." (284). For them no gaps of interpretive uncertainty impede their understanding, and within the performance arena of the temple, the enabling tradition of *bhakti* comes to life.

The inclusive spirit of Tukaram, a shudra poet who sang the virtues of a divine love beyond caste, pervades the festival. The statue of Krishna cannot emerge from the temple until the band of untouchable sweepers, "the spot of filth without which the spirit cannot cohere," plays its tune (305). Even those outside the caste system, the British *mlecchas* (or foreigners)

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nationalism. Subaltern histories emphasize that role but note its repeated appropriation by elite political organizations. We could hardly expect Forster's novel to advert directly to these opposing historiographical traditions; he was a fiction writer of the Modernist period, not a historian of today. However, it is worth noting that, in the interplay between high and low political forces during and after Aziz's trial, *A Passage to India* offers a broad depiction of political events, one that points to that "rounded history" of which C. A. Bayly writes (2000:121), a history that would study the potential convergences of rival elite and subaltern historiographies.

[22] On the popularity of Tukaram, see Jordens 1975:269. On the life and faith of the singer-saint, see Ranade 1994.

unwittingly participate in the festival. In his ecstatic vision of "Completeness," Godbole seeks to embrace Mrs. Moore in addition to the "stone" of the Marabar caves (286). The climax of the festival (if there is one) incorporates another set of non-Hindus. The boat carrying Aziz and Ralph (Mrs. Moore's son) collides with both the floating tray bearing the toy village of Gokul and the boat carrying Fielding and his wife Stella. The boats and tray capsize, and in the waters that unite gods, Indians, and Britons, "the oars, the sacred tray, the letters of Ronny and Adela, br[eak] loose and [float] confusedly" (315). The drowning of the letters is emblematic of the feeble power of the literate: "Books written afterwards" speak of the success of the festival, but "How can it be expressed in anything but itself?" (288). In this concluding section of the novel, we exist not in the realm of the literate, which is powerless to capture the experience of Gokul Ashtami on the grid of its clearly demarcated categories. We exist instead inside the world of the oral, the warm, communal, interactive, participatory arena defined by the devotees' songs to Tukaram and Krishna, in which all opposed terms—divine and human, elite and subaltern, and British and Indian—for a moment melt into each another.[23]

It is hard to attach any overt political meaning to the oral performance in the temple at Mau. It occurs in a Princely State outside the direct governance of the British Raj and bears no discernible relation to the anti-colonial protests beginning to ripple through British India. The festival's rendering seems to support the view that the *bhakti* tradition works to divert social and political aspirations into harmless religious forms rather than to channel them toward protest and reform. The sweepers will be no better off and Indians no closer to freedom after the festival. However, given the larger context of the novel, which shows the increasing politicization of the Chandrapore community as part of a proto-nationalist movement, we would be remiss in not looking at the depiction of Gokul Ashtami for signs of political change. Here we must look at political agency broadly, focusing not just on the historical period in which the novel is set but on the future that events of this period seek to presage. Shortly after the festival, Aziz, speaking to Fielding, declares that any friendship between them must await independence. The ending does not foreclose the possibility of amity, as some critics think.[24] Instead, invoking once again the device of expanding perspectives, it looks beyond the present to the future. As the "hundred

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[23] On the power of the oral to erode binary oppositions, see Goody 1977:105-6 and Ong 1982:164-65.

[24] See Said 1978:244.

voices" of India cry, "No, not yet," and "No, not there" (322), the narrative anticipates a day when, Britain and India having become political equals, friendship will be possible. For Forster, whose political views were often couched in social terms, the future of Indian independence is envisioned here as a utopian fraternity beyond race and nation, a fraternity embodied most clearly in Aziz's poem to "internationality" and "bhakti" (293). To the extent that Gokul Ashtami dissolves the boundary between Briton and Indian, it participates in this vision of future international love. The lyric to Tukaram, with its allusions to family union across caste lines, functions as an important component of this at once social, religious, and political dream of equality and mutuality.

Conclusion

May we say, then, that in *A Passage to India* the subaltern *can* speak? Some readers might object that Godbole, who figures in two of the three oral performances I cite, cannot be considered a subaltern. However, as Guha (2000:7) reminds us, the subaltern is not a monolithic but a variable and differential category, and relative to the Anglo-Indian elites who rule, Godbole can indeed be considered a subaltern. Spivak's thoroughly marginalized *sati* is only the most subordinate of subalterns on a spectrum that conceivably includes a brahmin teacher like Godbole. Other readers might object that, even if we consider Godbole a subaltern, he cannot really be said to speak in his own voice. If one is persuaded by Spivak, the voice of the subaltern is always already appropriated by a Western discourse that only seems to enunciate it in its "pure" tones. However, here I side with Parry in finding in Spivak too grand a view of the self-consolidating Western Subject and too limited a view of subaltern vocality. Europe is neither as homogenized in its own aspect nor as homogenizing of Asian heterogeneity as Spivak claims. The hundred voices of India are, I would argue, heterogeneous and resistant to the Western discourses that seek to represent them. Whenever Indians sing or chant in the novel, they disrupt not only Western aesthetic and epistemological norms but also Western means of social and political control. By foiling any attempt at appropriation, these songs and chants constitute oral phenomena that stand within their own traditions and pronounce themselves in their own terms. Indeed, they compose a subaltern counter-discourse in Parry's sense of the term, a counter-discourse embodied in the "sacred songs" she mentions as

one potential source of colonial subversion.[25] Forster's narrative facilitates
the transmission of these counter-songs. In its quiet awareness of the
limitations of its own writing—an awareness it conveys through its continual
failure to "take hold" of India—it opens itself up to moments of self-effacing
ventriloquism, moments in which a native counterpoint announces itself
with barely a trace of authorial mediation. These contrapuntal voices "sing"
most emphatically in those instances of spiritual upwelling that the narrative
finds itself least able to convey or define.

It is possible to deny a strong political significance to these counter-
songs, particularly as articulated by the oral performances I have studied. In
support of this view, one could argue that the oral tradition that enables these
performances is inherently conservative and implicitly resistant to political
change. However, with increasing attention to the diachronic features of
oral performance, scholars within oral studies have been led to stress the
power of this tradition to embody creative, dynamic change, whether on the
part of individuals in a lineage of performers or on the part of entire oral
communities in history.[26] In both cases, changes in the tradition can bear
political overtones.[27] For example, in the chant of Mrs. Moore's name at

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[25] In arguing for the potency of the subaltern in *A Passage to India*, I disagree
sharply with Barbara Harlow, who has made precisely the opposite argument about
subalterns in the novel. On the power of Indian subaltern song, see the essays collected
in Raheja 1997b. In her introductory remarks about the power of resistance in Indian
women's song, Raheja implicitly concurs with Parry (and dissents from Spivak): "The
idea of resistance has been an enticing one to anthropologists and folklorists: it provided
us with one kind of language with which to think about the diversity of narrative
traditions within a folklore community; it allowed us to think about relations of power
and challenges posed to them in 'traditional' expressive forms; [and] it allowed us to
begin to counter the colonial and postcolonial representations of the silence and the
passivity of Indian women" (1997a:6).

[26] On the fluid, dynamic quality of oral traditions, see Amodio 2000:193-94, 205;
Finnegan 1992:51; Foley 1985:59; and Foley 1995:xii; 46, n. 39.

[27] Recently, oral studies has paid increasing attention to the political contexts and
implications of oral art. In her assessment of current trends influencing anthropological
research into oral traditions, Ruth Finnegan sees "an interest in the potentially political,
contested, or contingent nature of much that had in the past been regarded as fixed and
essentially definable as verbally-transcribed texts" (1992:52). In contrasting traditional,
colonial and recent, postcolonial studies of Indian folklore, Gloria Goodwin Raheja notes
of current scholars in the field: "We began to see then that we could not understand oral
traditions without grasping the power relationships that informed the lives of the tellers
and singers, and that songs and stories might either uphold or challenge the ideologies
that sustained those relations of power. We could no longer accept the decontextualizing

Aziz's trial, we can trace both an aesthetic and a political dimension: the enlargement of an aesthetic repertoire dedicated to evocations of the divine and, in a tiny way, the elision of social and political divisions between peoples. The capacity of this oral tradition to absorb foreign influences underscores its power to carry a political charge. By including in its range of allusions a name belonging to its foreign conquerors, the crowd outside the courtroom reveals its "sly civility," in Homi Bhabha's phrase, its ability to mimic and thereby displace the authority of the word of the colonial interloper.[28] This is a case far from Spivak's concept of the self-aggrandizing Western subject. Indeed, it seems the reverse. It is also a case that belies the essentialism that Spivak finds an inevitable concomitant of Western subject-formation. There is nothing essentialized in a name that can be used for such diverse, shifting, and ambivalent purposes.

