



ORAL TRADITION

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Oral Tradition (www.oraltradition.org/ot/) seeks to provide a comparative and interdisciplinary focus for studies in oral tradition 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, and occasional transcriptions and translations of oral texts. In addition, issues will include the annual Albert Lord and Milman Parry Lecture on Oral Tradition. Submissions should follow the list-of reference format (style sheet available on request) and may be sent via e-mail (csot@missouri.edu) or snail-mail; all quotations of primary materials must be made in the original language(s) with following English translations. Most contributions will be reviewed by at least one specialist reader and one member of the editorial board before a final decision is reached.

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Editor's Column

With the present issue *Oral Tradition* enters a new era in its history. After twenty years as a bound paper volume, with online availability since 2004 through subscription to Project Muse, *OT* is presently in the process of migrating to a web-only, gratis publication. In 2006 it will be published in both media, but as of 2007 it will become a freestanding electronic entity posted on the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition website (www.oraltradition.org/ot).

Why have we chosen to follow this path? First and foremost, we aim, as always, to foster productive exchange among an interdisciplinary, international constituency, and to make that exchange as smooth and barrier-free as possible. *OT* was founded in 1986 to facilitate communication across disciplinary boundaries and among colleagues who otherwise would share no common forum. Since the internet has become the communicative instrument *par excellence*, creating a massive network with immediate and universal access, we feel it's time for scholarly exchange to leverage its enormous potential to the fullest.

Second, we are committed to making *OT* a free, gratis publication for the greater good of all concerned. Along with correcting problems inherent in distribution networks for paper publications, we intend to remove all financial barriers as well. Prospective readers of the journal will need no more than a web connection and a browser; all of our content from this issue onward will be open and continuously available worldwide without subscription fees of any sort.

Third, although we are beginning our online version of *OT* with the first issue of volume 21, we plan to make all back issues of the journal available in the same virtual format over the next few years. We will start with the inaugural volume (1986) and progress through back issues until the entire run of the journal is posted.

Concurrently, and in the context of this fundamental media-shift, much will remain the same. The vetting procedures for manuscripts submitted to *OT* will not change: our journal will be refereed in precisely the same fashion as during the last two decades, with one specialist and one generalist reviewing every submission before an editorial decision is made. Likewise with our recently introduced feature of eCompanions, the electronic appendages (audio, video, photos, etc.) meant to accompany the text of articles. Only in this case readers will no longer have to manage texts and eCompanions separately; the links to ancillary materials will be embedded in the online text of the articles in question.

We at the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition are extremely excited about the latest chapter in the journal's biography. We believe that this migration will be generally helpful to all readers and contributors, and especially important for

scholars and students in those parts of the world that (as letters to the editor testify weekly) have through no fault of their own seldom or never had access to our journal. Ironically, these are also some of the areas with the most thriving oral traditions. We very much hope that an online, gratis *OT* will correct this systemic imbalance and encourage both new readers and new contributors in what is, after all, our joint project.

The current addition to that project consists of what has become *OT*'s stock-in-trade over the past twenty years: a miscellany with articles on a wide variety of oral traditions from various parts of the world and from ancient to modern times. It opens with Joseph Sobol's analysis and representation of a folktale performance from the Appalachian region of the United States, together with an eCompanion audio-file of Ray Hicks performing "Wicked John and the Devil." Nicky Marsh, Peter Middleton, and Victoria Sheppard next offer perspectives on the growing interest in performing contemporary British poetry, with attention to both the history of the movements and the various audiences involved. Treating an oral tradition with roots in the Middle Ages, Antonio Scuderi then examines the Sicilian practice of *cuntastorie*, understanding it as a complex weave of performance and text; readers can consult the eCompanion to his article for an audio-file of a *cunto* sung by Peppino Celano.

The subject of the next contribution, by Elizabeth Oyler, is the Japanese narrative performance art known as *daimokutate*, which she introduces in historical and generic context as well as exemplifies with a video eCompanion. Kenneth Sherwood focuses on three performances by Amiri Baraka, Cecilia Vicuña, and Kamau Brathwaite, advocating an interpretive approach that does full justice to these print/oral/aural poets; audio versions of the performances described in his article are posted as an eCompanion.

The final three contributions to this issue form a cluster on ancient Greek oral and oral-derived works. Jonathan Burgess examines the relationship between neoanalysis, until recently a text-based method of approaching Homer, and perspectives from oral tradition. Next, Mark Usher considers the significance of the Hellenistic philosopher Carneades' practice of spontaneously quoting from earlier authors in a style that mirrors oral poetic composition. Finally, Penelope Skarsouli looks at the ancient Greek arts of memory and oral justice.

As always, and as a result of our move to the internet more inclusively than ever, we solicit your contributions to what will be modulating into an even more broadly based "eConversation."

John Miles Foley, Editor

**“Whistlin’ Towards the Devil’s House”:
Poetic Transformations and Natural Metaphysics in an
Appalachian Folktale Performance**

[*eCompanion at www.oraltradition.org¹]

Joseph Daniel Sobol

Great writers spend their working lives inclining toward posterity. When they set seal upon their final opus, all that remains is for the editing, publishing, and critical industries to add up their literary artifacts into an accounting of an artistic legacy. Great storytellers, on the other hand, breathe their art into the wind that blows where it lists. Their legacies are scattered in the hollows of community memories, in whatever may have been written or spoken about them, and in any formal or informal recordings that remain behind of their voices or their images. Electronic culture may have compounded storytellers’ legacies by multiplying the media products available for study. But major translation problems remain as stubborn as ever: how to move from the ephemeral delights of a storytelling performance into abiding illuminations of the storyteller’s art?

The late Ray Hicks (1922-2003) of Beech Mountain, North Carolina, is certainly more fortunate in his posterity than most traditional tellers. He was still a child in the 1920s and 1930s when folklore collectors Robert Gordon, Mellinger Henry, Maurice Matteson, Richard Chase, and Frank and Anne Warner began visiting Beech Mountain to record his family’s tales and songs. In 1962, at age 40, he made his own first recording of four Jack tales on a Folk Legacy LP, still in print. In 1973 he began a 27-year run as the iconic heart of the National Storytelling Festival in Jonesborough, Tennessee (all recorded and deposited in the Library of Congress). 1976 brought the Appalshop documentary “Fixin’ to Tell About Jack.” Following his receipt

¹ To listen to the four performances described in this article, visit the eCompanion at www.oraltradition.org.

of the NEA National Heritage Fellowship in 1983, a profile by Gwen Kincaid appeared in *New Yorker* magazine. PBS filmed him for their series *The Story of English*. There was a 1989 June Appal recording of his personal stories, “Jack Alive.” Robert Isbell published two editions of his biography of Ray and other family members—*The Last Chivaree* (1996) was later re-titled (2001) after its central figure, *Ray Hicks: Master Storyteller of the Blue Ridge*. In 2000 Lyn Salsi published three of Hicks’ Jack tales as a children’s picture book with accompanying CD (Hicks 2000); and there have been innumerable other theses and dissertations (Gutierrez 1975, Sobol 1987, McDermitt 1986, Oxford 1987, Pavasic 2005), popular books (Petro 2001, Smith 1988), articles, newspaper and magazine features, and field recordings in university and private archives documenting Ray’s torrents of talk and his impact as an artist and a man.

In short, over the course of his four-score years Ray Hicks made his way onto the fringe of that peculiar American terrain: folk celebrity. There is widespread consensus among those acquainted with traditional and contemporary storytelling that Ray was a master of the art. There is ample documentation of that art, and plentiful attempts to convey the facts and the legendary atmosphere of his life, in which much of his personal magnetism lay. I have written several previous essays on him: on a particular telling of AT513, “The Dry Land Ship” (1994), on his iconic relationship with the National Storytelling Festival (1999:104-16), and on his transformation of a hospital into a setting for some particularly memorable performances (2002). Yet there has been too little written that conveys the poetical inner workings of his tellings, their thematic urgencies, and their striking liberties within the traditional molds. Beyond the aura of celebrity, these are the elements that made up his actual artistry, and that made his storytelling sessions so spontaneous, risky, and exhilarating until nearly the end of his life.

In writing about these matters here, I will be deliberately avoiding the “last-of-a-breed” myth-making mood that suffuses much of the popular literature on Ray, and the literature on the storytelling movement generally. If storytelling is ever to take its place as an art among other contemporary arts, with a sense of its traditional roots and thriving branches, it will need to relinquish this dependence on nostalgia and the lure of the irrecoverable past as its sole source of appeal. Ray Hicks certainly represented a link to a bygone time and place; but to leave him at that is to diminish his stature. He was also an artist of rare and compulsive gifts, working in a medium that can bear keen, dry-eyed appreciation.

The subject of this study is a performance of “Wicked John and the Devil,” one of the teller’s best-known and most emblematic tales. It was recorded at his home on Beech Mountain, North Carolina, on June 6, 1985.

This was the same occasion and audience for which he told “Hardy-Hardass,” his version of AT513, which was transcribed and discussed in *Jack in Two Worlds* (Sobol 1994). “Wicked John” is a version of AT330, “The Smith Outwits the Devil.” This is a tale common all over Europe² and has been found in the New World in white, Hispanic, and African-American traditions.³

The smith is a type of the master craftsman. He works with elemental powers: fire, metals forged from earth, air for the bellows, and water for cooling. From these elements he draws his own powers. Inasmuch as he harnesses those elemental powers for human benefit, he is a Promethean figure, related to the many parallel characters in folklore who steal fire from the gods. He is also a direct descendant of Lugh, the divine smith of Celtic mythology, as well as of Gaibhde, who in some versions is Lugh’s own father, and who in later oral traditions becomes the clever smith the Goban Saor, a hero of his own popular cycle of trickster legends.

According to Thompson, in full versions of the 330 type the smith receives his powers from the Devil through sale of his soul; he is then granted magic wishes or objects by a divine emissary as well, most commonly St. Peter, and these allow him to deceive and to overcome the Devil when he comes to collect. Yet this victory eventually leaves him homeless after death, as neither heaven nor hell will now receive him. In most versions he ends up wandering the world in limbo, and the story’s ending often turns this into an explanatory device for some mysterious earthly phenomenon such as the Will-o’-the-wisp, the Jack-o’-lantern, or, in Hicks’ version, the Brown Mountain Lights. As Hicks had the Devil instructing Wicked John: “You take this fire. . . . You go out and start a Hell o’ your own!”

Ray Hicks was best known of course for his Jack tales, and Jack too is related to Wicked John, much as the Goban Saor, the Irish “Jack of all trades,” was related to his mythic elders Gaibhde and Lugh (O’Sullivan 1974:17-22). Jack is an everyman hero who often plays the trickster role, overcoming antagonists of all description: giants, witches, kings, beasts, and robbers. John is the etymological root of the name Jack—significantly, in one of Chase’s original sources the character of Wicked John was actually called Jack as well, a detail that we will revisit—but while the name and the

² See Briggs 1970:493, Dasent 1904:105, Grimm and Grimm 1944:367, MacManus 1963:10, and Sampson 1984:49.

³ See Bierhorst 2002:92, Chase 1948:29-38 and 1956:21-31, Harris 1921:160-65, Hurston 1935, and Torrence 1991.

folktale character Jack are figures for the adventures of youth, the name and the character of John the blacksmith are figures for age and the struggles of age against decay and death. Thus John the old blacksmith potentially plays a role even more fraught with metaphysical gravity than Jack the young fortune-seeker. John's principal antagonist, on the face of it, is the Devil himself, "the very own Devil," as John's wife puts it to him in Hicks' version. Yet Hicks' Wicked John has other forces to contend against, forces that do not explicitly figure in other versions of the story, and that give Hicks' telling particular complexity, poignancy, and even a taste of tragic grandeur.

This particular performance of "Wicked John and the Devil" took just under 25 minutes. The transcription given in the appendix to this article is laid out according to the ethnopoetic methods developed by Dell Hymes, Dennis Tedlock, Elizabeth Fine, and others into 536 lines of free verse, with a few additional lines of audience interaction at the very beginning and the end. Ethnopoetic transcriptions are intended as modes of translation between folk narrative in its living contexts and the acts of making and reading printed texts. Like any translation, an ethnopoetic transcript is bound to be incomplete, limited by a series of compromises—between the demands of the ear and the eye, between the existential wholeness of performance and the permanence and cultural authority of print. For the reader's sake, I have attempted to incorporate only a few of the dynamic or intonational markers and none of the kinesic codes that Fine devises for her performance-centered texts. Italics are used to represent emphases of volume, pitch, or both. There is so little audience laughter on the tape of this performance (a noteworthy detail in itself) that it is insignificant as a dynamic cue; so instead of the bracketed exclamation points that represent the element of laughter in my transcription of Hick's "Hardy Hardass" (McCarthy 1994:10-26), I have inserted the bracketed letter [H], to signal moments where Hicks' voice descends to a particular emotional register that I simply call Heart. This element, rather than the comedic, was the tonic note of this telling.

Line and stanza breaks are based on a close but non-technical rendering of vocal pauses and breath units. This is an "acoustic" transcript—for better or worse, no mechanical or digital measuring instruments were used to make this text beyond the cassette player and the ear. Roughly one-half to one second vocal rests and consequent line breaks often but not inevitably correspond with syntactic units below the level of the sentence (though "the sentence" is an admittedly loose construct in oral discourse), such as subject-verb clauses or various types of dependent or independent clauses. Stanzaic rests of a second or longer sometimes correspond with larger semantic and discourse units; but depending on the pacing of the

scene and the telling, these longer rests can also break the rhythmic flow into short incantory phrases, down to pairs of or even single words. This is not the place to fully explore the issue of whether or not ethnopoetic texts can legitimately be considered as scores for re-performance; simply stated, this one is not intended as such. Yet the rigorous and repeated listenings required to produce even basic texts of this kind can yield all kinds of insights into the verbal surfaces and emotional depths of long-past performance events. For that, as for the existence of these fragile and contingent magnetic documents, I am purely thankful.