I admire and value Spivak's tough scrupulosity, especially her sharp vigilance against the tendency of "benevolent" Westerners to use the subaltern recipients of their dubious kindness both to promote their own self-regard and to aid in the expansion of global capitalism. However, I find in the end that her scrupulosity amounts to a kind of impoverishing austerity. Too nice an apprehension of the problems raised by the subaltern can render one deaf to the potential power of that subaltern to speak. In *A Passage to India*, I would argue that subalterns *can* speak on their own ground and in their own idiom—on the constantly evolving ground of a dynamic tradition and in a diction that turns as readily to Western sources as it does to its own to expand its word-power and to augment its social and political agency.

John Carroll University

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and depoliticizing of folklore that so characterized the interpretive strategies of [William] Crooke and so many others like him" (1997a:6).

[28] Bhabha 1994b. On the power of the colonized to appropriate the word of the colonizer for their own uses, see also Bhabha 1994a.

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On the Use and Abuse of "Orality" for Art: Reflections on Romantic and Late Twentieth-Century *Poiesis*

Maureen N. McLane

It is not an overstatement to say that, in the last decades of the eighteenth and the first decades of the nineteenth centuries, almost every major British literary poet found him- or herself engaging with oral tradition, as well as with the figure of the oral poet, his work, his cultural position, and his method of composition. Oral tradition acquired new status not only as a legitimate fund of cultural authority but also a resource for the making and annotating of "original," literary poetry.[1] The image of the oral poet, moreover, fired the Romantic imagination—whether this poet was imagined as Ossian, "the last of his race," purported bard of third-century Scottish warriors,[2] or as a seventeenth-century "last minstrel" singing his dying

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[1] On the changing and disputed cultural status of oral tradition[s] in British literary culture, see in particular Trumpener 1997. With respect to Scotland in particular, and its simultaneous idealization and degradation of "the oral," see Fielding 1996.

[2] On the controversy attending the Ossian poems, published by James Macpherson throughout the 1760s, there is an ever-growing bibliography. To examine further the cause of this furor, see Macpherson 1996. For a lucid and measured survey of the Ossian controversy, its "three phases," and more broadly of Macpherson's career, see deGategno 1989. The impact of "Ossianism" on eighteenth-century literary culture is signaled in Fiona Stafford and Howard Gill's *From Gaelic to Romantic: Ossianic Translations* (1998). Stafford has written extensively on Macpherson, his career, the Ossian poems, and their reception: see, for example, Stafford 1988 and 1994:ch. 4. Trumpener 1997 offers a compelling analysis of the cultural politics of the Ossian controversy, Samuel Johnson's role in fomenting it, his famed hostility to Scotland, and more particularly his rejection of oral tradition. That the cultural politics of Ossian remain volatile is evident in the collection of fiercely partisan [pro-Macpherson] critical essays gathered in Gaskill 1991.

strains to defeated Scots nobles, or as a contemporary Highland lass singing as she reaped.[3]

In the following pages I propose to discuss what has been called "the romance of orality"[4] as a particularly lively and vexed opportunity for literary poets, both romantic and contemporary. For writers such as Walter Scott, Thomas Moore, Robert Burns, and William Wordsworth, ancient ballads and contemporary oral traditions offered a kind of poetic archive, a resource both for writing their own poetry and for theorizing the cultural work of poetry. There is by now a critical consensus that British Romantics, like their German counterparts, turned to ideas of the primitive, organic culture, folk essence, and fantasies of childish or *völkisch* naïveté in their efforts to rejuvenate what they saw as a hidebound art: this is one way to understand, for example, the elevation of the ballad in the late eighteenth century. This romance between highly cultivated literary poets and the primitive, however defined, must equally be seen as a romance with orality.

To map fully the longstanding literary romance with orality—a romance that still persists, as I will later argue—is a task that exceeds the scope of this essay; we can, however, begin to sketch the contours of some of its constitutive aspects. In recent decades, scholars have reanimated the "scandals of the ballad," to use Susan Stewart's phrase: controversies involving disputes over authenticity, fakery, and forgery; the status of oral tradition and manuscript evidence; and national and otherwise partisan styles of editing and scholarship.[5] The historicist and materialist turn in contemporary literary studies helps us to see how these eighteenth-century scandals—fueled by the success of James Macpherson's Ossian poems, Thomas Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), Chatterton's

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[3] For a discussion of the image of "the last bard" and the trope of "the last of the race," see Stafford 1994:espec. ch. 4 and ch. 7. Among the many such representations, Walter Scott's "Lay of the Last Minstrel" (1805) was the most commercially successful. The poem as cited here is from the 1830 edition of *The Poetical Works of Walter Scott, together with the Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (Scott 1830). Further references to the poem will be cited in text by canto and stanza.

[4] In McLane 2001. I have since discovered that in her wonderful *Writing and Orality* (1996) Penny Fielding uses the same phrase, observing that when the "romance of orality" is "constructed by a dominant ideology it begins to look suspiciously like writing" (10)—that is, as fixed, authoritative, monologic, and culturally hegemonic. Some oralities, that is, are better than others, and in a "graphocentric society" (10), it is the elite literati who sift and determine the values and meanings of the oral.

[5] Stewart 1994:espec. ch. 3 and ch. 4.

fabricated Rowley poems, and numerous ballad collections—emerged within a context of cultural nationalism (e.g. in the Ossian controversy, which pitted Scottish literary nationalists against English chauvinist foes like Samuel Johnson), changing copyright law, and new institutions of print capital.[6]

The editors and literary imitators of "ancient ballads" presented their works in book form to literate, cultivated audiences; these literary productions explicitly concerned themselves with the problem of representing, theorizing, and historicizing "orality," including such features as composition-in-performance, communal memory, folk tradition, oral transmission, and mediation. Particularly striking is the development, in the work of such antiquarians as Thomas Percy and later Romantic poet-editors like Walter Scott, of preliminary and controversial "oral theories" of poetry, including theories about the "ancient minstrels" who purveyed ballads and romances.[7] The figure of the minstrel, reconstructed and reinvented in the mid-eighteenth century, emerges as one type of the oral poet; he also emerges, in antiquarian and romantic discourse, as the figure of poetic obsolescence and decay.[8]

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[6] For trenchant accounts of these scandals and their implications, see Stewart 1994, which emphasizes the historical-material conditions of literary production, and Trumpener 1997, which focuses on the dialectic between imperialism and cultural nationalism. Groom 1999 offers not only a thorough account of Percy's project but also invaluable reflections on the theoretical implications of Percy's edition, which Groom characterizes as "a three-volume anthology of ballads, songs, sonnets, and romances . . . probably the finest example of the antiquarian tendency in later eighteenth-century poetry. It is also symptomatic of the emerging discipline of scholarly editing. It dramatizes the encounters between literate and oral media, between polite poetry and popular culture, and between scholarship and taste" (2). See Groom 1999 as well for the religious and nationalistic animosities fueling the antagonism between partisans of Percy and those of his scourge, the antiquarian and editor Joseph Ritson.

[7] For Percy's musings on English minstrels, see Percy 1886/1996:Appendix I. For further reflections on Percy's minstrel theory, see Groom 1999:espec. 61-105. For Scott's account of minstrel poetry, see Scott 1830:5-16. On the revivification of minstrels and "minstrel origins theory," see Stewart 1994.

[8] As Groom writes, "Minstrels . . . were oral poets" (1999:99). The minstrel offered Percy an image of the English oral poet that could, in colonialist fashion, subsume and trump images of Welsh and Scottish bards; English minstrelsy was also a mechanism for gathering and nationalizing local and regional poetic traditions within England. Groom notes further that "Minstrels also developed at the margins of orality and literacy. By plotting the borders, Percy melded together a national tradition, and clarified Englishness" (100).

These developments may be seen as aspects of what we might call "the oral turn" in the literature of this period. Recent scholarship on eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature has illuminated the cultural and political stakes of this turn; oral theory and media theory help us to reflect further on the processes of mediation (for example, transcription, printing, and other forms of textual "fixing") required by literary uses of orality.[9] And thus we might ask: how was orality harnessed to romantic poetry? What discursive functions did an invocation of "oral communication" or "oral tradition" perform? What kind of authority was imagined to inhere in such invocations? What did the imagined fate of orality have to say about the fate of literary poetry? How did the turn to orality inform literary poets' poems as well as their notions about performance, composition, mediation, and transmission?

The early work of Walter Scott and William Wordsworth will help us to meditate on, if not answer, some of these questions. Both of these poets, especially early in their careers, were preoccupied with and stimulated by the problem of representing orality. And as poets considered by their contemporaries as well as ours to be representative of their age, Scott and Wordsworth offer—in their divergent approaches to oral problematics and literary *poiesis*—exemplary cases.[10]

Representing Orality: Romantic *Poiesis*, Mediation, and the Oral-Literate Problematic

Ventriloquizing and Historicizing Orality: Scott's Minstrelsy

> The last of all the Bards was he,
> Who sung of Border chivalry;
> For, welladay! their date was fled,
> His tuneful brethren all were dead;
> And he, neglected and oppress'd,
> Wish'd to be with them, and at rest.
> Walter Scott, *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, Introduction to Canto I, 7-12

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[9] Some essential texts informing this discussion, in addition to those already mentioned, are Ong 1982, Finnegan 1992, Goody 1977, Havelock 1986, and Nagy 1996.

[10] See, for example, Hazlitt's remarks (1930): "Walter Scott is the most popular of all the poets of the present day, and deservedly so. . . . He has none of Mr Wordsworth's *idiosyncracy*" (154); "Mr Wordsworth is the most original poet now living. He is the reverse of Walter Scott in his defects and excellences" (156).

Walter Scott's best-selling *Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805) offers one spectacular example of the uses to which orality could be put. From his first collection, *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border* (1802-3), through his series of long narrative poems (*The Lay of the Last Minstrel* being only the first of several minstrelling romances), Scott was the romantic writer who most thoroughly worked through and worked over the oral-poetic problematic, which in his case we might call the problematic of minstrelsy. His corpus is a long meditation on the end, in all senses, of minstrels. If Scott's literary work both displayed and discussed what Stewart calls "the literary self-consciousness of antiquarianism" (1994:25), his work also revealed the historiographic and ethnographic self-consciousness of early nineteenth-century literature.

Scott took over from the antiquarians the reinvented minstrel—the professional transmitter of the oral-poetic tradition—and made him a historicizable mouthpiece. As "last of all the bards," the minstrel is not only the figure of cultural obsolescence, of the defeat of traditionary Scottish culture: he is also the figure through whom Scott can both represent oral *poiesis* and chronicle its obsolescence.

In the course of *The Lay*, Scott's minstrel has several ostentatiously self-reflexive moments when he pauses to reflect on his song, other versions of it, how he came to be fluent in it. Consider, for example, this passage near the end of canto 4, when the minstrel interrupts his account of the English and Scottish warriors' agreement to abide by the results of single combat "on foot" (xxxiii):

<div style="text-align:center">XXXIV.</div>

I know right well, that, in their lay,
Full many minstrels sing and say,
     Such combat should be made on horse,
On foaming steed, in full career,
With brand to aid, when as the spear
     Should shiver in the course:
But he, the jovial Harper, taught
Me, yet a youth, how it was fought,
     In guise which now I say;
He knew each ordinance and clause
Of Black Lord Archibauld's battle-laws,
     In the old Douglas' day.
He brook'd not, he, that scoffing tongue
Should tax his minstrelsy with wrong,
     Or call his song untrue:
For this, when they the goblet plied,

And such rude taunt had chafed his pride,
  The Bard of Reull he slew.
On Teviot's side, in fight they stood,
And tuneful hands were stain'd with blood;
Where still the thorn's white branches wave,
Memorial o'er his rival's grave.

Among the features worth remarking in this passage:

 1. The minstrel's ready reference to and insertion of himself within a community of song-makers, within a song-culture: "I know right well . . . full many minstrels sing and say. . . ."

 2. The minstrel's representation of his narrative as a tradition learned from another: a "jovial Harper" "taught" him while "yet a youth." The minstrel understands his lay, his corpus, to be an inherited one, and he foregrounds its transmission. This past moment of learning is converted into the "now" of the minstrel's saying: "In guise which now I say." The minstrel, then, understands his lay as a re-creation of previous lays, a saying of the same again.[11]

 3. The song tradition here as the historical tradition, replete with martial specifics. For the minstrel, there is no difference between historical and song traditions.

 4. The minstrel's participation in the competitive ethos of the warrior culture he celebrates: he trumpets his account as one different from, and superior to, "the lay" of other minstrels. If they claim "such combat should be made on horse," he insists that combatants met "on foot," battling "hand to hand." His account is *one among many*, the minstrel implicitly acknowledges, yet his is the best, whatever "many minstrels" may "sing and say." The minstrel's competitive spirit is as traditional as his lay: as he says, his own teacher refused to tolerate "scoffing tongue[s]," and quite readily "slew" bardic adversaries—The Bard of Reull. "Tuneful hands were stain'd with blood," his former student declares, apparently cheerfully. An unapologetic rivalry emerges clearly as the engine of minstrelsy. *The Lay* thus announces its commitment to praise and blame, to rivalry and combat, to competitive as well as communal making. This *Lay* also, and not incidentally, allies a history of Scottish poetry—as much as Scottish history—with a warrior ethos and transparent masculinity.

 In the very next stanza, however, the minstrel acknowledges that the romance of continuous transmission, of rivalrous making, is over: the

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[11] Gregory Nagy (1996:4) argues that the "mimesis" of oral performance should be understood as "dramatic re-enactment."

minstrel has outlasted his community, which had heretofore guaranteed the meaningful singing of his song:

<div align="center">XXXV.</div>

Why should I tell the rigid doom,
That dragg'd my master to his tomb;
  How Ousenam's maidens tore their hair,
Wept till their eyes were dead and dim,
And wrung their hands for love of him.
  Who died at Jedwood Air?
He died!—his scholars, one by one,
To the cold silent grave are gone;
And I, alas! survive alone
To muse o'er rivalries of yore,
And grieve that I shall hear no more
The strains, with envy heard before;
For, with my minstrel brethren fled,
My jealousy of song is dead.

The lament for the "master" is also a lament for minstrel- and warrior-culture, the end of productive rivalry: "my jealousy of song is dead." It is striking to see that signal Romantic lament—"And I, alas! survive alone"—emerge in this context. The minstrel exists as an "I" only inasmuch as he emerges as one of a minstrel band. Minstrels, that is, lack individuality, personhood, interiority, subjectivity; they are the vectors of culture, mediums *par excellence*. Having his minstrel reflect on his cultural predicament, Scott develops a theoretically informed and powerful image: that of a native-informant minstrel-maker who can report and meditate as it were "authentically" on oral poetry, song-culture, and its rivalrous ethos—an image the particulars of which contemporary oral theory seems to confirm.

  In presenting and representing minstrels, moreover, the Romantic poet allowed himself to explore his proximity and distance from minstrel-making and minstrel-culture. The minstrel is inevitably a figure not only of the past or of the proleptically past but of the contemporary poet's *method*, both literary and historiographic. In writing minstrelsy, the modern poet both imaginatively and materially remediates minstrelsy, taking it out of the mouths of singers and the realm of immediate audiences and into the domain of writing and manuscript or print circulation. If in himself the minstrel bears the mark of orality and indeed of the residual itself, the literary representation of the minstrel depends upon his supercession, the triumph of print culture and, in the broadest cultural and political sense, of the Act of Union between England and Scotland in 1707, and the ascendancy of empire.

The Lay of the Last Minstrel is also a witty and yet disturbingly knowing meditation on virtually every anxiety of the poet, whether ancient or modern, oral or literary. On the poet's concern for audience, consider the hapless minstrel at the end of his first "fitt" (end of Canto I; italics mine):

> Here paused the harp; and with its swell
> The Master's fire and courage fell;
> Dejectedly, and low, he bow'd,
> And, gazing timid on the crowd,
> *He seemed to seek, in every eye,*
> *If they approved his minstrelsy*;
> And, diffident of present praise,
> Somewhat he spoke of former days,
> And how old age, and wand'ring long,
> Had done his hand and harp some wrong.
> The Duchess, and her daughters fair,
> And every gentle lady there,
> Each after each, in due degree,
> Gave praises to his melody;
> His hand was true, his voice was clear,
> And much they long'd the rest to hear.
> Encouraged thus, the Aged Man,
> After meet rest, again began.

In such a passage, Scott takes great pains to represent the oral poet's embodied relation to the audience (notably marked as both noble and female), a relation in which face-to-face contact and immediate somatic feedback are the conditions of recitation and performance. Scott thus marks the historical distance between the situation of the minstrel's recitation and his own poem, bound as it eventually was in printed books, destined for a literate audience of thousands—an audience of men as well as women, of Englishmen as well as Scotsmen, of learned as well as unlearned readers, of lawyers, merchants, academics, and farmers as well as aristocrats. At the level of minstrel metaphorics, then, Scott creates a space for constituting, doubling, differentiating, and indeed historicizing the relation of poet-to-audience.