To appreciate Hicks' personal artistic transformation of "Wicked John," we need to examine his sources. Hicks grew up in one of the least diluted sanctuaries of oral tradition in the United States; yet he grew to maturity and assumed his place in the tradition during a time of intrusive change—changes that were both heralded and fostered by the arrival and interventions of the folklore collectors. Hicks credited his grandfather, John Benjamin Hicks (known as Ben), with his earliest versions of most of his tales. Other versions and variants he would have heard from relatives such as his uncle Roby Hicks or Roby's son Stanley, his brother-in-law Frank Proffitt Sr., or distant cousins Monroe and Miles Ward and Monroe's son Marshall. There was another influential figure in Hicks' storytelling experience, however, one who played a fascinatingly complex part as collector, scribe, and cross-fertilizing purveyor of folktale repertoires. That was the charismatic and controversial author of *The Jack Tales* (1943), *Grandfather Tales* (1948), and *American Folk Tales and Songs* (1956)—Richard Chase himself. Since debate over Chase's role in redacting and codifying Appalachian *märchen* in the popular imagination has only seemed to increase in recent decades, it would be well to take another look here at the relations between Hicks' "Wicked John" and that of Chase.

Chase was a prototypical folk revivalist. His personal journey in the 1920s and '30s from middle-class New England and Alabama roots to his later career as professional popularizer of Appalachian folk music, dance, and storytelling has been examined critically in several works, beginning with David Whisnant (1983) and followed by Charles L. Perdue (1987, 2001) and Carl Lindahl (1994, 2001). Chase began his work with Appalachian revivalism at Pine Mountain Settlement School in Kentucky in 1924, and worked in the '30s under the auspices of several New Deal cultural programs, including teaching folksong to schoolteachers through the Office of Emergency Relief in Education. Through that job in 1935 he met a young fifth-grade teacher from Boone, North Carolina, named Marshall Ward, who introduced him to the Beech Mountain storytelling tradition. In

1940, after Chase had already spent several years collecting from the Wards and their neighbors, Marshall Ward's father R. Monroe Ward introduced him to another folklore enthusiast from Wise County, Virginia, James Taylor Adams, who had been in correspondence with Ward about traditional mountain culture. In 1941-42, Chase was able to get support from the Federal Writers Project of Virginia to spend time collecting with Adams in Wise County (Perdue 2001:113). These two areas, separated by 100 miles or so of rough terrain, became the mother-lodes both of Chase's literary work and of his repertoire as a professional performer.

Perdue prints archival tale texts from Chase's Virginia collecting partner, Adams, and compares them with Chase's published and unpublished versions. He also discusses Chase's often cavalier way with sources. But Perdue makes quite clear, albeit from the problematizing perspective of traditional folkloristics, that Chase's method of creating his published texts was that of a storytelling practitioner—a writer-performer who straddled the oral and literary worlds, and who for better or worse was unabashed about actively reshaping traditions as he recorded them. Perdue quotes Chase to that effect in a letter to the director of the Virginia Writers Project (1987:113):

About this rich and full quality that should go into any editing of this oral stuff—The NC “Jack and the Giants” was quite a skinny tale at the first recording. After hearing Mr. Ward tell it again when we had a gang of kids around us, it filled out considerable. But after hearing Ben Hicks, Miles Ward, and [blank] Hicks tell it, it became interesting, and after I had *told* [emphasis in original] it a few times it really came to life. Having gone through this telling-listening process so much with the NC tradition now I can do it as a [blank] but I do need a number of variants.

This was in 1941—Ray Hicks would have been 19 years old, and already an experienced teller. He often claimed to have started immediately retelling to playmates, siblings, and anyone else who would listen, the stories he heard as a child in his grandfather Benjamin's lap. The bracketed blanks in the passage above indicate lacunae or legibility problems in the original manuscript. But it is intriguing to remind ourselves that while the “[blank] Hicks” who told a variant of “Jack and the Giants” here might have been any number of Hicks-Ward-Harmon relatives (those credited in the notes to *The Jack Tales* included Monroe Ward, Martha Ward Presnell, Ben Hicks, and Roby Hicks), it might just as well have been Ray.

It is also clear from this passage and from other evidence as well (Perdue 1987, 2001) that Hicks would have had plenty of opportunity to listen to Chase. Chase was a figure on Beech Mountain for much of Hicks'

life. Chase first visited with Marshall Ward in 1935, when Hicks was 13, and he visited and even lived there off and on until the '60s. His books came out at regular intervals between 1943 and 1956; but, just as significantly, Chase was making his living as a professional storyteller in and around western North Carolina for that entire period. There were very few storytellers working regularly then in schools, libraries, folk festivals, and other public venues—the same circuit that later formed the infrastructure of the Jonesborough-based revival of the '70s and '80s. As Hicks' star was rising in that later firmament, Chase's was declining (Sobol 1999). But as Hicks made his own very gradual and ambivalent transition into a public and professional role, Chase would have stood for him as an important, highly visible, positive and negative role model.

Chase has been much criticized by contemporary folklorists like Lindahl, Perdue, and Whisnant for unscrupulously adapting tales, conflating versions, and adding details and incidents out of his own experience to create not a folkloristically accurate representation of a local repertoire, but a transformation of tradition into something new—a “Richard Chase repertoire.” This, however, had been standard practice for literary purveyors of folkloric material at least from Chaucer and Boccaccio onward—Chase's deftly dissimulating frame-narrative to *Grandfather Tales* is modeled self-consciously on these earlier works. One pitfall for Chase seems to have been that his later career coincided with the ascendance of modern anthropological standards of representation and informant ethics to vie with the older library-based aesthetics of literary folklorists. Another was surely the manner of high-handed personal aggrandizement with which he appropriated the works of his sources.

Chase has generally been cast as the heavy in recent retellings of the clash-of-cultures narrative; yet there is much in his early proselytizing and later posturing that I would view in the light of another narrative: that of the bright talent beset with tragic flaws. It was Chase's very brilliance as a crafter of popular frames and palatable if synthetic oral/literary pastiche versions that made them compelling to educated mountaineers and outsiders alike. Ellis (1994:101) and Lindahl (2001:74, 94n) have noted the effect of Chase's retellings on one teller from within the local tradition, Maud Long, for whom they seemed to supplant key details of her own mother's renderings. It is interesting to note, however, that the process of appropriating, conflating, and adding personal detail to create distinctive artistic signatures did not simply flow in one direction. Members of the Folk had their artistic licenses, too, and were as eager to appropriate Chase's art as he was to appropriate theirs.

In conversations with Ray Hicks over many years I often heard him refer to the original corpus of Jack tales that he heard from his grandfather Benjamin as “the twelve.” There was a theophanic ring to it that struck me as characteristic. Unfortunately, I never did ask him to inventory exactly which stories stood in that number. But even a glance at *The Jack Tales*’ table of contents shows more than that: 18 Jack tales, to be exact. And Hicks’ active repertoire as enacted in his 27 years on the Jonesborough stage also grew well beyond the original set. After describing the Harmon-Hicks-Ward family and their tale-telling repertoires, Chase’s introduction to *The Jack Tales* states (1943:x):

[I]n Wise County, Virginia we have found three tales unknown to the Wards: “Jack and the Bull,” through Mr. James Taylor Adams of Big Laurel, and recorded from Mrs. Polly Johnson of Wise; “Jack and King Marock,” recorded from Mrs. Nancy Shores, of Pound; and “Soldier Jack,” recorded from Mr. Gaines Kilgore, of Pound. And, very recently, a Jack tale was found in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Chase’s statement supports some intriguing insights into Hicks’ repertoire, some speculative, some confirmed. One clear deduction is that these three tales, unknown on Beech Mountain at the time of Chase’s collecting, were introduced into that local tradition by Chase and/or Adams. In fact Hicks eventually incorporated all three. I have heard him tell “Jack and King Marock,” the longest and fullest wonder tale in Chase’s book, at the National Festival. “Jack and the Bull” he told for me at home during his last illness, and he confirmed then that he learned both that tale and “King Marock” “from the book.” “Soldier Jack” became one of Hicks’ favorite tales to tell, so closely identified with him that his version became the centerpiece of the 1976 Appalshop documentary. Like “Wicked John,” to which it is closely related, “Soldier Jack” incorporates and dramatizes much of Hicks’ personal philosophy: his ideas about life and death, good and evil, nature and the human soul. These themes were present in Chase’s versions in glib, skeletal images. Hicks meditated his way inside the tales, clothed those images with flesh, and breathed them full of passionate interior life.

Finally, Chase’s statement gives us an inkling about the wandering path of “Wicked John.” For the Jack tale “very recently . . . found in Charlottesville, Virginia,” was almost certainly this one. None of the stories in the notes to *The Jack Tales* are credited to a Charlottesville informant; but in *Grandfather Tales* “Wicked John” is primarily attributed to a Mrs. Jennings L. Yowell of Charlottesville, with the further remark that “Mrs. Yowell called him ‘Wicked Jack’.” No Beech Mountain source for the tale is

given—the only other credited informant is Mr. Peck Daniel of Bristol, Virginia. The implication here, though difficult to confirm at this point since virtually all contemporary witnesses are gone, is that this tale, too, came into Hicks' repertoire via Chase—either “from the book,” as with the three above, or from hearing Chase perform it.⁴

These inferences and assertions are beset with many of the usual drawbacks of the historical-geographic method. They are based on limited or hearsay testimony, circumstantial evidence, and informed surmise, and would hardly be conclusive in a court of law. We cannot say with certainty that there were no versions of AT330 in circulation around Beech Creek before Chase and Adams appeared on the scene. Even if there had been, however, internal comparisons between Chase's and Hicks' versions support the argument for Chase's influence. The most interesting part of Hicks' performance is the elaborate introductory fantasy, discussed below, for which there is no parallel in Chase. But once Hicks actually launches into the body of the narrative itself, the motifs line up with Chase's version as faithfully as they do for one of his grandfather's “twelve.”

Does this indicate that Hicks was following Chase, or vice versa? A crucial clue lies in the main character's name. We have Chase's word that he made the change from Jack to “Wicked John.” This is of a piece both with Chase's method and his aesthetics. He was never averse to altering, collating, and conflating his Appalachian source versions to fit with his own notions of a higher authenticity, to which he assumed a privileged access through his study of the “original” European antecedents. But he was also prone to altering elements to fit into the aesthetic frameworks of his books. And Jack the crusty old blacksmith was a poor match for the character of Jack that Chase was creating in his first book, *The Jack Tales*. The title of that work is a flag of its ambition: to create a popular American folktale cycle, with a hero whose individualistic everyman persona remains consistent from tale to tale. Chase was the most devout Unitarian among Jack tale writers: his view or, rather, his manifest desire that the hero of his book should be experienced as a single figure through all of his episodic adventures predetermined many of his authorial choices. One of those choices was to take the Jack tale “recently discovered in Charlottesville,

⁴ A parallel from a very different tradition is the famous example of Avdo Medjedović, Parry and Lord's star *guslar*, who listened to an inferior version of a previously unknown epic song and instantly created his own far fuller and more authoritative version. Medjedović's most significant song, “The Wedding of Smailagić Meho,” was apparently learned and expanded upon from a short chapbook version read to him by a friend (Lord 2000:78, 223-34).

Virginia” and to reserve it for his next book, *Grandfather Tales*, where it would not clash with his carefully constructed image of Jack as a *puer aeternus*. Chase was so fond of “Wicked John,” in fact, that he printed it twice, and in his introduction to the tale in *American Folk Tales and Songs*, where it is the first tale in the volume, he is as explicit as he can be about his motives (1956:21):

As printed here it is based on the way I heard it from Mrs. Jennings L. Yowell of Charlottesville, Virginia. Her name for the blacksmith was “Wicked Jack.” I changed it to “John” to avoid confusion with the boy Jack of *The Jack Tales*.

Could Hicks or other Beech Mountain traditional tellers have been circulating versions of “Wicked John and the Devil,” using that title, that name of the central figure, and that precise sequence of plot motifs, before Chase and without Chase encountering it during his collecting period? It is possible, of course. But I would suggest an alternate and perhaps more interesting story: that Chase’s version became the basis of “Wicked John’s” entry into the Beech Mountain repertoire. Chase’s redaction of Mrs. Yowell’s “Wicked Jack” would thus have been the version that Hicks received from Chase, by oral or written transmission or both—just as any good storyteller might borrow from another who comes to share his parlor and his family table—and that Hicks then reframed to make entirely and triumphantly his own.⁵

⁵ This two-way transmission process, though it breaches a certain cherished ideal of folk inviolability, is in fact more normal than its absence. The natural way for a folktale collector to get a session started is to “tell one.” As Adams wrote in an unpublished guide for fieldworkers (Perdue 1987:108):

I have found that the best way to get the ordinary tale-teller started off is to talk about other things at first, then gradually drift around to old times and old tales. I usually tell one myself, choosing one of the shorter ones like “The Big Toe,” or “Fat and Lean,” anything which I think might stir the memory of my prospective informant.

In a context in which the suspicion of cultural expropriation and economic exploitation has not already been introduced, the ordinary reaction of a lover of story is to listen and respond, and to mentally file away the offered stories for later use—just as the collector will do with the informant’s tales. This mutuality is the would-be norm. It is precisely the collector-informant role-play that both creates the semblance of this natural human dynamic and then subverts it by overlaying a disciplinary shadow-history of expropriation, exploitation, and class-conflict or patronization. Ellis (1994) reveals that Maud Long, though she remembered learning only 11 tales from her mother Jane Gentry, eventually boasted that she could tell every story in either *The Jack Tales* or *Grandfather Tales*. For this Ellis pronounces Long “one of the first—and most successful—of the

The 25 minutes transcribed here are a cutting from a long afternoon and evening of storytelling and conversation in the Hicks' front room, with an audience consisting of my friend Kathleen Zundell (a storyteller from Los Angeles), one Beech Mountain neighbor (a man in his fifties), Ray's son Ted, and myself. Ray's wife Rosa was in the kitchen preparing food. Thus the audience was a concentrated mix of insiders and relative outsiders to Hicks' storytelling repertoire and milieu. To bring the mix into one accord, the first six minutes and ten seconds of the performance captured on tape is a remarkable introductory oral essay, a rhetorical *tour de force*, which challenges not only the commonplace assumptions about the character of Wicked John, but also folklorists' canonic understandings of folk narrative genre and style—as based on frequently simplified and decontextualized literary renderings.