For this minstrel, performance is an arduous task, hesitantly begun and then ecstatically, albeit erratically, continued (end of Introduction, Canto I, 84-100):

> Amid the strings his fingers stray'd,
> And an uncertain warbling made,
> And oft he shook his hoary head.

> But when he caught the measure wild,
> The old man raised his face, and smiled;
> And lighten'd up his faded eye,
> With all a poet's ecstasy!
> In varying cadence, soft or strong,
> He swept the sounding chords along;
> The present scene, the future lot,
> His toils, his wants, were all forgot:
> Cold diffidence, and age's frost,
> In the full tide of song were lost;
> Each blank in faithless memory void,
> The poet's glowing thought supplied;
> And, while his harp responsive rung,
> 'Twas thus the Latest Minstrel sung.

Scott's intense focus on the minstrel's activity—his tuning up, his physical movements, his playing, his "uncertain warbling," his anxious consciousness of the audience, his "ecstasy," his intermittent depressions throughout the lay—casts a strange and ambiguous halo over the poem. If the poem often condescends to this minstrel—"infirm and old," barely able to get his harp tuned and his measures flowing—nevertheless the poem ultimately articulates its primary narrative content through this decrepit figure, whom Scott tells us he introduced as a "prolocutor" or "pitch-pipe" meant to help modern readers more easily swallow the legendary stuff of the poem.[12] Such a passage relies, characteristically, on a kind of poetic filter, a constitutive mediation: Scott represents the minstrel's strumming "in varying cadence," at various dynamics ("soft or strong"), finally catching "the measure wild." Such a picture emerges, however, through the medium of Scott's own highly regulated measures, cast in writing and ultimately print, in a more or less standard English, unaccompanied by harp or even, if we are silently reading the lay, audible voice. We note as well that Scott differentiates his own framing narration from the minstrel's recitation by means of meter: he uses the octosyllabic "minstrel couplet" in the framing passages (see, for example, the passage immediately above) and a variable ballad stanza for

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[12] For Scott's decision to use the minstrel as a framing device, see his "Introduction to 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel'" (1830:315): "I entirely agreed with my friendly critic in the necessity of having some sort of pitch-pipe, which might make readers aware of the object, or rather the tone, of the publication. . . . I therefore introduced the figure of the Old Minstrel, as an appropriate prolocutor, by whom the lay might be sung, or spoken, and the introduction of whom betwixt the cantos, might remind the reader at intervals, of the time, place, and circumstances of the recitation. This species of *cadre*, or frame, afterwards afforded the poem its name of 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel'."

the minstrel's own recitation (see, for example, his account of his master's death). On the level of metrics, then, Scott both borrows from minstrelsy (using its characteristic couplet form) and differentiates himself from it (having his minstrel recite in another meter). If *The Lay* contains a narrative about border feuds, supernatural interventions, and romance triumphant, as well as a meta-narrative of historical change, the poem tells, on the level of poetic representation, yet another story: that of the disjunction between the minstrel's hesitant, effortful recitation and Scott's confident handling of it.

If Scott's conspicuous fluency differentiates him from the minstrel, nevertheless he also raises the inevitable specter of the minstrel as his own double. Singing on the edge of an abyss (his "date was fled"), the minstrel offers a parable of the modern poet's imminent obsolescence. *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* is predicated on a trope of simultaneously conjunctive and disjunctive analogy. The minstrel, that is, as both like and unlike Scott, offered him a multivalent figure to think with and through. Scott emerges as a particular kind of poet in *The Lay*—a poet who makes poetry out of historically obsolete and yet picturesque poetic practices, practices clearly marked as oral *poiesis*. Scott's confident authority depends precisely on our *not taking* the minstrel as the proper analogue for the modern poet. Simultaneously historicizing the minstrel and analogizing with him, Scott's *Lay* vividly enacts what it encodes—to wit, the historicity of poetry and its mediations, and the cultural conditions of the poet.

The oral problematic of minstrelsy is, from this angle, the problem of the chronotope of *poiesis*—"chronotope" used here, in Bakhtin's sense, to mean the constitutive configuration of space and time within a literary work as well as the time-space relationships generated between the work and its compositional context.[13] If the minstrel is the medium of the lay, Scott's representation of the minstrel *as* medium authorizes the lay precisely by historicizing his situation, what James Chandler would have us call his "case":[14]

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[13] See Bakhtin (1981), who observes that "it is precisely the chronotope that defines genre and generic distinctions, for in literature the primary category in the chronotope is time" (85). Characteristic of Scott's minstrelsy is its orchestration of several temporalities: the "now" of narration; the "then" within the narrative present; the time of any framing narration; the distance, if any, between these narratological temporalities; the time of composition; the time of notes and addenda; the time of revision; the time of successive editions; and so on. Scott's historiographically informed poetry develops chronotopical complexities that anticipate those of his historical novels.

[14] On analyzing literary works as "cases," in the full casuistical, grammatical, and psychohistorical senses of the term "case," see Chandler 1998:espec. ch. 4.

> The last of all the Bards was he,
> Who sung of Border chivalry;
> For welladay! their date was fled.

This trope of the fled "date," the chronotope of a hazily but decidedly past past in a ruined, haunted place, a placed saturated by the traumatic marks of time, is exactly what constitutes the space of recitation in *The Lay*. The minstrel's pathos resides in his being residual, his date "fled." The minstrel is himself conscious of his fled date: as we have seen, he laments within his narration that his brethren are all dead, and that the noble ethos of poetic competition has faded: "my jealousy of song is dead."

Remembering days when he used to pour out "to lord and lady gay, / The unpremeditated lay," this rather doleful specimen sings a lay that is doubly "of the Last Minstrel"—a lay sung *by* him but also, by virtue of Scott's astonishing poetic and historiographic fluencies, a lay *about* him. Inasmuch as the lay is *his* lay, part of his minstrel-stock, and *perhaps the only lay* the last minstrel now possesses, the lay of the last minstrel is "of" him in yet a third sense. The punning condensation in the preposition "of" offers an allegory in miniature of Scott's interest in the pre-position of the poet, in the poet's *case*.

It is impossible to avoid the question of the good faith of such a representation, and many critics—both Scott's contemporaries, notably William Hazlitt, and ours—find such alternately lugubrious and pugnacious renderings of the end of minstrels and of Scottish local culture to be, at best, a canny, slick appropriation, a masquerade capitalizing on shallow nostalgia while sating the public's lust for picturesque sentiment, manners, and lore.[15] Yet if Scott ventriloquized oral poetry in *The Lay*, he also showed himself, in his *Border Minstrelsy*, to be a passionate, rigorous advocate and preserver of its cultural value and poetic richness. In a fuller investigation of Scott's romantic orality, one would wish to explore thoroughly his multivalent responses to and uses of the oral-poetic traditions he himself declared were dying off, "fled," or dead.

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[15] For a sample of Hazlitt's criticism, consider the following: "there is a modern air in the midst of the antiquarian research of Mr Scott's poetry. It is history or tradition in masquerade. . . . He has just hit the town between the romantic and the fashionable; and between the two, secured all classes of readers on his side. In a word, I conceive that he is to the great poet, what an excellent mimic is to a great actor" (1930:155).

Mediating Orality: Wordsworth's Close Encounters of an Oral Kind

If Scott rendered oral recitation as pageant and spectacle, with minstrelsy a vehicle for a picturesque rendering of cultural history, Wordsworth approached the question of oral-poetic problematics from another angle. Scott largely confined his reflections on the use of orality to his notes and commentary, but Wordsworth often made oral-literate transactions the very "matter" of his poetry. For an illuminating distillation of the historical and material distances that oral poetry could travel, consider one of Wordsworth's best-known poems, "The Solitary Reaper." Beholding "yon solitary Highland Lass," and enjoining us to do so as well, Wordsworth in the third stanza bursts forth impatiently (1946:77; ll. 17-32):

> Will no one tell me what she sings?
> Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
> For old, unhappy, far-off things,
> And battles long ago:
> Or is it some more humble lay,
> Familiar matter of today?
> Some natural sorrow, loss, or pain,
> That has been, and may be again?
>
> Whate'er the theme, the Maiden sang
> As if her song could have no ending;
> I saw her singing at her work,
> And o'er the sickle bending;—
> I listened till I had my fill,
> And, as I mounted up the hill,
> The music in my heart I bore,
> Long after it was heard no more.