He begins, immediately after the insertion of the cassette in the recorder and the pressing of the record buttons, with a sweeping claim: “They just told it like it was: / Any man can be Wicked John.” The first line is perhaps a response to a question about how Hicks originally heard the tale. His answer boldly appropriates his sources' voices (“They just told it like it was . . .”) into his own reading of the character's metonymic nature. As we will see, this is not a literal report—it is unlikely that any source understood the character remotely the way Ray did. Certainly neither Mrs. Yowell nor Chase would recognize the brief that follows. The statement is a fictive device. Like the famous opening lines of *Moby Dick* or *Finnegan's Wake*, it is a way of immediately abducting the listeners into the mythic dimension where the hero and the story will reside. The device is not limited to his characterization of John—Jack inhabits this realm for Hicks as well. Barbara McDermitt recorded his expansion on the theme in 1983 (9):

revivalists” (105). While stated in an ostensibly complimentary tone, and defensible in the context of *Jack in Two Worlds*'s thematics, Ellis's very need to make the distinction in the case of Long's mainly private storytelling displays vestiges of the old folkloristic romance that would push the standard of purity ever further up the holler and into the past. If Maud Long, whose mother Jane Gentry was Cecil Sharp's greatest ballad source and the first recorded Hicks-Harmon tradition teller, should be counted as “the first and most successful of the revivalists,” then surely Ray Hicks must be the next—and he was far more successful both in terms of recognition and of stubborn adherence to his own aesthetic. But the extended logic of dichotomization here finally reaches towards the absurd. It might be wiser to simply acknowledge the multiple shadings of cross-cultural interaction between mountain folk and folklorists, amateur collectors, romantic regionalists, and revivalists, extending over many decades, and to regard with dispassion—even some compassion—most sentient beings' incorrigible habit of influencing one another.

That's the way it was when I growed up . . . when you git like I tell it, I'm Jack. Everybody can be Jack. Jack ain't dead, he's a-livin'. Jack can be anybody. . . . Like I tell 'em sometimes, I'm Jack. I've been Jack. I mean in different ways. Now I ain't everything Jack's done in the tales, but still I've been Jack in lots of ways. It takes Jack to live.

Californian Kathleen proceeds to prod the teller on a point of gender inclusiveness: "Any person?" she asks.

Hicks easily agrees, "any person, yeah." Overriding my own attempt at a conversational turn, he continues, "any man, or a woman, can be Wicked John." He goes on to draw the outlines of the character: he is poor, hard-working, long-suffering, and inflamed with "the heart desire, in there, to help poor people." He is a man, in short, very much like Hicks himself. "And that," he continues, "makes 'em . . . cuss—to try and stand the job."

Hicks has now introduced his thematic core: the conflict between good and evil that rages, not between the two-dimensional figures of typical folktale antagonists, but within the complex personality of the hero. Hicks proceeds to directly challenge the traditional characterization, as found in Chase and others' versions:

And they called him a mean man.
 But that's about all the way it was to tell the tale.
 A man like 'at was the best people that was
 to help little young'uns out—
 now a lot o' the people get that told wrong.

So Hicks is in critical dialogue here not just with those of us in the room, but with all those who have told the tale before him, and who have adapted simplifying strategies in order to fit the hero to a generic pattern. Chase's Wicked John is a comic buffoon of the bad-man type. Mrs. Yowell, whose version Chase follows more closely in *American Folk Tales and Songs*, adds the further derisive note that he is a mean drunk. The fact that he feeds a hungry beggar once is portrayed as a mere plot function, at best a momentary and accidental lapse of his general uninflected badness.

Folklorists, literary scholars, psychologists, and writers on oral-formulaic theory have been complicit in this commonplace reduction as well. Authors from such diverse backgrounds as Max Lüthi (1976), Marie-Louise von Franz (1996), and Walter Ong (1982) have fallen into line; and Elliott Oring sums up conventional folkloristic and formulaic-theoretical wisdom concerning character in oral narrative thus (1986:127-28):

Folktales place little emphasis on character development. . . . No attention is paid to internal conflict or complex motivation. Folktale figures are two-dimensional characters rather than three-dimensional personalities. The wolf is large, voracious and wily. The kids are small, innocent and gullible. These traits are givens. The folktale does not concern itself with explaining the wolf's character in psychological or philosophical terms.

Hicks' John is something else again: he is a man whose compassion for human suffering leads him to take on the devil's own work—toiling at the fiery furnace—and the devil's own language—curse words, or “cuss” words. “Cuss words” for mountain folk, as in other cultures, are taboo utterances that summon forbidden powers—either the names of the divine and the diabolic (the name of the Lord or the Devil taken “in vain” or in a non-sacred setting), or of forbidden functions of the earthly life, the life of the body. This is where Hicks' own natural metaphysics announces itself and begins to weave into the fabric of the story.

A recurrent theme of his discourses over the 20 years I knew him was the many errors of understanding in the conventional religious denominations that surrounded him. “A lot of the people get that told wrong” was a statement I heard him make as often in reference to a fine point of biblical exegesis as to folktale interpretation. Hicks' principal book was in fact not *The Jack Tales* but the King James Bible; yet he interpreted it in some surprisingly heterodox ways, through a prism deeply colored by direct reading in what he called “the Book o' Life”—nature in all its numinous patterns. *Fixin' to Tell About Jack* (Appalshop 1976) captures him in the mid-seventies expounding the analogies between the galax plant and the human soul: the vine's root stock covers large areas of earth and sends up similarly patterned leaves each new growing season. When the leaves are picked, the roots remain below the ground to rise again—so the leaves he picks are in fact the same stuff as his ancestors picked and his descendants will pick. And so with the human soul: our physical forms grow from the root stock of spirit that remains in the ground of the unseen from generation to generation. Hicks arrived at the idea of reincarnation through that reading of the vegetative cycle, and fully expected to return in some form after his physical body had been digested by the earth. When I asked him once about heaven, he simply replied as any earth-religionist might: “Heaven is the Planet.”

Thus Hicks' John, like his Jack, is infused with his brand of natural metaphysics, and the tale is interwoven with the ongoing theological debate between the conventional Protestant and radical/natural mythic systems and root narratives. Lines 1-50 of the introductory section present the basic

imagining of a kind-hearted man who adopts the tools, the powers, and the language of the negative realms in order to serve the hungry and the needy. This is John *in imitatio Christi*. His divine spark is descended into a fallen world, like his evangelist namesake's Light that shone in darkness and the darkness knew it not. He could equally exemplify the bodhisattva's vow never to attain nirvana while suffering remains in the world. Hicks' natural metaphysics is strongly inflected by the earth-centered worldviews of the Native Americans who occupied the land when his ancestors arrived, and who intermarried with them (Hicks' great-grandmother Rebecca was apparently full-blood Cherokee) and taught them both survival skills and attitudes that were still articulated and embodied by Hicks. The astonishment of Hicks' telling is that while these biblical and world-scriptural parallels are never made explicit, it is evident that the tone of philosophical and psychological urgency and immanence is fully and eloquently present. Not only does it thoroughly transform our apprehension of the character John, it also leads us to question and to nuance some key tenets of orthodox folk narrative theory.⁶

At line 51 Hicks interrupts himself. "*And I been with him!*" he exclaims, and the rhetoric and energy of the performance suddenly shift. For the next 74 lines he enters into a kind of associative catalogue of personal encounters with Wicked John in his various incarnations through the days of Hicks' youth.

And I been with him!

The same as he was,
down here on the river.

And he had one eye put out,
whur a piece o' steel, hot steel flew in it.

And he would *swear!*
down on the river, I been in the shop
of Wicked John.

Been there! not just a-hearin' it.

⁶ Another example of a traditional teller whose philosophical and cosmological principles are inextricably bound to his folktale repertoire is recounted by the Hungarian folklorist Sandor Erdesz in "The World Conception of Lajos Ami, Storyteller," originally published in 1961, available in Dundes 1984:315-35.

One of Hicks' roles as a storyteller was to bear stubborn witness to the Appalachian lifeways in which he had been raised. His was a lean and perilous existence, but it also bred varieties of resourcefulness, kindness, and everyday heroism that are fast fading from the cultural memory. As long as he was alive, Hicks obsessively reworked those first-hand accounts of vanished occupations, customs, and people into the frameworks of his traditional tales. So he goes on with a short history of blacksmithing in the Watauga district, not in the detached mode of a literary account, but in the passionate voice of a man rescuing his own life from the forces of oblivion. We hear about "the first Wicked John," who had a shop where he shod horses for farm work and logging, and also hammered out heel-irons for people who otherwise could not have kept body and soles together—cussing like fire all the while out of pure harsh necessity: "but if he—but if they wouldn't o' cussed it wouldn't o' holped me." The Lord may keep the feet of his saints, according to the Psalms, but the black-tongued smith kept the feet of men and horses. And reciprocally, men like Hicks would climb the high ridges to cut old-growth maples and roll them down the mountain to the river bottoms (the practice known as "ball-hootin") to make charcoal for the blacksmith's forge. All this is woven around the rhythmic refrains of "*Been there! Seed Wicked John! I've seed it! I seed—*"

Inserting himself like this into the tale of Wicked John as a kind of Ishmael to John's Ahab is another fictive device that, according to the classifications of folk narrative genres, we are not supposed to encounter. But it is fully characteristic of Hicks' art. It melds this performance with other generic frames, such as tall tale and legend; yet it undercuts our received understandings of each.⁷ Tall tales generally begin in naturalistic settings and push by artfully logical steps towards the comically absurd. The legend, according to Oring, "is set in historical time, in the world as we know it today. It often makes reference to real people and places" (1986:125). Though many scholars have asserted that legends by definition are believed and told as factually true, Oring qualifies this explanation, saying rather that "the narration of a legend is, in a sense, the negotiation of the truth of these episodes . . . at the core of the legend is an evaluation of its truth status" (125). "A folktale," on the other hand, "is a narrative which is related and received as a fiction or a fantasy" (127).⁸

⁷ For example, Hicks would begin his performance of the standard miraculous hunt tale, "it's like the time me and Jack went hunting . . ." (Sobol 1992:98)

⁸ Oring is passing on the disciplinary classification of prose oral narrative into genres of myth, legend, and folktale enshrined by Bascom in 1965 but inherited

So the critical question is: what are we to make of Hicks' claims in "Wicked John" when he says (ll. 60-66):

And—

like, if you believe me now,
I'm a-tellin' the truth, I've been there,
Seed Wicked John

A-hammering steel,
th' ole way,
and a-cussin'.

Is Hicks having us on, as a tall-tale teller would? Is he expressing a fundamental belief in the factuality of John's miraculous encounters with St. Peter and three emissaries from Hell, as in a conventional legend? Is he confused about his tale's proper genre status, or has he simply been carried away by emotion into a kind of hallucinatory fugue state?

Of course, Hicks is no longer available to be pestered with these kinds of questions. But, based on 20 years of listening to him at home and on various public stages, I would suggest that he had a much larger repertoire of imaginative devices than storytelling scholarship has usually admitted. He was not in fact asserting the literal truth of John's encounters; but by projecting himself inside the narrative frame of the folktale and declaring witness, he was making certain we listeners knew how deadly serious he was about their symbolic and metaphoric truth. Hicks' re-visioning of "Wicked John and the Devil" suggests that folk narrative genres, though a disciplinary milestone and an important tool for the basic sorting of texts, are insufficient to encompass the mutability of tales in context, nor the creative impulses of a particularly talented teller.⁹

essentially unchanged from the Grimms. Though logically appealing, historically imposing, and undeniably useful as a sorting device, this typology is also problematic in theory and limiting in practice in some of the same ways as the classification of human beings by race and social class.

⁹ A pioneering attempt to nuance folk narrative genre concepts through direct ethnographic observation of the multivalent creative forces at work and play in live storytelling performances was Daniel J. Crowley's *I Could Talk Old Story Good: Creativity in Bahamian Folklore* (1966). Henry Glassie's levels of talk in *Passing the Time in Ballymenone* (1995) show an original attempt to bypass genre in the analysis of traditional storytelling dynamics. Richard Bauman (1986) uses sociolinguistic methods to show similar nuances in contrasting performances by a single teller. Megan Biesele (1999) and Donald Braid (1999, 2002) each demonstrate the enormous potential differences in psychological, philosophical, and poetic depth in performances of the same

There was no laughter in this performance, so utterly unlike his Rabelaisian rediscovery of “Hardy Hardass” later that evening. Men like John had saved Hicks’ life, for no other reason but that they had the “heart desire, in there” to do it. These were foul-mouthed, soot-covered, strong-smelling mountain men, outcasts from the polite society of the church-house, and scorned by would-be genteel wives. It was no aberration for men like these to feed a hungry beggar—it was of a piece with their culture of hospitality and their fellow-feeling for the needy. Yet neither would they take their reward in the world to come. Being earthly men they wanted their wishes here and now, in the form of power over earthly things—the chair, the hammer, the fire bush. These objects were sacred in a purely practical way to the blacksmith, representing well-earned rest, human craft, and natural beauty. With the power transferred to him and to his magical things by the visitor from above, John is empowered to defeat the claims of the forces from below. The tragic note in Hicks’ version, a tone that rings in each of the long, breathy, swallowed sobs marked in the transcript by an [H], is that in doing what he must—all that he knows how to do—the smith becomes too bad, too full of curses, to enter Heaven, but also too full of Luciferian power to coexist with the rulers of Hell.

Hicks’ specific genius here is to take Chase’s hoary comic yarn and to find the metaphysical implications within its central character and his struggle with the world, to take them both seriously and personally, and to attempt to work them out within the traditional structure of his tale. His task of poetic transformation in this telling is to redeem his flawed hero John, and through John all those decent, earthy elders of his youth and his community. In place of the typical jocular tale, Hicks has given us a tragic elegy. Wicked John’s heaven, like Ray Hicks’, is finally the planet, where he endures like the wandering folktale itself as a mysterious, flickering light. In the end, the recurrent tragic note resolves to a final chord of acceptance. Down goes John, “a-whistlin’ towards the Devil’s house,” and up he comes again. The folktale melts away and runs off into the legendary subject of the Brown Mountain Lights. “I ain’t seed it but one time,” Hicks said of the Lights—

well-known tales by different narrators within single cultural traditions. Kay Stone (1999) shows some of the creative complications introduced into even the simplest traditional genres by changing contexts and teller intentions. Harold Scheub (1998, 2002) makes significant strides in seeking genre structures of African oral narratives beneath the surface in order to uncover their motivating impulses of emotion and symbolic transference, which he calls “the poem in the story.” Perhaps Trudier Harris-Lopez (2003:100) best summarizes the status of genre theory in contemporary folkloristics when she calls genre a “continuous site of contestation.”

unlike Jack or Wicked John, whom he could see wherever in the world he wished to look.

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Appendix

[*eCompanion at www.oraltradition.org]

“Wicked John and the Devil”

Told by Ray Hicks

At home on Beech Mountain, NC, June 6, 1985

Ray: They just told it like it was: (1)
any man can be Wicked John.

Kathleen: Any person?
R: Any person, yeah.

Joseph: You were tellin’ me that, uh,
he would get to cussin’
R [overlapping]: Yeah, I mean any man—
J: —cause it was just so hot in that shop—

R: —any man, or a woman, can be Wicked John, if they get in this—
if they get in hard enough work. (10)

And get *deposed* long enough.

And *punished*—

And then got the heart desire,
in there,
to help poor people
And that makes em. . .

cuss,
to try and stand the job.

And they called him a mean man.

But that’s about all the way it was to tell the tale. (20)

A man like ’at was the best people that was. . .
to help little younguns out—

now a lot o the people get that told wrong.

You see now, Wicked John, he was a man that—
like I said, when y' first come there talkin' with her—

of a way Mother divided our feed out— [referring to an earlier turn in his conversation with Kathleen]

Now a man like this
tried to help—
wherever parents as had little children—
whur their father's wagon was broke down, (30)

And his horse was without horseshoe.

And he had no grab.

Well he'd toe 'em.
And like, Wicked John now, he run gristmills in the mountains.

They some lost their lives—

up a-choppin' ice on the mill wheel tryin' to help two little boys out
that come wi' a little turn a corn—

Cut hisself with the ax and died

Cause he know'd they was hungry.
Well they'd *cuss*, (40)
while they was a-choppin' that ice.

Cussin's what made 'em chop it,
a man that wouldn't cuss wouldn't *do* that.

He'd quit!
He'd give up and quit and let the children die!

That cussin' kept him built up.
What made him cuss—
had a good heart in him.

And the one that didn't have the feelin' would quit and
all just starve to death.

And so, Wicked John, he uh— (50)

And I been with him!

The same as he was,
 down here on the river.

And he had one eye put out,
 whur a piece o' steel, hot steel flew in it.

And he would *swear!*
 down on the river, I been in the shop
 of Wicked John.

Been there! not just a-hearin' it,
 And—

(60)

like, if you believe me now,
 I'm a-tellin' the truth, I've been there.
 Seed Wicked John

A-hammerin' steel,
 th' ole way,
 and a-cussin'.

But if he—but if they wouldn't o' cussed,
 it wouldn't o' holped me.

And so Wicked John—

he run a blacksmith shop.

(70)

And say,

that coulda been,

right along,

in the mountains here,

about

in nineteen hundert

coulda been the first 'n there

that got started a-beatin'
 some steel

And the first Wicked John then:

(80)

They had to roll logs—

now that down yander's a place they called the Coal Pit,
where Wicked John

had a shop down yander,
and I seed the shop, uh—later,
And built me heel irons
for my leather-heeled shoes.

Made heel-irons
to put on there.

And built 'em for a— (90)
a nickel or a dime apiece.

Heel-irons—
when leather-heeled shoes, would, uh—

Wet—get wet, and the way they put them steel spikes on, they'd come off!
Well you could put heel-irons on there and drive a center right full of carpet tacks,

And hit'd last!

And so he'd make the heel-iron,

fer ye,

and put 'em on fer ye, if you asked him. (100)
I just—just git him to put mine on, in the shop.

And so, Wicked John, he, uh—

There at the Coal Pit they rolled sugar-tree logs and ball-hooted 'em off o' the mountain
right over yander into the holler—

And got them logs afire,
and then covered it up with dirt-sod,
and dirt,
and made charcoal *out o' wood*,
was their first coal
to heat steel here in the mountains, they had no way to get coal
nowhere in here, they didn't know what coal was! (110)

They 's no transporta—they didn't know where no coal 's at in Kentucky—

Virginia—

And they made their charcoal outa coverin' that hard wood up,
and it's hotter 'n coal!

atter it's smothered and burnt in there with that old—
they some coals down there in the ground yit.

Ain't never rotted.

And so Wicked John—

He run this shop.

And some way or some how—

(120)

like, uh—

like it, it—

I've *seed* it.

I seed—

His wife couldn't understand [voice catch, emotion] poor old John.

She couldn't understand.

He had to work in that shop,
and then to help people too, to get a little earnings to live on.

And worked hard, but—
she didn't like him a-dirtyin' her sheets,
or her bedclothes up.

(130)

She'd yap at him,

And he'd cuss.

He'd say,

[whispered] "*Oh my Gaw-wd.*"

He was in there, he couldn't keep clean, and he didn't have enough clothes to change.

And her a-yappin',

"John—

[miserable tone] you're gonna ruin ever'thing I've got."

An'— (140)
directly they kept yapping.

An'—

finally,

she says, "John,"

said, "Some o' these days,

"the very own *Devil*

is gonna come to the shop and carry you off."

He says, "By God, let him come!"

And, [from defiant to pleading] "By God, honey, let him come."

"Let him come to the— (150)
I'm just doin' the best I can,

"beatin' this steel,"

Says, "I don't know nothin' else to do."

And he says, "I thought

I was a-helpin' little younguns,

"And parents to raise their kids
in this here world we live in."

And so,

Hit went on.

And they would yap, (160)
and he would swear.

And finally. . .

Saint Peter—

he come down on earth,
every twelve months

to see how many decent people he could find

on earth.

And he come in the shop,

Saint Peter come in the shop a-all bowed over and crippled up,
as a beggar.

(170)

with beggar clothes on.

And John was a-beatin' steel, and he looked over and seed that old—
that man a-lookin' like 'at and he rolled his eyes,
and he was a-beatin' and he rolled his eyes—

Directly,

the beggar said—

(which it was Saint Peter), but the beggar says, uh,

“Man—

Said, “I don't know who ye are,”

But he said, “Would you give me somethin' to eat?”

(180)

He said, “I—I'm hungry.” [voice weak, fading to inaudible]

Well John went to the house,
and got his wife to fix up a big platter—

a bowl of
green beans,
cornbread,
cow butter—
Farm eatin', on his farm.

And, uh—

And cornbread, and a
big glass o' milk.

(190)

And—and, John didn't feed it to ye not skimmed—
I mean skimmed!

He wanted his milk with the cream *on it!*

Milk wasn't good,

sweet milk ain't, if you skim it off,
they called it *blue john!*

Made it look blue it was so weak,
just about as well drunk water.

And so he brought it back and the beggar eat it, (200)

Smacked his mouth,

Said, "Thank you, Man."

And he went back to hammerin', and
looked around, and that man was up,

A-crackin' his bones
and all,
and a-tryin' to get straightened up,
and directly all them old clothes just vanished and there he stood with a *purple robe on!*

And spoke, and he said, "John—
"I just was foolin' people up," (210)
he said, "I was Saint Peter when I come in here!"

And he said—

And he said, "I'm a-checkin'."

And he said, "You have to have somethin' in you pretty good."

He said, "You've got somethin' in your heart, [H]
"pretty good."

"Or you wouldn't o' given me that eatin'"

He said, "But bein' you done that,
"I'm gonna give you three wishes!"

Said, "You can take 'em (220)
for this life,
or hereafter."

"Either one you want to do, it's *up* to you."

Well John says, [H]

"Well—

He says, "I'll take the first one,"
 said, "I want it—the first,"
 said, "I want it for this life."
 He said, "Them there con-founded school younguns," [H]

He said, "They come by here from that little old school, (230)

And said, "They'll come in my shop here and me a-sittin' here tryin' to rest and slip my sledgehammer out,"

And said, "They'll get it out in the grass outside o' my little old shop,"
 And said, "Hit'll get me all frayed up and I'll cuss!"

And said, "I wish—
 "want it put,
 if hit's that way—"

"That the next 'n that gets ahold o' my hammer—"

[two rhythmic coughs]

"That you can't turn loose,
 it'll stick the handle to his hands."

And said, "just sledge him, till his feet jumps up offa the ground." (240)

Well—

Peter said, "That's one,

Says, "John—"

"What's the next?"
 "Oh," he said, "you see that old rocker over there?"

He said, "It's wore down,"
 and he said, "I get so tired—"

"in here o' beatin this steel and heatin' it,
 "and—"

 "soot (250)
 all in my eyes,
 all in my clothes."

Said, "When I go over to take a rest," said "there's a confounded little old schoolboy in it—'rik-rik-rik-rik-rik-rik!'"

Said, "They'll come in here while I'm a-workin',
'rik-rik-rik-rik-rik-rik-rik-rik,
 and said, "That makes me cuss!"

Said, "frets me up, with that racket in here,"
 Said, "I can't keep 'em run out!"

And said, "I wish—" (260)

"That the next 'n that sits in that chair it'll stick his sitter fast to it—"

"And it won't
 get loose till I let it loose."
 "Well," he says, "That's *two!*"

"Well," he said, "now what's the third one?"
 "Ooh," he says, "my
 beautiful fire-bush out 'aire—"

(Or thorn-bush, or fire-bush) [explanatory]

He said, "It seem like these low-down sons o' horseback riders—"

"Can't break nary switch offa no bush, only my beautiful fire-bush." (270)
 And said, "I wish—"

"that the next 'n that reaches out
 to get—to break a switch off—"
 he said, "—look out 'aire how ugly it is,"
 said, "they've broken it, it's about to die!"

And said, "A-all these other switches,
 as they go on their trail,
 to break off,

And said, "they want to break offa mine!"

"My fire-bush, the thorn what blooms those pretty blooms." (280)

And he said, "I wish—"

"the next that reaches out to
 break a switch offa my fire-bush, or thorn-bush,"
 said, "I wish it'll suck'im right down in it head-first."

"Well," he says, "John—"

He said, "I 's a-hopin'—"

“Bein’ you give me somethin’ to eat,

“I was a-hopin’ you took one wish

“for your soul’s salvation for hereafter.”

“But,” he says, “you didn’t.”

(290)

“It’s your’n John!”

“Well,” he says, “By God, that’s the way I want it.”

So—

John kept
 goin’ on,
 goin’ on.

Finally,

down at the Devil’s furnace,

he [spit]

hyeard about it,

 how bad John was a-gettin.’

(300)

He did, he got to gettin’ that—

 that kind o’ left him.

That left out of him, he growed colder—

a-beatin’ that steel, and got older, and

 sufferin’—

till it left him, and he got to cussin’ and fightin’ his *neighbor!*

And John had got changed!

the Devil had hyeard about it

 at the furnace,

 and he sent his, uh—

(310)

got his two boys out,

He said, “Son—

 (with

 little buck horns about that long)

He said, "You go, uh, fetch John in,"
 said, "we've got to get him out o' there and get him here."

So—
 he said, "Now you get him *fast!*
 "*Quick,*" he said, "Don't you fool much time!" (320)

And—
 that oldest 'n went—

and—

he went right in over the
 shop sill,
 hewed sill,

And just grabbed John right around the waist,
 he said, "*Let's go, John!*"

He said, "*Dad's sent me after you!*"

And John was a-buildin' a (330)
 set o' horseshoes

fer a—
 a feller that was a-loggin' to git
 to help people and his kids to git a little livin',
in the mountains! [guttural]
 'fore they couldn't stand up!

And he welded—

he welded corks on the end of 'em—

where I've logged at now,
 welded corks on the end of 'em *that long,* (340)
 where they'd *stick in rock and hold!*

I've seed horses with their legs broke,

loggin' out o' these mountains—

been there!

[Emphatic sniff]

“Well,” he says, “Son—“
 he said, “uhh—

“Oh gosh,” he said, “I can’t leave this here people a-sufferin’!”

Said, “Just wait about fifteen, ten or fifteen minutes, and—

“I’ll be right with you!”

And so, account o’ him bein’ scared of his Dad he said, (350)
 “You *hold* the steel and let me *hammer* it.”

The Devil’s boy got ahold o’ that sledgehammer handle,

And for just a few minutes there he thought he was doin’ well,
 and when he happened try to let up, it—

it seed his hands was stuck, and give him a holler, and about that tight it was
 a-je’kin’ his sleeve and him not not a-wantin’ the hammer and the hammer was a-comin’
 up and down.

He ’gin to scream, and—

he said, “Oh my Gawd!”
 he said, “What kind o’ hammer have you got?” (360)

John says, “I just got a sledge-hammer—

fer people like you.”

He said, uh—

He said, “You go,” uh— [clearing throat]

He said, “Will you *leave me alone*—

“if I tell it to get it loose?”

And the Devil’s boy said, “Yeah, oh Gawd!”

And John told it to let him alone,
 and the hammer fell down on the ground, *klunk*.

And that boy took out over that sill— (370)

And he said he was a-movin’ on—

and just common bushes layin’

his legs went over,
he didn't fool no time.

Went on in, and he said, "Did you get him?"
he said, "Gosh, no!"

"Git him!" [??emphatic vocable? spit]

He said, uhhhh
and he sent the
next 'n, he said, "Now son, you get him!" (380)

He went in—

grabbed John, and he said, "Now—

"John, let's go!" and he said, *"One thing about it, you ain't gonna get me ahold o' your hammer!"*

Th' other 'n told him about it, he had.

Said, "You ain't gonna get me ahold o' that sledgehammer in yonder."

"Oh," he says, "Wait, uh"
he said "I'm a-fixin' a wagon wheel for a family,
a covered wagon, uh—

"Is broke a wheel down and a-sufferin, gonna die!"