Such stanzas may be read as Wordsworth's astonishingly economical and lovely engagement with Romantic orality. As Peter Manning has reminded us, Wordsworth worked up this poem not from an actual encounter recalled from his and Dorothy's 1803 tour of Scotland, but more directly from "a beautiful sentence" in his friend Thomas Wilkinson's manuscript, *Tours to the British Mountains*.[16] That a poem presenting a personally experienced,

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[16] Manning 1990:ch. 11. Manning's elegant, trenchant essay offers a historicist corrective to and complication of Geoffrey Hartman's previously dominant reading of the poem as another Wordsworthian movement of consciousness. Thanks to Ann Rowland for referring me to Manning's essay. Of "The Solitary Reaper," Wordsworth remarked, "This Poem was suggested by a beautiful sentence in a MS. Tour in Scotland written by a Friend, the last line being taken from it *verbatim*." See his note to the poem in Curtis

unmediated (if vexing) overhearing of oral lyric had its origins in—and drew its closing line from—another tourist's written document only begins to suggest the always already fictive and "written" nature of "oral" encounters as they appear in Romantic poetry (not to mention the textually mediated vision of all eighteenth- and nineteenth-century tourists). The poetic economy here, material and metaphorical, is obviously rich and potentially disquieting.[17]

If the poem lends itself to readings as a romantic expropriation of women's, workers', or Highlanders' oral poetry (or, in a less sinister gloss, as an obfuscated appropriation of a friend's manuscript), it also offers us the chance to read it as a melancholy methodological inquiry. The almost absurd question, "Will no one tell me what she sings?" propels a set of provisional responses and meditations on ballad genres: "what she sings" may be a "historical ballad" (to invoke Scott's taxonomy),[18] a tale of "old unhappy, far-off things, / And battles long ago"; but on the other hand, the song may be a "more humble lay, familiar matter of today." The mysteriousness of the song lies not only in its linguistic inaccessibility—the Highland lass sang in Erse (Scottish Gaelic), Wordsworth's source reports—but in this temporal ambiguity: the ballad may gesture back to time immemorial or may equally commemorate "today's" news, news that, moreover, may be repeated in the future—she may well be singing of "pain / That has been, and may be again!"

The ballad chronotope—the space-time configuration of oral *poiesis*—here emerges as temporally extensive (from "long ago" to a

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1983:415: Curtis identifies the friend as Thomas Wilkinson, and adds that his "*Tours to the British Mountains* (London, 1824) circulated among friends in MS. for years before it was published; the passage reads: 'Passed a female who was reaping alone: she sung in Erse as she bended over her sickle; the sweetest human voice I ever heard: her strains were tenderly melancholy, and felt delicious, long after they were heard no more' [p. 12]."

[17] A fuller account of this poem would have much to say about the exoticism of the Highland girl, Wordsworth's eroticizing of her, his focus on her song as his pleasure, his taking of his "fill" at the expense of "her work," his unrepresented transformation of source materials in generating a lyric of represented spontaneity. Critics such as Dave Harker have made us especially alert to the appropriations and expropriations of workers' culture by non-laboring literati. For a minutely detailed and impassioned account of the class politics of folksong, ballad, and so on, see Harker 1985.

[18] In Scott's "Introduction" to   *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*   (1830:36) he identifies the "three classes of poems" included in his collection: historical ballads, romantic ballads, and imitations of these compositions by modern authors.

possible future "again") but spatially restrictive: Wordsworth offers in the Highland singer an image of a traditional culture recreating itself over time, from time immemorial; it is the image, perhaps nostalgic, of a rooted human community in its full temporal extension. That such a community appears in the highly marked regional figure of a Highland lass should not obscure the general point of Wordsworth's inquiry; it was Wordsworth's frequent strategy to meditate on the universal human through such "exotic" or "marginal" figures.   It is of course striking and characteristically Wordsworthian that she be "single in the field," solitary as the tree in the Immortality Ode, the one that gives him terrible pause. Despite her being "single," she is hardly individuated: Wordsworth is less interested in the oral poet than in oral poetry.

Oral poetry here emerges not as the province of trained professional rivals (*pace* Scott's minstrel corps) but rather as that haunting song that drifts through and between individuals. If Scott's minstrel emphasizes the work of learning his lay, Wordsworth's lass seems to know her song as it were unconsciously: her work is reaping, not singing, and her song comes unbidden, sung for none other (she thinks) than herself. Scott emphasizes the institutional situation, the explicit cultural formation, of song culture; Wordsworth finds in this song an occasion for meditating on the ambiguities of song, song-transmission, and song-matter. Note that Scott's minstrel has no expectation that any of his audience will go out and repeat his lay; his is a professional recitation bespeaking years of training and specialization. The Highland lass shows us another aspect of oral poetry, song as a popular, unprofessional, communal inheritance—an inheritance, notably, represented as inaccessible—or, to be more precise, as only partially accessible—to Wordsworth. *That* she sings, he appreciates; *what* she sings, he cannot know. The tune carries, the semantic import does not. In terms of ballad *poiesis*, Wordsworth in "The Solitary Reaper" seems to anticipate an insight that later theorists, most notably Bertrand Harris Bronson**,** have also enunciated: that a ballad is a ballad only when it has a tune.[19]

"The Solitary Reaper" may be seen, then, as a performance in print of transformed and ostentatiously imperfect transmission. The reaper's "song" becomes, of course, Wordsworth's poem, "Solitary Reaper": sung song becomes artifact. The poem explicitly offers a splitting between music and meaning, between measures and melody on the one hand—her "plaintive numbers"—and the verbal and thematic content of her words, the "matter." The poem traces an allegory of translation and textualization but also of

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[19] For a version of this dictum, see Bronson 1959:ix: " *Question:* When is a ballad not a ballad? *Answer:* When it has no tune."

dispersal: she sings "as if her song could have no ending." Is this not the dream of poetry, and of those cultures, professions, and individuals who produce it? Wordsworth's "as if" delicately places the pivot of the poem between perpetual presence (the time of singing, the sung "now") and inevitable passing.

The pathos of this encounter is figured, perhaps inadvertently, in Wordsworth's closing couplet. Having asked "what she sings," having proposed possible answers, Wordsworth leaves "the Vale profound" (ll. 30-32):

> And, as I mounted up the hill,
> The music in my heart I bore,
> Long after it was heard no more.

The poem offers us, of course, not her music but his, not her matter but his reflections on the indeterminacy of the song's matter; the impasse between the reaping singer and the walking poet persists, a rebuke to fantasies of transparency and unobstructed mediation. It is striking that Wordsworth focuses most on the poet's preoccupation, as it were, with "the matter"; he notably swerves from ventriloquizing the lass, preferring to emblazon her figure and to rechannel her music into his lines. This representation of listening and his insistence that we listen—"O listen!"—create an immediacy and a contemporaneity that Scott's poems, with their scrupulously historicizing spectacle, abjure. Yet it is appropriate that, however different these poems, we recognize in them a haunting by questions raised by oral *poiesis*.

Perhaps, given the frequency with which oral communications become the stuff of Wordsworthian lyrics—with their enunciators witting or unwitting providers of "matter"—we should both revisit and revise the New Critical dictum. Wordsworth's poems are often not so much poems about poetry as poems about the complex encounters between oral and literary *poiesis*. His most compact and penetrating exploration of oral-literate complexities—particularly those inhering in problems of textual mediation—may be found in the lyric he wrote as if to preface Macpherson's Ossian poems, the most vexed and famous orally based texts of the period.

Binding Mediations and Orality Redux: Wordsworth's Ossian Unbound

"The Solitary Reaper" shows Wordsworth thinking about the textualization he represents himself as enacting. We might also bear in mind, as a further complication, what we know and what Wordsworth later acknowledged, that the poem was in a sense always pre-textualized, a manuscript its muse. Whether displayed or occluded, such textualizing operations were, of course, practices central to Romantic traffic with the oral. The major literary debates and scandals of the period—over the authenticity of Macpherson's Ossian poems, for example, and indeed, over Scott's later use of Coleridge's "Christabel," from which he derived license for his metrical and rhyming variousness and some lines in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel*—revolved around questions of textualization and other appropriative, mediating practices: translating, editing, plagiarizing, and forging.

Wordsworth's poem, "Written on a Blank Leaf of Macpherson's Ossian," proposes in its title that Wordsworth's "lines" be taken as a continuation of as well as a supplement to Macpherson's work. What has been left "blank" by Macpherson's Ossian will be written in and over. The poem may be read as a commentary on the Ossian problematic, which Wordsworth astutely diagnoses as a problematic of poetry itself.