And said, "Just wait till I got this wheel mended, (390)

"And I'll go right along wi' ye," and said, "You go back—

"there," he stood, "there—

"Back there's an old rocker
you can sit in," and he just stood,
and he was kind of afeared of John a little bit, you know—
not trustin' him, and John,
stepped back a little, needin' to rest a little, "Oh," he said, uh—

"Back there—"
he said, "Back here," he says, "I got a *big old fork I made,*
"a pitchfork," and says, "*We'll need that there in Hell!*" (400)

So John got back there a-lookin' for that fork,
he didn't have nary 'n, he was just tellin' that,
and he got back there,

huntin' for that fork,
and he'd made an old big pitchfork—
he'd made it home-made.

And that Devil, the young one kept standin' there
and his knees got weak—
John just kept huntin'.

His knees got weak— (410)

And he seed that chair and flopped down in it.

And all at once it begin to rock,
and he knowed he wasn't rockin'
went, *rock-rock-rock-rock-rock*
and it screekin'—

So, uh—

He 'gin to raise up—

went to raise up and it stuck to his setter!

And the chair was comin' up with him!

He 'gin to scream, said, "John— (420)

Said, "What kind o' chair have you got hyere?"

He said—

"Will you promise like your brother, to—
never come back around me?"

He said, "Oh my God, yeah!"

He told him to turn it loose and *he* took out.

A-movin' on, and it went on a few days.

And the Old Big-horned One come—
the Devil—the Dad, Big-horned one come,
and he come in over that sill, (430)

And got John—

And rolled him out,
 drug him out over that sill,
 and was just nat—uh,
 beatin' the hide offa John.

Was a-tannin' him.

And all at once,
 John happened to think—

O' the way he'd twisted cow's tails—

to load 'em, you know, (440)
 in a wagon, or anything,
 to twist 'em and make 'em go up in a bad place, or anything—

And he got ahold o' the Devil's tail—

And hadn't been for that the Devil 's a-getting' him,
 he got ahold o' the tail and 'gin to twist that tail,
 and he'd groan—

the Devil would groan,
 and every time John would twist—

and make it hurt right bad to get his mind off his strength,
 he'd pull him towards that fire-bush. (450)

And doggone, when he got that Devil in about ten feet o' that fire-bush—
 Phunk!

In he went upside down!

An'—

So the thorn-bush just closed in on him—

stickin' them thorns in his body,
 and he 'gin to take on in there.

And he says, "John—"

"Will you turn me out o' here?"

And he said, "Yeah, like your sons," (460)
 he said, "if you'll promise
 "to never come back around my place,"

“I’ll turn ye out.”

He said, “I’ll sure promise.”

So he told it to turn him out—

He went on—

never seed no more,

and John he kept hammerin’ in there—

hammerin’ and workin’.

Finally he took ill—

(470)

and died.

Deceased, passed away.

And the people missed that man. [voice catch]

There they was, nobody to—

to do the rough work,

to help.

And so atter he died,

he went

a-walkin’, a-whistlin’—

to Saint Peter’s door—

(480)

Heaven.

There—

pecked on it,

here come Saint Peter, and he *knowed him*.

He said, “John—

“Wait a minute,” he said, uh,

“You can’t get—

“I’ve got to check records hyere,” he said, uh—

“Let me get your record,”

and he got it—

(490)

And on the credick side—

John had a lot o' good things
he'd done.

He said, "Now here
is marked down—

"where—I put it down—
and you give me somethin' to eat,
when I come in there,"
and he said, "It's good!"

Here on the credick side, but he said, "*God!*" (500)

"On this reverse side," he said, "of the wrong things,
and cussin' you've done—

Said, "down through all that other line,
is lines wrote *between* lines."

Said, "You can't come in here."
"Well," he says, "that's O.K."

He went on down a-whistlin'
towards the Devil's house.

And he got inside.

And that— (510)

youngest son happened to peep out 'tween the bars,
and seed, said, "*Oh Gosh, Dad!*"

"*Yonder comes John,
bar the door!
bar the door!
bar the door!*"

So—

John got on down,
and the old Dad Devil peeped through a bar—

He said, "John— (520)

"We can't have you in *here!*"

Said, "You'd take our Hell *over!*"

Mmm. [emphatic guttural]

Old Devil, he went back, took a pair o' tongs—

and got out a
big

coal o' fire as he could get out o' the furnace, and rech it out—
through, 'tween those bars and said, "*Here, John—*

He said, "*You take this fire,*" he said,

"*You go out and go start a Hell o' your own!*"

(530)

And so—

I ain't seed it but one time—

yander towards, uh,
through, uh,

Linville, and in there we were went—

O' the Brown Mountain Lights?

I believe that's where he started,
and she's in there right now.

[long pause, raised eyebrows, laughter]

You'uns ever—you ever see 'em, the Lights?

J: Just heard you tell me about them.

(540)

R: You've heard talk about 'em?

J: Yeah, yeah.

R: Well you've heard others tell about it, ain't ye?

[Segue into discussion of the Brown Mountain Lights and so on.]

“Blasts of Language”: Changes in Oral Poetics in Britain since 1965

Nicky Marsh, Peter Middleton, and Victoria Sheppard

In 1943 George Orwell described the situation of poetry in terms almost unimaginable 60 years later: “many people who write verse have never even considered the idea of reading it aloud” (1994:240). He knew what he was talking about because he was trying to persuade poets to contribute to a wartime broadcasting experiment that aimed to win the minds of intellectuals in India by making a poetry magazine available on the radio. He also felt that the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) had done little in this area in Britain. Although the BBC would go on to make poetry broadcasting a significant but small part of its programming, their initiative would remain of limited importance to poets, as would the production of LP and later tape and CD recordings. What did change was the growth of live performance by poets who would willingly read aloud; over the next few decades speaking poetry aloud would become central to most poets’ reputation and reception.

Today all but a very few dissenters read their work aloud, some are more performers than writers, and for many poets performance is an integral part of their writing career—compositionally, socially, and not least financially. One arts organizer goes so far as to say that “more poets read more often than at any time since the troubadours” (Robinson 2002:7). The situation has reached the point where the refusal to read aloud can become as distinctive as the elective anonymity of a novelist like Thomas Pynchon. Oral performance is for many poets the primary activity: they were first excited by live performance, they have learned to compose for performance, and their readership has been shaped by performance. What Andy Croft says about Middlesbrough—“almost all the most distinguished poets of our time have read in Middlesbrough during the last fifteen years” (quoted in *ibid.*:43)—could be said about many cities and towns. The poet Basil Bunting, whose career as a poet stalled during the 1950s after an early success in the ’30s, was a beneficiary of the development of the new

performance culture, as a bibliography of his performances illustrates.¹ Nor was it for lack of broadcasting—he did have two BBC readings in 1954 and 1957. The complete absence of live public readings was the problem. Only after he began to read at the Morden Tower series in Newcastle curated by Tom Pickard was his reputation re-established. Live public readings were essential to the building and maintenance of this reputation.

In a prior sketch of the history of this transformation of the reception of poetry, we have suggested that the contemporary poetry reading emerged from the demise of private reading circles and the use of poetry as a primary text for elocutionary training (Middleton 2005). Most readers of poetry in the nineteenth century would have heard poems read aloud by friends and family, and by the author only if they had a personal friendship. Many such readers, if they came from middle and upper-class backgrounds, would also have learned to speak poetry aloud as one of the various regimes of elocution that were supposed to be an asset to social and public life, as well as to clarity of thought and its expression.

The formation of poetry choirs by John Masefield, Elsie Fogarty, and others in the 1920s and early 1930s was arguably a decadent extravagance at a moment when the social structures that had made possible this wide circulation of the aural values of poetry were no longer viable. Changes in leisure brought about by the mobility of the car and the new entertainment technologies had put an end to the reading circles and the interest in elocution. Masefield tacitly admitted as much when he told the Scottish Association for the Speaking of Verse that he experienced the same emotion felt by the farmer who “looks on a patent corn-drill-and-sower, a machine, odd to look at and incomprehensible to many, but whose end is to make the valleys so thick with corn that they seem to sing” (1924:30). Verse speaking in the old mode had indeed become “incomprehensible to many.” He believed that verse when spoken aloud is so moving as to be “irresistible,” but associations for poetry performance proved not to be irresistible at all and effectively disappeared during the Second World War. It was the new form of public reading by the poem’s own author, under quite specific conditions, that would transform the landscape once audiences already sensitized by jazz and rock music could be attracted to the performance of powerful social and political passions in unaccompanied lyrics.

¹ A bibliography of Basil Bunting compiled by Roger Guedalla (1978) lists “principal readings and lectures,” and this account suggests that until the poet was able to read his work regularly he could not hope for an audience. Once offered frequent opportunities to read, he could promote his major poem *Briggflatts* in both the United Kingdom and the United States (84).

Despite the avowed importance of performance for contemporary poets, relatively little is known about this history. How is it that poetry readings have come to be an essential part of the writing and distribution of poetry over the past 40 years? The interrelation of campus readings, avant-garde performances, poetry slams, ethnic performance, religious arts, and the heritage poetics of minority languages has not yet been researched, and we know almost nothing about how specific poems, poets, and types of poetry have been shaped by expectations of performance. Is it true, for instance, that, as many poets allege, the standard format of the poetry reading—“a 45- to 60-minute reading where brief poems are the going thing, with explanations of personal references, some literary references, some circumstances of composition and/or intention”—has led to what Hank Lazer calls “a narrow conception of poetic accomplishment” (1996:52)? Poets themselves have rarely reflected upon its importance to them, and no tradition of critical reviewing, nor any systematic recording, has encouraged the growth of critical self-awareness. Since the proliferation of readings and other more performative, theatrical, and musical forms of poetry events has not attracted historians, much of this work is already lost—neither recorded nor reviewed, despite its evident importance for poetry, for both poets and audiences. This inattention is itself an integral part of the phenomenon. In our view, histories of English-language poetry of the past 60 years are so much based on the study of printed texts that they miss one of the most important forces at work in the shaping of poetry at all levels of its form, meaning, and genre.²

To describe the phenomenon in this fashion, however, is to elide the many difficulties in the way of researching it. Literature, indeed most contemporary cultural practices of textuality, attract intensive academic interest, to the point where writers of literary fiction and poetry are able to incorporate advanced hermeneutic methodologies into their work. The emphasis in literary theory—whether poststructuralism, historicism, or cultural studies—on print culture has mostly assumed the oral performance of poetry to be no more than a vehicle for textual distribution,³ a negotiation with the complex politics of identity, and not internal to the semantics of the text itself. Theoretical readings of textuality and orality have often relied on models of either opposition or progression, and this methodology has

² Middleton 2004 is an attempt to sketch what a different history might look like for the United Kingdom.

³ Most critics would agree with Christopher Beach that poetry performance has been beneficial as a means to ensure a “continued public for poetry” (1999:124), but would not go further.

hindered attempts to produce more nuanced analyses of the relationship between the printed and the performed text. At the same time, the all-embracing concept of performativity (made to account for gender, expertise, and agency) undermines attempts to discern methodologies for the study of the material specificity of sites of poetry performance. The work of historians of orality, ethnographers of performance, and linguists, which might have been a stimulus to research, has so far had little impact on the dominant modes of interpretative criticism of poetry. We also lack conceptual models for the distributed social engagement that occurs when a text is performed and therefore becomes the shared property of a social network whose interactions may take many forms, ranging from close community to divergence and non-communication.

Any attempt to further our understanding of the relationship between poetry and performance is immediately met with two particular problems. First, a great deal more historical research is needed before we can be confident that our speculations about this history are correct. We need the scattered collections of recorded material to be archived and analyzed so that we can trace changes in the presentation of voice, the paratexts and “circumpoetics” of introductions and commentary, the degree to which a few dominant styles have emerged, the variations of emotional expressiveness, and the use of sharp- or soft-edged articulation. Then we need information on who read where and when, on the place of readings in many different individual careers, and the place of funding organizations and entrepreneurs. To what extent are we perhaps looking at several partially independent, partially overlapping histories when we consider the many different communities, ranging as they do from those clustered around academic verse to the celebrity cultures of some performance poetry? Second, we need to develop new conceptual tools for reading the several dimensions of a poem—its visual, semantic, oral, and mechanical form (as printed text in a magazine or book, screen image, or even in a few cases a CD)—as different facets of the same linguistic unit of meaning. This radical expansion of the poem’s signifying fields needs to be understood as proffering a challenge to many of the received assumptions about contemporary poetry. Not only does contemporary poetics require new, shared narratives for poets who are rarely read in relation to each other, but its emphasis on what Garrett Stewart has described as the “displacement” between “a merely evoked aural and an oral vocalizing” (1990:5) questions the assumed centrality of the silent reading itself.

During the past year, funded by a small grant from the Arts and Humanities Research Board (AHRB) in the United Kingdom, we have been

carrying out the preliminary research necessary to meet the first of these two challenges. This has involved interviewing a range of British poets about their interest and experience of poetry performance in order to gain a fuller picture of the past 40 years, the period in which the explosion of poetry readings has taken place.⁴ Earlier research suggests that despite some differences between the poetry cultures of the United States, the United Kingdom, and other English-speaking countries, the similarities resulting from shared literary markets, communication technologies, and cultural practices are far more prominent. For this reason we decided to begin by focusing on accessible local practice through interviews with poets and organizers of reading series. There are good reasons for starting with interviews. The self-understanding of protagonists in the *habitus* of poetry performance is crucial to making the right sense of all the other data.

Interviews enable the researcher to test hypotheses by asking questions that appear to lead to the core of the phenomenon and by listening to the poets measure the accuracy of these directed investigations. Interviews act as a sampling device, catching diverse information that can be taken at this stage to represent larger bodies of data yet to be found, and they give the poets an opportunity to begin to put on record their own tentative articulations of this history. Interviews also provide oral nuance that can be analyzed fruitfully if the exact contours of idiomatic expression are carefully respected in transcription. Written accounts necessarily accommodate themselves to existing discursive genres, and, in the absence of any discursive forum for reflecting on the aesthetics and cultural work of poetry performance, much of the writing that has been done on this theme tends to gloss over some of the determining features of current performance practice, as well as its internal tensions and uncertainties. Most of the poets we interviewed have never publicly reflected on these issues despite their importance in everyday praxis; giving them space to articulate provisional thoughts yielded significant correctives to the received wisdom about the poetry reading.

We began with two different constituencies: poets who have been active in an underfunded, often neglected avant-garde that has always valued performance even when publication remains their defining arena; and a highly successful network of younger poets, often associated with an Afro-Caribbean community, for whom stage performance is an explicit goal. This division is broadly apparent in the critical apparatus for contemporary British poetry that has made much of the allegedly persistent demarcations between the political, aesthetic, and social ambitions of these two groups of

⁴ All interviews were taped between 2002-03.

poets. As we encouraged these poets to reflect on the principles at work in their practice and that of others they had observed, the character of such divisions between communities began to seem more complex as a set of more commonly shared assumptions about the role of performance in poetry began to emerge.

Chief among these beliefs was the conviction that poetry remains an oral art. Publication of texts for individual, silent reading is important for all the poets we interviewed, but readers valued silent reading usually only when they were also familiar with the live performances and the intensity of exchange they make current in their poetry communities. All of those interviewed were confident that they knew how to identify a good performer, and much of the work of their careers had been dedicated, in different ways, to fostering performance, both that of others and their own. What also clearly emerged from these discussions was the sense that the performed poem produces its own kinds of reading practices and its own kinds of cultural and social contexts. There was a persistent mistrust of existing institutions—universities, arts funding organizations, arts centers, and so forth—which, it was feared, would interfere with these practices without understanding their parameters.

The discussion that follows is a prolegomenon to future historiography of poetry performance in English-speaking cultures of universal literacy, highly developed leisure cultures dependent on advanced communications technology (in contrast to cultures where orality remains a tangible link to earlier pre-industrial times). Our research points to some major lines of development in recent decades, suggests further areas for investigation, and should help confirm the centrality of oral performance for a wide range of poets. In the context of the study of oral literature, it may bear repeating that this poetry is rarely if ever studied with the assumption that its orality is integral to its achievement. Our paper sets out how this emerging history challenges the received assumptions about the development of contemporary poetry and points toward the need for an expanded theoretical vocabulary for understanding this phenomenon.

Learning to Perform

How do poets learn to perform? The usual unexamined assumption has been that poets write first and then gradually learn how to read their creations aloud afterwards through the trial and error of actual

performances.⁵ Our research suggests that imitation, not always based on live performance, also plays a crucial role. Several poets told us that they were influenced by the Beat writers a decade or more after their currency in the United States.⁶ Peter Finch⁷ explained that his own practice changed during the late 1960s as a result of listening to recordings of American poets reading to jazz that would have been recorded up to a decade earlier. He looked around for United Kingdom parallels to the work of the Beats, Jack Kerouac, or Kenneth Rexroth and found nothing, except perhaps the work of Jeremy Robson, and also read with great interest the accounts of poetry readings in the novels of Kerouac and John Clellon Holmes. Fired by these new images of poetry performance, he “formed a thing called Second Aeon Travelling Circus,” a guitar band who sometimes read poems and worked in a folk/rock context. Then he saw Adrian Henri’s Liverpool Scene perform: “He was engaging in a theatrical way with the audience” and this style of “entertainment” in a poetry reading was “a move away from the more academic approach.”

Allen Fisher⁸ also remembers the impact of the Beat poets:

I suppose I was a teenager, I can’t really remember the dates, but there was something called jazz and poetry. And people who were not that much older than me like Mike Horovitz, were very young then but he was sort of the young hippy on the block doing stuff with jazz groups . . . and Spike Milligan and Adrian Mitchell and people like that, other names I’ve now forgotten. And they did things with poetry and jazz. I was already a jazz fan. I was a blues fan and I went to folk concerts and things like that but I didn’t really go to poetry readings and I came in by that route. But

⁵ The poet Robert Duncan, in a 1958 letter to Denise Levertov, mentions the improvement in the reading practice of Robert Creeley in terms that imply such a learning process (Bertholf and Gelpi 2004:109): “Last night at Joe Dunn’s Bob gave a reading that now stands with Charles’s and yours to make a triumpherate [sic] of the beauty the discrete voice can give to the poem—I had feared he would mumble or obscure the voice of the poem (for all reports of his last reading here had been that it was poor indeed).”

⁶ The Beat writers, among whom Robert Creeley is sometimes included, were most active in the United States between about 1955 and 1965.

⁷ See Caddel and Quartermain 1999, and the British Electronic Poetry Centre website (www.soton.ac.uk/~bepc), for poems by and further information on Peter Finch.

⁸ See Rothenberg and Joris 1998, Caddel and Quartermain 1999, Tuma 2001, and the British Electronic Poetry Centre website (www.soton.ac.uk/~bepc), for poems by and further information on Allen Fisher.

one of the reasons I came in by that route was that I had been reading Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg and all sorts of other people. And I did know about readings. I did know that it was something they did and never heard them. There was a lag really in the history—I'd heard everything after they'd gone so to speak. So I'd got Kerouac's recordings but not when he was alive and so on.

Fisher underlined the point by adding that in some cases live performance was not helpful: "Ginsberg I did hear, but I didn't hear him at his best I don't think, or nothing like his best."

The poets also told stories of more direct contact with older contemporaries as well as the Americans. Maggie O'Sullivan⁹ told us that her first experience of attending a reading was one by the Liverpool performance poet, Adrian Henri:

He was the first living poet that I'd ever encountered. I thought it was tremendously exciting, his delivery and the energy of his work. And soon after that I started going to the Poetry Society. . . . It was Bob [Cobbing]'s workshops really that were the main kind of excitement for me there, because the poetry society also held other readings of [e]very kind of standardized poets. . . . I would have been nineteen, twenty, and thinking this is so dull. I decided this wasn't for me, the boring kind of confessional mode. And I was so excited and intoxicated by what Bob was doing. . . . He was running his workshop and so he performed during the workshop session. I knew immediately that this is the work that I wanted to be involved in and that interested me. And also I remember at that time there was a reading with Robert Duncan and Fielding Dawson and I was so inspired by Robert Duncan's work and his reading. I was so enamoured of the American poets at that time. I went into it very deeply.

For many of the poets we interviewed, performance styles were the result of the influence not only of a few charismatic individuals, like the Beat poets and their immediate successors and imitators, but also practitioners trained in a wider range of art forms. Bob Cobbing's workshop was significant not only for Maggie O'Sullivan in this respect. Peter Finch told us that after his early ventures, he went on to work with visual material and music and toured with Bob Cobbing, with whom he did a lot of work in the 1970s, making "free form poetry readings." From Cobbing he learned to record his own voice on a tape recorder, then slow it down and imitate the result with his voice until he did not need the recorder. Allen Fisher's early

⁹ See Rothenberg and Joris 1998, Caddel and Quartermain 1999, Tuma 2001, and the British Electronic Poetry Centre website (www.soton.ac.uk/~bepc), for poems by and further information on Maggie O'Sullivan.

connections to the Fluxus group of performance artists left him with an enduring interest in bringing elements of performance art, such as props, special gestures, or special reading styles, into his readings: “I’ve been a performance artist as well and done some performance work and sometimes I’ll have that with a reading as well. And so that has an interactive aspect because it’s using objects or furniture or space. The last one I gave here used easels, rope, charcoal, recordings, a whole series of things as well, and that was quite deliberately set up.”

Our younger poets were sometimes directly influenced by a later generation of political poets. As well as citing the influence of Beat poets such as Ginsberg and Dub poets such as Linton Kweisi Johnson, Patience Agbabi¹⁰ remembers being deeply impressed by the radical poet Adrian Mitchell, who developed a powerful polemical performance style. Joelle Taylor,¹¹ also influenced by Mitchell, names Joolz, John Cooper Clarke, and Attila the Stockbroker as early models for her writing. These younger poets were also more influenced by the currents of popular music and theater than by innovative developments in the visual or performing arts. Joelle Taylor’s career began with a pop band who “ran out of music,” and she was touring with the Pogues by the time she was 16 as a way of warming up the audience even before the warm-up band. By the late 1980s she was working an established network that included speaking to the anti-war demonstrators at Greenham Common and on the university circuit. Expectations of performance poets, a growing number at that time, were explicitly political. Patience Agbabi’s career began as a performer at poetry venues such as Apples and Snakes, Hard Edge Club, and Night Writers, where performance had to be lively, accessible, entertaining, and above all topical. The example and support of other Afro-Caribbean poets was also very important to her, and one writer in particular, the American poet Kwame Dawes, made a deep impression through a program held by the Afro-Star School. Dawes insisted that poetry should work both on the page and on stage, and he read and critiqued *Transformatrix*, her first published collection. Both Agbabi and Taylor were part of the performance group Atomic Lip, which flourished in a poetry scene that included a range of performance poets: jazz poets, sound poets, and dub poets.

¹⁰ See Sissay 1998, Hoyles and Hoyles 1999, McCarthy 1998, and Newland and Sesay 2000 for poems and further information on Patience Agbabi.

¹¹ See <http://www.poetrysociety.org.uk/education/slamtm03.htm> for further information on Joelle Taylor.

One reason the older poets looked abroad and to recordings was that the models of poetry performance they witnessed were often uninspiring. Cris Cheek¹² recalls his first poetry reading in similar terms as a pairing of opposites, John Betjeman (then poet laureate) and Ted Hughes, at his school:

I remember that the school set up both Betjeman and Hughes at a podium, and that they both stood behind the lectern (Betjeman in a black suit and black tie and some brogues, and Hughes in a leather jacket, much racier and rock and roll). Betjeman read from *Summoned by Bells*, which is fairly whimsical and anecdotal and colloquial . . . and he was very affable in his delivery. Hughes was sterner, obviously the shift was from a southern, middle-class, very media-friendly voice of Betjeman to something that I needed to tune into a little bit more because of the dialect. And Hughes was reading poems like “The Thought Fox” and some of *Crow*, and his language was obviously much more muscular, much more jammed together.

Peter Finch recalls attending his first readings around 1965-66, when he was newly interested in poetry and often baffled by what he heard: “I was bored stiff . . . it took me many years to really begin to find how you could get something out of a reading.” They were “dry formal affairs,” the poets were often poets with roots in the 1940s, and they read an “introverted verse.” Poets might ask for questions after their readings—which marked them off from other forms of performance: “after an entertainment you don’t ask for questions.” There were few young people attending. Even though there have been great changes since then, some of the old practices persist, he adds, saying that even today “the old style of reading continues” on occasion. Perhaps it was this early experience of fascinated puzzlement at poetry readings, as well as his later career as performer and arts organizer that has led him to reflect extensively on what happens during a text-based reading. It is not just the poet as performer who has to learn; listeners also have to acquire reception skills too.

When Finch looks back at those early poetry readings, he recalls that “the first problem was just understanding what they were on about.” He expresses it strongly: in a “traditional” reading you have “concentrated language blasted at you.” These blasts of language led him to reflect on the internal contradictions of the listener’s experience:

What you do in listening to poetry is you don’t listen to everything, some of it you take in and you use traditional comprehension of it; otherwise

¹² See Tuma 2001 and Caddel and Quartermain 1999 for further information on Cris Cheek.

you just listen to the sound the words make. Sometimes it's the sound, sometimes you grab a bit of the meaning, and as those two processes, which both come from the ear, mix together, you get different things out of a poem. I didn't realize that; I thought what you had to do, was understand every simple thing. And I sat there, listened to the poem, and thought, I don't understand anything. Couple that with the concentration problem. If you're not accustomed to sitting for several hours listening to somebody talk to you in that way, your mind is going to drift. And poetry readings tend to go on"

The paratext helps too: "It's very interesting if the poet says a few things about how this particular poem came into being or puts it in a context you might have missed."

The significance of the struggle for comprehension is something that Allen Fisher also considers very important. One of the most powerful readings Fisher can recall was given by the American poet, Charles Olson, visiting London in 1967:

There are many people around us now, most of the people around us now, who haven't heard Charles Olson, never will. But they could have heard recordings, and I would still recommend that they do hear those. But having said that, having seen him read live, I've never actually got over it, absolutely astonished how good it was and I never understood a blinking word he was talking about at the reading. I thought what is this *about*? So isn't that interesting? Now I could tell you what it's about.

Fisher too does not believe that the audience has to understand every word they hear: "there is another understanding possible, which is to do with what it feels like, what speed it's at." This extra-semantic dimension is not simply unrelated to the production of meaning, even if it may function more like augmentation by another performance medium rather than as added emphasis. Research has little to say about just what is happening to enable an audience to have a specific sense of "what it feels like" to hear a particular poet perform. This is something that matters to O'Sullivan very much:

I suppose it's quite an old-fashioned thing to say, but it's like the source, I want to be near the source. There is something about hearing a poet read their work that you could never replicate, this astonishing kind of bodying forth of the sounds, the language. It's bodying forth, it's the body, for me, to experience that presence, that physicality, that whole being. That language, bringer of language to experience them in the flesh.

She also talks about “this ability to totally inhabit language, so that the body is in the language” that differentiates a more engaging poetry reading from “those awful dull readings at the Poetry Society” where “it was like there was a detachment between the reader and the work, that they weren’t entering it at the vocal or psychic or physical level, it was just reading stuff.” Although this quality may in part be generated from somatic or environmental factors beyond control, O’Sullivan believes that the poet can give the members of the audience occasion for “choosing between different types of attention, different involvement, where to focus their attention.”

Allen Fisher illustrates what he means by this quality of performance by recalling a reading by a contemporary of his whom he had not heard before:

I’d read the books and liked them and I’d come to the reading along with everybody else and he opened his mouth and I couldn’t believe it, I just thought my god I can’t believe how good this is, and I was almost in tears by the end of the reading—it was fantastic . . . because it was eloquent, and eloquent means that not only was it able to say the words that were written down, that you could read, but it was able to make them clearer than you could have anticipated. Now that’s a bit odd really, because that means what would happen to someone who would never ever get this chance?

Fisher’s speculation points to one reason why poetry readings are now so pervasive—reading the poetry in a book almost requires prior experience of the poet’s oral style. This belief guides his own practice as a performer. The choice of poetry will depend to some extent on what sort of audience he is performing for, especially whether they are likely to be familiar with his work or not. Fisher states, “I suppose there are things I know will work better with an unfamiliar audience because they have worked before.” But sometimes he might want some degree of alienation because this unfamiliarity can work as a “necessary difficulty . . . so that it makes sure that people are alert to what’s going on.”