Wordsworth begins by offering natural similes as figures for poetic reception (1947:38; ll. 1-12):

> Oft have I caught, upon a fitful breeze,
> Fragments of far-off melodies,
> With ear not coveting the whole,
> A part so charmed the pensive soul:
> While a dark storm before my sight
> Was yielding, on a mountain height
> Loose vapours have I watched, that won
> Prismatic colours from the sun;
> Nor felt a wish that Heaven would show
> The image of its perfect bow.
> What need, then, of these finished strains?
> Away with counterfeit remains!

Wordsworth naturalizes the process by which we receive poetry, particularly poetry that exists, like Ossian's, only in "fragments." Figuring the reception of poetic "fragments" as a kind of overhearing of "far-off melodies," Wordsworth hovers between oral/aural and literate "strains" of poetry. The "fragment" here is positively valued, while "the whole" stands uncoveted.

In this astonishingly modulated and understated simile, Wordsworth pits an ethic and a poetic of the authentic fragment against, in a richly suggestive phrase, "counterfeit remains" (akin to the unsought rainbow). Macpherson's "finished strains" appear in rhyme as they did, in Wordsworth's opinion, in literary history—as "counterfeit remains."

It is telling that the counterfeiter here, Macpherson, remains unnamed—as if he shall remain nameless. That there might be a fragment or partial remain of Ossian does, however, continue to intrigue Wordsworth, who boldly invokes Ossian as poet, having refused to name his translator/mediator (*ibid.*:38-39; ll. 17-30):

> Spirit of Ossian! if imbound
> In language thou may'st yet be found,
> If aught (intrusted to the pen
> Or floating on the tongues of men,
> Albeit shattered and impaired)
> Subsist thy dignity to guard,
> In concert with memorial claim
> Of old gray stone, and high-born name,
> That cleaves to rock or pillared cave,
> Where moans the blast or beats the wave,
> Let Truth, stern arbitress of all,
> Interpret that original,
> And for presumptuous wrongs atone;
> Authentic words be given, or none!

In this central movement of the poem, Wordsworth shows himself thinking through—in incredibly concentrated lines—the oral-literate problematic that the Ossian controversy made into a famously debatable topic. In his apostrophe—"Spirit of Ossian!"—Wordsworth reopens the question of Ossian. He stringently dissociates the "spirit of Ossian" from the texts through which he supposedly is heard, that is, through Macpherson's "translations." Wordsworth's apostrophe to Ossian's spirit is a kind of dis-interral, a revivification, with a difference. Conjuring and appealing to his presence in a significantly conditional clause ("if imbound / In language thou may'st yet be found"), Wordsworth tellingly reverses the operation of textualization to which Macpherson had subjected Ossian: we might say that, in spiritualizing Ossian, rendering him a presence in nature, Wordsworth imaginatively reoralizes Ossian.

Wordsworth deftly represents several layers of mediation, presenting them in reverse order, as if peeling away the "counterfeit" layers to reach the ineffable, mysterious, and yet authentic core. Having dispensed with

Macpherson's "finished strains," Wordsworth further problematizes the question of any access to Ossian "in language." He recognizes that the problem of Ossian is, even aside from Macpherson, a problem of mediation. To consider whether Ossian "may'st yet be found" leads one to wonder whether he might be "intrusted to the pen / Or floating on the tongues of men, / Albeit shattered and impaired." The uncertainty of reference in this last apposition raises an intriguing question: is it the "tongues of men" that are "shattered and impaired," or the paltry "aught" (anything) one might still find, or indeed the "Spirit of Ossian" perhaps found "floating" there that is shattered?

The question of Ossian hinges, then, not only on "authentic words" but also on the state of men's tongues and the reliability of human mediations. One wonders how exactly one might ascertain the authenticity of "authentic words": original Ossianic words, could they be found or reconstructed, would be Gaelic; yet perhaps Wordsworth might have been satisfied by faithfully edited, fragmentary Ossianic translations, in which case "authentic words" would still be heavily mediated ones. Wordsworth traces very efficiently a romantic economy of poetic mediation and realization, ascending up several layers of artifactualization. The "spirit" appears as the raw material, the driving pulse, of poetry; it may be "imbound / in language"—this is the first, linguistic mediation of poetic spirit. It is notable that language itself appears here as a binding, a medium; this linguistic binding may be rendered orally (in the "tongues of men") or may be textualized ("intrusted to the pen"). Wordsworth privileges neither mode of transmission or fixing; he offers both, in a rapid parenthetical, as options. In the first movement of the poem, Wordsworth strenuously criticizes the distortions engendered by our longing for artifactual "wholes"—for "finished strains." But we see that it is not the *writing* of oral poetry that vexes Wordsworth; it is, rather, the obscuring of what may yet actually "subsist," whether in oral or written form.

It becomes apparent, as one rounds through the poem's arc, that Ossian serves as a case for lost poetry in general (*ibid*.:39; ll. 37-42):

> No tongue is able to rehearse
> One measure, Orpheus! of thy verse;
> Musaeus, stationed with his lyre
> Supreme among the Elysian quire,
> Is, for the dwellers upon earth,
> Mute as a Lark ere morning's birth.

Ossian is thus the latest in a long line of poets whose "verses" are lost, no longer "rehearsable." Only their names persist. Note that here Wordsworth explores the oral-poetic problematic as a problem not so much of *authorship* or *source* as of *poetic work*, most specifically the mediating work of cultural transmission. Here he foregrounds a different issue than he did, for example, in "Solitary Reaper," where the "author" of the lass's song—like those of most Anglo-Scots and Gaelic ballads—is presumably anonymous, lost in the mists of time: Wordsworth there confronts a mysterious song, a winsome singer, but no "original source," and, more importantly, no problem of origination. In the case of Ossian, Musaeus, and Orpheus, however, we have names and not works, origins but no surviving poetic destinations. Yet Wordsworth's catalogue of lost beauties leads him to a surprising interrogation (*idem*: ll. 43-47):

> Why grieve for these, though past away
> The Music, and extinct the Lay?
> When thousands, by severer doom,
> Full early to the silent tomb
> Have sunk, at Nature's call. . . .

Here, with stunning economy, Wordsworth both diagnoses the melancholy and longing that fueled the antiquarian/historicist project and counter-prescribes for it. If it was the desire to provide a national epic and a heroic, dignified past that fueled Macpherson, as well as Percy and Scott, this longing—however profound—should not, according to this poem, be indulged. In this remarkable passage Wordsworth moves beyond his stern critique of counterfeiting and false finishing to criticize the psychocultural impulses propelling that bad project. Again, he poses the crux of his critique as a question, for this is truly an interrogation of the "griefs" that lead men to create bad "memorials" (ll. 43-44):

> Why grieve for these, though past away
> The Music, and extinct the Lay?

Well, indeed, why grieve? To this Percy and Macpherson and Scott could have given extended, albeit differently inflected, responses. Yet Wordsworth objects to the emotional economy of antiquarian grief precisely because such grief privileges and fetishizes lost rarities—whether poets, poems, or musics—over vaster, unnamed human and poetic losses: "[T]housands, by severer doom, / Full early to the silent tomb / Have sunk."

The poem then becomes a homage to and invocation of "Bards of mightier grasp!"—the "chosen few" who persisted, unsung, in their

vocation. In the closing lines of the poem, Wordsworth rounds back to the Ossian problematic that underlies the whole and provides a reconstructed poetic genealogy for British poetry. Imagining poets in all ages and climes comforting their fellow men, Wordsworth analogizes (*ibid*.:40; ll. 75-82):

> Such, haply, to the rugged Chief
> By fortune crushed, or tamed by grief,
> Appears, on Morven's lonely shore,
> Dim-gleaming through imperfect lore,
> The Son of Fingal; such was blind
> Maeonides of ampler mind;
> Such Milton, to the fountain head
> Of Glory by Urania led!

In these closing lines, Ossian is reclaimed and inserted into an ascending pantheon of poets whom Wordsworth addresses as his "Brothers in Soul!" In soul, we might add, but not in textual body. Even in these last lines Wordsworth keeps us alert to the problem of mediation: the final turn to Ossian—the "Son of Fingal"—is a conspicuously mediated apparition. He "appears, on Morven's lonely shore, / Dim-gleaming through imperfect lore." Not Ossian's fragments but his spirit, not his historical, verifiable existence but his continued fame preserved and sustained through "imperfect lore": Wordsworth ends his lines here, with the shadowy image of the barely and imperfectly mediated poet. Yet this Ossian, however shattered and impaired, is the poetically powerful Ossian. Converting Ossian into a muse rather than a source, proposing him as spiritual forebear rather than as fragmentary text, Wordsworth reaches an uneasy reconciliation with Ossian, whose influence he would elsewhere furiously and improbably deny.[20]

Again, what is remarkable here is not only the turn to Ossian, and to the oral-literate problematic surrounding his purported works, but the terms and lines through which Wordsworth thinks and renders that problematic. Transmission, oral or not, and textualization are the cruces of this poem, and more broadly for any poet intent on a rigorous engagement with dubious but compelling "remains."