The Poet as Career Performer

All the poets we interviewed spoke passionately about the satisfactions of performance and its overall importance for their work.

Gilbert Adair,¹³ in a written interview, speaks of his first reading as a determining moment for him:

In 1979 I was living in Crouch End & aware that poetry readings were being put on in a local café on Finsbury Rise, *The Rainbow*. It wasn't a series, more occasional. I managed to get a reading there, my first. I thought of it as a collage poem—a huge sheet with varying-sized typewritten bits of paper glued all over it. It's long since disappeared. I stood with this thing occupying most of the table in front of me, overflowing fore, aft, and to the sides, and started reading. I'd taken lessons from a neighboring amateur singer on voice projection, I was following these breath-rules, but I didn't dare look up or I'd lose my place in this vast expanse of close-set typeset words. So I hadn't a clue as to how the small audience, none of whom I knew except, a little, the organizer, a poet called John Gibbens—they were all sitting in the compacted spaces around the café's close-packed tables—were reacting. The work itself took its main inspirations from [William] Burroughs and also, I guess, a kind of B.S. Johnson urge to *unpack* things. I seemed to be the only one making a noise in the place. . . . I paused appreciably for breath and heard a male voice say something like, "I think we should stop this for a while & discuss what we're hearing." And then voices I remember as mostly female, "No no we're enjoying this, let him keep going." So I did, and presently it was over. It was wonderful. I decided then and there: I must find ways to make this happen again. . . . I suppose there was a certain reassurance that even with a non-specialist audience . . . a reading didn't have to be immediately, discursively "understandable" to be enjoyed—at least by some. The piece hadn't been written to be read aloud in the first place. If it distinctly hadn't worked that way, however, would I have changed the way I was writing? I don't think so, but it never came to that.

The skills of performance require practice and planning, even if it is important to give the impression of spontaneity. Finch believes that poets have on the whole become more skilled at performance, even if this has been a slow process. He says ruefully, "poets have been massively undisciplined" in their work with audiences. Like most of the poets, he believes that "the nature of the poetry reading has changed. . . . Today people who don't read poetry books don't mind going to a poetry reading," and they treat it as a leisure activity, "a bit of fun," perhaps even "an intellectual injection . . . we've got writers who can provide that now." Performance is not appropriate for every poem he writes, however, and he is conscious that his poems themselves can demand quite different kinds of presentation. Some

¹³ See Clarke and Sheppard 1991 for further information on Gilbert Adair. An interview with Adair is available in issue one of *PORES: An Avant-Gardist Journal of Poetics Research*, online at www.pores.bbk.ac.uk/1.

poetry is written for an attentive audience to listen to quietly, whereas some is written in what he calls his “declamatory” style, with which he has built his reputation.

This sharp awareness that the poet’s texts may sometimes fall on either one side or the other of a divide between orality and silent reading is perhaps unusual, but other poets certainly do think of performance as more than a simple sonic transcription of a written text. O’Sullivan recalls that the poets she met at workshops when she was starting out “were only concerned with what was on the paper, and it was embedded in critical analysis, and there was no kind of interest in how you sounded this out, how you might use the space; it was English Lit. at its absolute worst.” One sign of a growing awareness of the vocal entailments of the written text is a shared sense that poetry readings have improved. Like Finch, Fisher believes that poetry readings have evolved over the past 30 years “from a series of habits that started in America in the ’60s and in Britain in the ’70s, of regular poetry readings and so on. . . . People have got better at it or thought more about it. I hope that’s true, I think it is. I still know some poets I read who are terrible readers.” Fisher plans his own performances carefully: “By planning, what I mean is I have a list of what I’m going to read at a reading, a little book, so if I’ve read at a place before I look at the previous list to make sure I’m not doing it again, or the same again, or if I wanted to do the same again, I’m doing it for a particular reason, in other words, it’s not some accident that it’s repeated.” He times the delivery of the work, and builds in flexibility in case the reading starts late. Poetry performance has, he feels, completely altered the landscape of poetry: “I also think that the poetry reading complex, the fact that there has been poetry readings and they continue has changed the way poetry’s now written and provided. It’s changed what it looks like on the page, it’s changed what is on the page, it’s changed what’s permissible, it’s changed the potential for the tones really, and the potential for non-words almost.”

Cris Cheek concurs with these assessments and also adds an aside that hints at one of the most important and least discussed aspects of this growth:

Poetry reading (or vast swathes of poetry readings) has got its act together in terms of a public presentation, it’s not so introverted, it has taken on some ideas more broadly shared with other performing arts. Some of that might tend towards the theatrical, some of it might tend towards the other side of performing arts, performance art, live art, those kinds of histories of performance. Broadly speaking the vast majority of poets who are operating in any kind of reading conference, coherent series presentation circuits, are much better at their delivery, they don’t tend to sit, they’re not so muffled, they’re more confident, they’re more assertive vocally,

they've learnt more about how to project their voices. And there have been moves made by many poets in many spheres of poetry to aid that projection. Some of which could be over-characterized as standing up rather than sitting down, although I think you can still do a perfectly good job sitting down, but I think standing up brought a little bit more rock and roll to poetry than sat-at-the table mode.

This allusion to rock music as a measure of the intensity of audience experience is a useful reminder of the cultural context in which poets have to perform.

The importance of foregrounding these changes in performance values in such explicitly pedagogical settings was agreed upon by Agbabi and Taylor, who have both taught extensively in schools and, in the case of Agbabi, in higher education. Taylor has integrated performance poetry into the curricula of many London schools as a way of intertwining developing literacies and writing. She suggests that slam poetry, for example, is “poetry for people who don't like poetry” and debunks the “myth of the poetry reading” by demonstrating it to be something not “silent and static” but “alive, organic, and interactive.” Her negative comments on the more conventional poetry reading echo Finch's description of the continuation of the older style of poetry reading. Agbabi similarly considers the performed poem a vital way of making the reading of poetry more accessible and can even train audiences who lack skills needed to read poetry on the page by helping make prosody tangible to them in the auditory enactment of lineation and scansion.

Although Agbabi resists the “page-stage” division (this was the subject of her master's thesis at the University of Sussex), she believes that a good reading should come from the body of the reader. In her teaching, for example, she encourages students to memorize poems in order to allow them to be spoken from the body rather than read as a script. This does not mean that she prepares each detail of the anticipated performance: the poem is not rehearsed, she insists, just learned. Echoing Peter Finch's longer perspective, she too believes that stagecraft has become increasingly important to a wide range of poets. Although he expresses it with less emphasis than Agbabi, Fisher also thinks that the poet's body plays a key part in the performance: “I've learned that the energy from a reading is better for the kind of work that I make if I'm standing up. Because some of the nervous energy comes through the feet or rather comes back out of the body into the ground, so it works in a positive way usually.” Planning provides a framework rather than a set agenda for every word and action. Improvisation can be an important element of some readings. Fisher explains, “If I improvised it wouldn't be necessarily always as radical as changing the words. It would sometimes be

the speed and lack of speed, or it would be intonations. But sometimes what I do is pick pieces that are difficult, and it sounds perverse when I say it, but they trip me up, I trip myself up in trying to read them. And out of the mistakes that occur from the trip-up I improvise. Rather than correct the trip-up I expand upon it, and develop it into ‘what does that now mean?’” Such extemporizing usually only lasts for a line or two at most. It is closely linked to a poetic method of rewriting earlier texts according to various constructivist strategies, and thereby creating new poems; occasionally he actually performs such a construction process live.

A career as a performer carries with it potential risks incurred by the relatively transient practices of performances in a culture where documentation is so highly valued, and techniques for recording poetry performance remain undeveloped. Despite her evident success as a performance poet, Patience Agbabi was explicitly wary of the consequences of not taking publication seriously, and believes that the longevity of a poet’s career depends on publishing books. The older poets we interviewed recalled the emergence of entertainment as a legitimate aspect of the poetry performance as something of a liberation from earlier modes of high seriousness. Two decades later, in the 1990s, entertainment has come to dominate events as far as many poets and organizers were concerned, and so it becomes necessary to stress other aspects of poetry performance. As Agbabi says, the very designation “performance poet” has become a problem for some writers who feel it to be a denigrating term used by the Establishment, a code for working class or ethnic poetry that does not need to be taken seriously. Although she has taken the performance of poetry to a much further degree of professionalization than most poets, Agbabi retains a strong loyalty to writing and to certain traditional forms of the poem. Her interview reveals that the poetry scene still makes strong distinctions between spontaneity and rehearsed actions when categorizing poetry performances, and that these judgments can screen cultural divisions. However good the performer, if he or she is not also a poet publishing written texts in readily available book form, then his or her status as a poet is uncertain. She resists, however, the idea that poetry is a purely verbal or cognitive art, saying repeatedly that poetry is a bodily art, and requires performance. This belief, and the conviction that performance is also important as an informal pedagogy for potential readers of poetry who lack the specialist training needed to read a poem, suggests that she conceives of a written text as a reliable score for performance, and that this performativity is implicit in the written text.

Allen Fisher is a poet with a very different aesthetic, and yet he too emphasizes the interdependence of writing and performance: “My poems are never complete until I’ve read them to somebody. If there’s any rewriting it takes place after the first reading. . . . Public might only be two people, but it would need to be public. Because it’s that business of the other person hearing and their response that you somehow understand, that you then make a decision about.” Taylor, who organizes London’s Respect Festival Poetry Slams, considers this poetry to be written “on air” and not appropriate for translation onto paper. Her attempt to anthologize the poems by finalists from a previous year’s Respect Slam failed, and this shortfall led her to decide to record the finalists from 2003 onto a CD at the Exchange studio in Camden. The experience of Johnson and Taylor in organizing large poetry events was not unique among the poets we interviewed. Finch has developed his position as the Director of the Welsh literary arts council, Academi Gymreig in Cardiff, so that he can directly fund many poetry reading series, and he regards this activity as an important task for his organization. Nevertheless, most poets are unlikely to be in a situation where they can either organize or fund readings, and thus have to rely on the extensive formal and informal networks of people who make poetry performances possible. How do these organizers of poetry reading series shape this history of poetry performance? How do they understand their own role and what do they value in the poets they invite? We asked poets who have had many years’ experience in organizing such events to give us as full an account as they could of the issues that they encountered.

Poetry Reading Series

Just as a publisher will create a poetry list, so too do organizations. These range from institutions that treat British poets as representatives of British culture as the British Council does, by sponsoring events around the world at which about 20 or more British poets will perform, to those that present poets in reading series that meet on a regular basis (typically on the same day every few weeks) and nurture a stable core audience over time. The history of one important avant-garde reading series will give some idea of what is involved.

The long-running series, Sub-Voicive Poetry (SVP), was founded by Gilbert Adair in 1979. Adair describes the first couple of years of the series as a “community service” model that “included floor readings at the end” and allowed for public discussion. There were lots of local readers, and the events were generally held in the upstairs rooms of central London pubs.

The atmosphere was typically informal—most of the audience (largely consisting of other poets, small press publishers, and their friends) would have a drink and there would be a continual external noise from the street and from the traffic to the bar downstairs. Adair describes “a kind of educative thrust, trying to bring people in contact who weren’t familiar with each other’s work,” and he highlights a gradual movement in the readings from the “community service phase” towards a more performer-centered event. In terms of delivery, poets learned not to offer much in the way of introductions—this was not to be a confessional mode of performance. Poets were tacitly discouraged from giving their readings emotionally expressive coloring and from using the pieties of cadence widely used by readers of the autobiographical personal lyric; a percussive delivery was commonly favored. Readings might, however, be performative, and some poets would at times go beyond semantically coded sounds altogether in pursuit of voiced non-phonemic sounds. Critical judgment and criticism were assumed to take place informally behind the scenes. Audiences were relatively stable for extended periods of time, and largely consisted of other poets, small press publishers, and their friends. The picture that emerges is of a reading series that itself has to learn how to perform, and in doing so moves away from what Adair calls the “community service” model that can include public discussion to a more performer-centered event.

In the early 1990s, when Adair left England for a job in Singapore, Lawrence Upton¹⁴ took over the running of the series. Both organizers were asked about the selection of poets. Were there specific criteria of some kind: performance skills, relevant interests, shared poetics? Adair’s criteria were based on the requirement that

either I or someone I trusted thought this was a serious poet with something to say to people familiar with, at least, twentieth-century avant-garde traditions, or open to responding to someone who was coming out of these. “Linguistically innovative” as I coined somewhere in the late eighties, and have recurrently been tempted to think through. But it being a social thing, there were in practice other criteria too—mainly, that any member of Bob’s [Bob Cobbing’s] workshop who wanted could get a reading at Sub-Voicive.

What emerges in this interview typifies the responses we received from others. These criteria are in practice largely tacit ones, and probably have more to do with performance abilities than the organizers are necessarily willing to admit.

¹⁴ See www.soton.ac.uk/~bepc for further information on Lawrence Upton.

Upton's discussion of his selection pointed to his desire to invite poets who have not been heard for a while, though he also has a small number that he is willing to invite at least once every season. He places a high value on the quality of the vocal reading itself, the projection of the voice, and the ability to engage the audience, and he encourages where appropriate improvisation and intermedia. Failure is a risk he says he is willing to run, and he is eager to try out poets he has not heard before. Although he remains keen to do so, there have clearly been underlying principles of exclusion and inclusion, as a look at the records of the reading series during his term as organizer makes plain. In practice there is considerable discussion in advance with friends and regular attenders, and a series of suggestions emerge. Why not invite leading mainstream poets whose work may be of interest to the audience? Upton feels that such poets could easily find reading venues in London and elsewhere. SVP should, he feels, concentrate its commitment on poets whose work he and the core audience admire and who are not likely to have many opportunities to perform elsewhere.