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[20] See Wordsworth's extraordinary attack (1974:78): "Yet, much as those pretended treasures of antiquity [Macpherson's Ossian poems] have been admired, they have been wholly uninfluential upon the literature of the Country. No succeeding writer appears to have caught from them a ray of inspiration; no author, in the least distinguished, has ventured formally to imitate them—except the boy, Chatterton, on their first appearance."

Such a poem allows us to rethink certain critical insights about Romanticism: for example, that it was preoccupied with notions of "spirit" and transcendence; that it privileged a discourse of inspiration over imitation; that it developed a poetics of the fragment. These general propositions seem true enough, especially for poets like Wordsworth who often employed vatic strains. But perhaps we could refine these propositions by considering them, as it were, in an oral key: in such a poem as Wordsworth's on Ossian, we see that his commitment to the fragment rests on a complex theorization of literate mediations of the oral as well as on a nod to ongoing oral mediations (e.g. "tongues of men," "imperfect lore"). We also see that the invocation of Spirit is no transparent operation: the apostrophe—perhaps the stereotypical Romantic trope (O wild west wind, O Derwent, and so on)—immediately propels a conditional clause ("*if* imbound . . .") and parenthetical options (e.g., possible preservation by tongues or pen). With their qualifications and clarifications, Wordsworth's lines scrupulously enact the difficulty we have in "getting," not to mention "getting to," Ossian.

Wordsworth's poem allows us to see that there is no Ossian, and indeed no poetry, without mediation, whether oral or literate. One can only discriminate among kinds of mediation and kinds of remains ("counterfeit" or authentic). All poetry depends, however regrettably, on binding mediations. In a stunning paradox, it is through the rhetoric of immediate access, of unimpeded inspiration—"Spirit of Ossian!"—that Wordsworth most cannily argues his point: no poetry without mediation.

Orality Interminable: The Oral Turn in Contemporary Poetry

Representing orality means theorizing orality. For Romantic literary poets, representing orality required a confrontation with the cultural situation and historicity of poetry. Was oral poetry dead? If "oral poetry" meant "minstrelsy," sung by trained minstrels to Scottish aristocrats, as in Scott's *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, then yes. If "oral poetry" meant "popular poetry," as Scott has it in the "Introduction to Popular Poetry" prefacing his *Border Minstrelsy*, then no, oral poetry was not at all dead: the contents of the *Minstrelsy*, Scott frequently notes, were often taken "from the mouths" of contemporary singers and reciters. Was oral poetry a viable inheritance for literate poets? Again, the question has no one answer: for Scott, immersed in as well as cultivating and commodifying Border song-culture, there was a vital continuity from his edition of *The Border Minstrelsy* to his first "original work," the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. Yet Scott's relation to Border

lore and Border poetry may be read, to borrow terms from Schiller, as a relation of the sentimental to the naïve. Conspicuous in Scott's works are his mediating, ironizing, historicizing hand and voice. On the question of viable encounters with orality, moreover, Wordsworth's work also reveals a profound recognition of a barrier—whether linguistic, cultural, or educational—between the modern, literate, publishing poet and what he represents as his oral contemporaries. The drama of Wordsworth's poems often arises from his represented recognition of just such a barrier. His poems offer a savoring of such impasse, even as he strains to transcend it: as he asks, concerning the Highland lass's enigmatic song: "will no one tell me what she sings?"

I would argue that the romantic encounter with orality—its complex representations of and debts to oral poetry, its exploration of song-culture and traditional forms like the ballad, its privileging of ethnographic authority as a poetic resource, its focus on mediation—inaugurated a long imaginative exchange that we are still witnessing. It is striking that, however different their poems, aims, and commitments, poets as diverse as Scott, Wordsworth, Thomas Moore, and Samuel Taylor Coleridge understood their balladry to be both innovations and interventions in what they saw as a moribund poetic state. Their work presents the by now familiarly paradoxical face of many modern literary movements: they strove, in Ezra Pound's words, to "make it new," and did so by reviving and reworking what they saw as the old, the traditional, the popular, the naive. Among the traditional things ready for re-working was oral poetry, which from one angle seemed decidedly past, and yet from another was everywhere around them, in the popular ballads they knew from childhood, or the songs their grandfathers knew, or tales carried in the minds of vagrants they might encounter on the public way, or tunes sung by their nurses.

This paradoxical movement, of literary revivification through the romance of orality, persists in contemporary experimental poetry, albeit in newly mediated forms.[21] We can debate, as critics have on the front page of *The New York Times*, whether rap is poetry; leaving aside that revealingly vexed and racialized controversy, we find in the heart of high-cultural

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[21] For an excellent recent collection of essays discussing poetry, performance, and the cultural and linguistic politics of contemporary *poiesis*, see Bernstein 1998. Particularly relevant to this discussion are the contributions of Bob Perelman ("Speech Effects: The Talk as a Genre," 200-16) and Ron Silliman ("Afterword: Who Speaks: Ventriloquism and the Self in the Poetry of Reading," 360-78).

American poetry a telling turn toward the oral and toward theories of the oral.

David Antin, for example, has set himself the task of becoming a post-literate performance poet, a truly improvisational poet who comes to events, he claims, with no prepared text, just the readiness to talk, to perform, and to be open to the occasion. Evoking aspects of comic monologue, confessional poem, jazz improvisation, free association, and obsessional diatribe, his pieces are intriguing examples of a reconstructed orality used to jump-start contemporary poetry.[22] Antin is, moreover, extremely self-reflexive in his pieces, meditating explicitly on his compositional choices and the stakes of his poetic gambits. In his introduction to "a public occasion in a private place," published in *Postmodern American Poetry*, Antin notes that he had been called to do a reading (1994:230):

> *i had to explain that i wasn't doing any reading any*
> *more   or not at that time anyway   that i went to a*
> *place and talked to an occasion and that was the only*
> *kind of poetry i was doing now   but if that was all*
> *right with them id like to read with jackson maclow*

Antin thus announces a reading involving no reading, a reading in which "reading" becomes the name not for the practice of reading out words from books or manuscripts but rather for the occasion itself, an occasion that, he proudly declares in his opening lines, is unmediated by books, text, print, or writing (1994:231):

> i consider myself a poet but im not reading poetry   as you see
>   i bring no books with me   thought ive written books   i
> have a funny relationship to the idea of reading   if you cant hear
> i would appreciate it if youd come closer

Swerving here from "the idea of reading" to the problem of hearing, Antin gestures explicitly to the audience. This gesture is both an interactive solicitation—a thing said to the audience concerning the audience—and a theoretical proposition (*ibid*.):

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[22] For an illuminating discussion of Antin and the stakes of his work, see Perloff 1981. Perloff reads Antin's exploratory *poiesis* as specially engaged with "opsis," that is, with spectacle (289): "Performance . . . is, by definition, an art form that involves *opsis*: it establishes a unique relationship between artist and audience."

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                           i came here in order to make a
     poem      talking      to talk a poem      which it will be         all
     other things being equal
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"To make a poem" is now "to talk a poem"; what he is doing is making as he goes, on his feet. Antin's *poiesis* is obviously a highly sophisticated meditation on *poiesis* as well as an apparently free-form "talk." Antin goes so far as to announce the death of all poetry that is not, as he claims his is, "complete improvisation"; this extreme pronouncement he then quickly and characteristically reworks (*idem*:234):

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                                                      ive
     said you cant possibly make a poem that isnt a complete improvi-
          sation say      or something like that         and then i figured      as
     soon as i said it         a week later i made exactly the opposite kind of
             poem       because as soon as you take a position very forcefully
     youre immediately at the boundary of that position
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Antin constantly invokes the implicit contract between poet and audience, revising the contract as he names it (*idem*:236):

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             . . . youre here at a private experience in a public
     place            its what one expects of a poet isn't it?
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Antin's semi-serious characterization of poetry as a typically "private experience" relies on a literate, literary, bourgeois conception of poetry, in which poems are imagined as intimate, written, page-bound communications read alone, in silence, in private. Using oral performance to confound the literate conventions associated with poetic experience, Antin explores the social situation of poetry, its "place," its status as "private" or "public." Antin has undertaken as a kind of meta-performance poetry a *poiesis* obviously informed by a deep literary sophistication that nevertheless privileges—or claims to privilege—the "composition-in-performance" one associates with oral poetry. Yet however much he has recourse to the oral, Antin's performance poetry is not, to be sure, the "saying of the same again" of traditional oral poetry: his works are not re-creations but rather one-time-only improvisations. And we can see that, by allowing the printing and anthologizing of transcriptions of his poem-talks, Antin also embraces—notwithstanding his avoidance of conventional capitalization and punctuation—the same means of mediation and transmission as his more text-oriented, literary-minded peers. The contradictions of Antin's project are obvious, and not least to Antin, who revels in paradox.

For another exploration of the contemporary uses of orality, we might look at Jerome Rothenberg's manifesto, "New Models, New Visions: Some Notes Toward a Poetics of Performance," first presented in 1977.[23] Just as our understanding of oral poetry and performance has been illuminated by the conversation between philologists and anthropologists, so too we see Rothenberg turning to anthropologists of ritual, notably Victor Turner, in an attempt to imagine a new, postmodern poetic practice free from literary constraints (640):

> The model—or better, the vision—has shifted: away from a "great tradition" centered in a single stream of art and literature in the West, to a *greater* tradition that includes, sometimes as its central fact, preliterate and oral cultures throughout the world, with a sense of their connection to subterranean but literate traditions in civilizations both East and West.

Outlining this new paradigm, Rothenberg calls for the dissolution of the artwork, for an emphasis on process over product, and for the disappearance of the distinction between artist and audience. On this last point, he notes, "the tribal/oral is a particularly clear model, often referred to by the creators of 1960s happenings and the theatrical pieces that invited, even coerced, audience participation toward an ultimate democratization of the arts" (643). Again, what is important here is Rothenberg's telling impulse to find in the "tribal/oral" an alternative to Western high-cultural models of art-making.

If it was the Romantics who first conceptualized the idea of "poet-as-informant," the postmoderns continue to find it compelling. Rothenberg, for example, makes a polemical, volatile analogy in the closing paragraphs of his essay, styling his new-modeled poet as a post-literate, native informant (644):

> The model switch is here apparent. But in addition the poet-as-informant stands in the same relation to those who speak of poetry or art from outside the sphere of its making as do any of the world's aboriginals. The antagonism to literature and to criticism is, for the poet and artist, no different from that to anthropology, say, on the part of the Native American militant. It is a question in short of the right to self-definition.

It is by now a cliché that such avant-garde announcements of the death of art and literature are accompanied by an exaltation of the "primitive," the collective, and, more important for our purposes, the oral. We observe here, as we can in eighteenth-century writing, a characteristic blurring of these

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[23] Now published in Hoover 1994:640-44. Further quotations from the essay will be cited in text from this source.

terms into one another. Such an extended, if confused, analogy reveals how politically and ethically problematic the turn to the oral can be. In his great drive to liberate artists from the shackles of convention, critical apparatus, elitism, and commodification, Rothenberg turns to his fantasy of pre-capitalist, communitarian societies and ritual practices. In doing so, his rhetoric ultimately lapses in its grotesque elision of actual aboriginal and Native American claims, histories, and predicaments. One could discuss such moments in this and other essays under the title "On the Use and Abuse of the Oral Native for Art."

Rothenberg is focusing here on poetics, of course, at a particular moment in the late 1970s: yet his manifesto has clearly become a synecdoche for those interested in constructing a postmodern canon, however quixotic such a venture may be. And Rothenberg has been for decades a prominent and hugely influential compiler, translator, anthologist, and advocate of various world poetries and alternative poetics;[24] poetics for him merges into the making of culture, and the democratization of culture, thereby involving art-making in a political and ethical project. But Rothenberg's analogy raises an interesting, disquieting issue for students and theorists of so-called oral cultures, poetries, and peoples, whom we almost inevitably approach from the literate, capitalized side of the oral/literate boundary. If natives should be wary of anthropologists, should oral poets have been wary, say, of Milman Parry, or Alan Lomax?

What is notable, for our purposes, is the continuation of the romance of orality in this manifesto housed within the typeset, mass-produced pages of *Postmodern American Poetry*. Postmodern poets, even more than their romantic forebears, invoke orality as a mode of critique: it reveals what most prevailing poetry *is not*, what it lacks, what it needs; it shows the way, for these poets, to a new consideration of performance, language, and relation to audience.

As this necessarily brisk survey suggests, the romance of orality has proven to be surprisingly resilient, persisting through the birth of new media and the concomitant reorganization of old. Many of us—scholars, critics, and poets—long ago internalized a concept of poetry founded on the hegemony of print and the ideal of the fixed, perfected, replicable artifact. It

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[24] Among his many contributions, alongside his own volumes of poetry, are *Technicians of the Sacred: A Range of Poetries from Africa, America, Asia, Europe and Oceania* (1985), *Revolution of the Word: A New Gathering of American Avant Garde Poetry, 1914-1945* (1974), and an important recent anthology, co-edited with Pierre Joris: *Poems for the Millennium: The University of California Book of Modern and Postmodern Poetry* (Rothenberg and Joris 1995-98).

seems unavoidably true that, as Walter J. Ong has suggested, we now live in a world governed by secondary orality—in which the oral/aural domain, newly mediated and amplified by electronic and digital technologies, has displaced the primacy of text and print.[25] Whether oral or literate or hovering in the twilight zone between the two, poetry has always been, in the first instance, an art of language. The vitality of poetry will surely continue to depend on this ongoing negotiation between a history of linguistically based traditions—whether "oral" or not—and an embrace of new media. [26]

Society of Fellows, Harvard University

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[25] Ong discusses "secondary orality" (as opposed to the "primary orality" of peoples untouched by writing) in light of Marshall MacLuhan's notion of the "global village"—the mass-mediated group-consciousness promoted by electronic, and now digital, media. See Ong 1982:136-37.

[26] This essay developed in conversation with several friends and colleagues: in addition to acknowledging my debt to their thinking and support, I would like to thank Ann Rowland for directing me back to Wordsworth's "Solitary Reaper" and to Peter Manning's essay on the poem (1990); Celeste Langan for sharing her stimulating work on Walter Scott (2001); and Laura Slatkin for commenting on and improving every version of this essay and for her illuminating discussions of *poiesis*.

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About the Authors

Andrew Cowell teaches in the Departments of French and Italian, Comparative Literature, and Linguistics at the University of Colorado. He works on both medieval European literature and Native American traditional narratives. He is currently completing an anthology of Arapaho oral narratives as well as a book on changing performance traditions among the Northern Arapaho from the nineteenth century to the present.

Thomas A. DuBois is Professor of Scandinavian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He is the author of *Finnish Folk Poetry and the* Kalevala (1995), *Nordic Religions in the Viking Age* (1999), and, with Leea Virtanen, *Finnish Folklore* (2000). His research interests include Sámi culture, medieval Nordic, and the lyric songs of Northern Europe.

Werner H. Kelber is the Isla Carroll and Percy E. Turner Professor of Biblical Studies and the Director of the Center for the Study of Cultures at Rice University. He has published in the areas of early Christian literature, gospel narrativity, Christian origins, biblical hermeneutics, media history of the Bible, rhetoric, orality-literacy studies, and cultural memory. His major work is *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q* (1983; second edition, 1997).

Native New Yorker *LindaAnn Loschiavo* has presented programs on the folk culture of southern Italy and Sicily in Manhattan venues such as the American Museum of Natural History, The Harvard Club, and The Players Club, where "Ninu Murina" came alive on stage on February 11, 2003. Her nonfiction work "Return of the Native to Stromboli" was reprinted by nine different publications last year; a bilingual excerpt appears online at <www.CyberItalian.com> [Galleria section]. With a paternal grandfather from Stromboli and a maternal grandfather from Naples, she is descended from volcano dwellers on both sides.

Associate Professor of English at John Carroll University in Cleveland, *John McBratney* is the author of a recently published book on Kipling, *Imperial Subjects, Imperial Space: Rudyard Kipling's Fiction of the Native-Born*. He has also published articles on nineteenth- and twentieth-century British writers, and is currently at work on book-length studies of cosmopolitanism in Victorian Britain and of nineteenth-century British discourse on social and racial types.

Maureen N. McLane is a Junior Fellow at the Society of Fellows, Harvard University. Her book, *Romanticism and the Human Sciences: Poetry, Population, and the Discourse of the Species*, appeared in 2000. Her poems have recently appeared in *New American Writing*, *Jacket*, and *Sugar Mule*. She is currently working on two books: *Balladeering, Minstrelsy, and other Poetic Mediations of Culture and History, 1800/2000*, and *Poetry in Prose: Lost Souls, Dead Poets, Live Feeds, and other Media Phenomena*.