We gained a strong impression that the reading series has been an important site of exchange for poets, publishers, and readers. Here one could do business around poetry, a business conducted among poets and otherwise disembedded from its urban location. Nicholas Johnson's¹⁵ experience of organizing a reading series and then a series of poetry festivals outside the metropolitan nexus was somewhat different. He feels that the location of the Six Towns festival in the Potteries region¹⁶ is important for breaking with the strong metropolitan influence on contemporary poetry. For him it was necessary to draw into the enterprise as much of the local community active in supporting the arts as possible. Seed funding was provided by the Arts Council, but local newspapers and radio stations provided additional financial support. Services were provided free by some local businesses, and local people provided accommodation for some of the dozen or so poets.

Unlike SVP, which could largely draw on existing London audiences, Johnson had to create an audience in this area. He was particularly interested in attracting an audience under thirty who had little experience of an oral tradition of poetics, and in bringing in those with connections to an oral traditions that had been marginalized ("folksy" or Celtic); he was also interested in paying attention to voicing, to dialect, to accent, to regional

¹⁵ See Johnson 2000 for further information on Nicholas Johnson. He is the publisher of Etruscan Books.

¹⁶ So-called after the six towns, including Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme that comprise the Potteries, the industrial area where china and pottery manufacturers congregated for several hundred years.

identities, and to an expanding notion of Britishness. Each year a surprisingly high proportion of the poets were Scottish poets, for example. The aim was to offer a texture of voices and a range of contrasting performances. Poets were selected above all on the basis of their likely skills in performance. The festival quickly created a core of performers who regularly returned each year. Small pamphlets of work, produced cheaply each year to go with the festival, led to the emergence of a small press, Etruscan Books, that eventually issued a series of three-poet anthologies, and then a major anthology, *Foil*, of younger contemporary poets.

Our third example of a poetry series is another metropolitan one, but a world away from the intellectuals of SVP. London's Respect Slam, organized by Joelle Taylor, attempts as Johnson did to use the performance of poetry to create a new body of poetry readers and listeners. The Slam's constituency is drawn from the whole of the London area, from young people between the ages of 12 and 18, and groups are brought along from local schools, youth groups, and young offenders' institutions. The 2003 event was dedicated to the memory of Stephen Lawrence, whose mother, Doreen Lawrence, was a patron. Respect themes focus on anti-racism but also include respect in schools, bullying, and child abuse. Taylor explains that one of the key elements is the training of participants, making highly visible what we have seen as an element of the other reading series that was important yet not foregrounded. Taylor, working with the Poetry Society, employs contemporary performance poets as poetry consultants to show contestants how to "work a slam audience." The judges of Slam competitions are chosen randomly through a lottery (although the Respect Slam also includes a chosen panel of well-known poets), and generally this dynamic means that the competition cannot be a "fair" assessment of the quality of the writing, but instead is dependent on the dynamic between poets and their audience and judges. This arrangement renders the slam deeply interactive: poets can improve their marks through explicit interaction with audience by the use of jokes, dancing, even pleading. Each performer has just three minutes, and the result is that it is the performance, rather than the quality of the writing, that is the key to success. This success can mean a lot in terms of access to the media. Anthony Anaxagorou, a winner from poetry slam 2002, now presents Youth Nation, a twelve-part series for the BBC.

Conclusion

There remain many uncertainties about this situation. What are the key determinants of the rise of performance and what are simply contingencies that help give it a particular cast? Is the hegemony of performance the result of the transformation of leisure by the new communications technologies or perhaps the result of a growing appetite for the arts to work in more than one medium at a time? Are we seeing the making of a new or renewed oral tradition with the staying power of earlier traditions, or is this more of a transient fashion in poetry that will ebb away and be replaced by non-oral practices? Unlikely as that latter prospect seems, there is little in the current state of our knowledge of this relatively new phenomenon to assure us that performance is going to continue to be integral to the circulation of poetry. Innovations in the distribution of music as compressed and easily downloaded digital files for portable players may have a marked impact on the provision of recorded poetry if some current ventures to create web archives of MP3 poetry recordings are successful. Would that diminish the emotional and intellectual investments in poetry performance? Perhaps the interactivity of the slam is a pointer to the future. Speculating about the future is a reminder that our current knowledge of the ethnography of poetry performance is still underdeveloped and limits our understanding of the ways in which poetic meaning is projected through the synergy of orality and writing.

One overriding conclusion arises from our work: the conditions of contemporary life preclude the creation of a supportive audience for poetry solely on the basis of silent reading. Keen readers of poetry find themselves wanting to hear the poem's sound articulated by its author, and the media and recording industries have not hitherto been able to satisfy this need. Live performance by the author is all that will suffice. And then a feedback process occurs. As listeners try to sort out the "blasts of language," the complex and possibly unsayable word-strings that comprise much of the poetry written directly for the page, they find themselves becoming cognitively active in new ways. This is not ordinary linguistic communication. Models of communication, whether communication is considered as the decoding of a message or as the amplification of inferential cues (as in Relevance Theory), do not adequately describe what we might call the "oralization" of a text. Poetic writing does not usually originate as the transcription of a real (or imagined) statement; poetic writing is a verbal pattern in a two-dimensional space that depends on the back-and-forth scanning of visual recognition that then elicits an extended hermeneutic activity.

Off the page and carried by a voice that does not allow such intensive cognitive attention to meaning, the performed poem impacts listeners differently. They begin to notice sound patterns, tempo, the grain of the voice, its embodiment, its acoustic properties, as well as the complex iconicity of poetic language. Over time this prompts poets deliberately to incorporate such features more and more into texts for performance. Meanwhile, audience skills begin to sharpen and change as people participate in a well-focused public reading experience over time. Performance does not replace publication; instead it becomes a complement to publication, and the two modalities generate an interdependence that reaches a new level of integration, so that the result is more than the sum of its parts. Even when poets use easily understood language, perhaps by imitating the idioms of an informal or confessional address to the audience, the cognitive and perceptual excess over and beyond semantic interpretation becomes more and more pronounced. Poets do of course sometimes work with language that can be read aloud as if it were a form of natural speech, but what we observed in our interviews was a widespread recognition that the performed poem was usually something else, especially in its entirety. Speech might be part of its repertoire, but the overall effect was more akin to a group of musicians who might employ a singer. These poems employed a range of effects, with varying degrees of success, that would include speech-based elements.

Performance has increasingly become a condition within which poets have to operate when even the largest organizations, such as the British Council, have come to treat it as a norm. Our research suggests that it would be a mistake to treat this orality as simply a continuance of long-established traditions. What we are witnessing in this history of recent poetry performance are sometimes radical innovations, innovations for which there is either no precedent or, in cases where there may be some few precursors, little shared consciousness of this history and almost no critical history. We also see that this is a phenomenon with no single cause. Many factors—economic, technological, social, aesthetic, and cultural—all contributed to its emergence and changing features. Our poet interviewees experienced these developments as happening beyond their direct control. None of them feel they have invented an oral poetics themselves, and yet they also see it as capable of some redirection, depending on their relation to the cultural institutions. Dissonances as well as equivalences that occur in the poetry's cultural work of marking transitions between speech and writing are everywhere evident. These performative blasts of language can be described as blasts because they tend to resist assimilation as solely communicative

meaning because of the storms, explosions, excessive noise, and other discomfoting effects that are intrinsic to their success. Research into this history is sure to develop and will carry with it a burden: its narratives will become part of the poetics that informs future practice. Further studies will therefore need to find ways of acknowledging the blast without either ignoring its resistance to assimilation or merely domesticating it. Listening to as many as possible of those who have helped make this history will be a good start.¹⁷

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¹⁷ This research was supported by a grant from the AHRB.

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Performance and Text in the Italian Carolingian Tradition

[*eCompanion at www.oraltradition.org¹]

Antonio Scuderi

One of the most fascinating aspects of the chivalric-epic tradition of Italy is the historical dialectic between its manifestations as oral performance and written text. Based primarily on Carolingian lore, the oral and written traditions influenced each other in a symbiotic dialogue across the centuries. John Miles Foley, one of the leading experts on world epic traditions, discusses the interaction of oral and written processes in his book, *The Singer of Tales in Performance*: “The old model of the Great Divide between orality and literacy has given way in most quarters, pointing toward the accompanying demise of the absolutist dichotomy of performance versus document. . . . Consequently, text can no longer be separated out as something different by species from the oral tradition it records or draws upon; the question becomes not whether but how performance and document speak to one another” (1995:79). The dialectic interaction of oral and written manifestations of Carolingian lore in Italy will be the primary focus of this study. Special attention will be given to 1) the *cantari*, medieval poems that hail back to the beginnings of the chivalric-epic in Italian literature; and 2) oral performances of epic lore in the Sicilian *cunto*, which up until the early part of the twentieth century were still part of a living tradition.

The epic tradition in Italy, both oral and written, is primarily based on the French *chansons de geste*, in particular the *Chanson de Roland*. Foley asserts that the *chansons de geste* were originally *oral-derived* texts: “Behind these manuscript-prisoned epics stands a tradition of oral composition and transmission by singers of tales, called *jongleurs*, although clerical and scribal activity intervened in various ways between oral performance and written record” (2002:177). With specific reference to the

¹ To listen to an audio example of the Sicilian *cunto*, performed by Peppino Celano, visit the eCompanion to this article at www.oraltradition.org.

Oxford manuscript of the *Chanson de Roland*, he explains that it “derives in some fashion from oral tradition and retains structures and textures typical of oral poetry We know it only as a manuscript dating from about 1100, but it’s without doubt an oral poem” (2002:177-78). Foley, with his extensive scholarship and astute methodology on the subject, lends an authoritative and contemporary voice to the issue. But the belief that the *chansons* were derived from oral performance is certainly not new.²

The *Cantari*

It is believed that stories and songs from France came into Italy in the twelfth century with merchants traveling to northern and central Italy for commerce and pilgrims on their way to Rome, but especially via minstrels and *jongleurs*, some of whom may have accompanied the other travelers.³ These stories and songs would include *chansons de geste*, which were war songs such as the *Chanson de Roland*; Arthurian romances; and lyric poetry. Important evidence of the popularity of the French chivalric tradition in Italy during this time is provided by one of the most important historical figures, Saint Francis of Assisi (1182-1226), the son of an Italian merchant. Francis was enamored of the chivalric tradition and sang troubadour songs of chivalric deeds in Provençal. His sermons to popular audiences were often in a chivalric register, using the knight’s code of honor as a metaphor for leading the Christian life (Cardini 1989; Frugoni 1995).

The French tales began to be written down in Italy, and the form that is of particular interest to this study, the *cantare* (pl. *-i*, from the Italian “to sing”), consists of verses in octaves. *Cantare* refers both to the poem as well as to its internal divisions. The earliest extant manuscripts date from the 1340s. Most likely it was literate *cantarini* (*cantari* performers) who wrote down the first *cantari*, thus most of the standard structural features, discussed below, are performance-derived. French tales, mostly Carolingian

² The bibliography on the subject is extensive. To mention a few examples, see Rychner 1955 and Goldin 1978:28-46. All translations are by the author unless otherwise indicated.

³ The informational background on the *cantari* is from Brand and Pertile (1996:167-68), Grendler (1988:59-71), and Kleinhenz (2004:180-81, 183-84). There is iconographic evidence (bas-reliefs in Modena) as well as records of people with Arthurian names that suggest the presence of chivalric romances in Italy as early as the twelfth century (Grendler 1988:61). For iconographic evidence, see Lejeune and Stiennon 1971.

and to some extent Arthurian, were the primary sources of the early *cantari*. Later, in the fifteenth century, we find *cantari* with other subjects, such as classical stories (the Trojan war, for example) and the Bible.

The *cantari* are an important part of the process of the Italianization of French literature and the beginning of an Italian chivalric continuum that would reach literary heights with the great Renaissance epics. For example, the *Entrée d'Espagne* (Entry into Spain), from the first half of the fourteenth century, written in a Franco-Italian koiné,⁴ turns Roland (“Orlando” in Italian) into a knight errant in an Arthurian vein (Brand and Pertile 1996:167-68, Cromeey 1978:295). This and other innovations to Orlando “add new dimensions to the character on his journey to the Italian peninsula, preparing him for the pen of Boiardo and Ariosto” (Cromeey 1978:295). The great Renaissance epic poems of Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso specifically continue the *cantare* tradition, adopting the octave meter and other narrative devices discussed below.⁵

The Sicilian *Cunto*

Nowhere else in Italy (or in Europe for that matter) have the Carolingian stories been so diffused and so integrated into the culture and popular psyche than in Sicily.⁶ Fortunately we have extensive and intelligent accounts that were made while the traditions were very much a part of Sicilian life. In 1884 Giuseppe Pitrè, one of the greatest folklorists of the nineteenth century, published a lengthy article entitled “*Le tradizioni cavalleresche popolari in Sicilia*” (Popular Chivalric Traditions in Sicily) in six parts: (1) The Marionette Theater; (2) The Epic Storyteller; (3) Popular Poetry; (4) Various Traditions; (5) Ballad Singers in Italy; and (6) The

⁴ A discussion of Franco-Italian (referred to by Italian scholars as *franco-veneto*) will be published in Morgan forthcoming.

⁵ Part of what makes the written tradition a continuum is the fact that later texts continue the stories of earlier ones: “Thus *L’Entrée d’Espagne* finds its sequel in *La Prise de Pampelune* [another Franco-Italian *chanson de geste*], Luca and Luigi Pulci’s *Il Ciriffo Calvaneo* in Bernardo Giambullari’s continuation, and the *Orlando Innamorato* in the *Orlando Furioso*” (Allaire 1997:6).

⁶ See Di Palma (1991:59-62), where the author discusses, among other examples, popular sayings and children’s games.

Nature of the Chivalric Tradition in Sicily and Conclusion.⁷ From written accounts, such as Pitre's, and from personal accounts of those who had witnessed performances when the tradition was still very much alive,⁸ we may briefly sketch certain key aspects of epic performance in Sicily.

Although this study will primarily focus on the Sicilian epic storytelling tradition, an occasional reference to the puppet theater *l'opera dei pupi* (also *l'opira* or *l'opra 'i pupi*) must be made as well. The Sicilian *pupi* are a form of marionette, manipulated from above with two metal rods and one string. The Catanese versions, much larger than their Palermitan counterparts, stand over four feet high and can weigh close to 100 pounds. Traditionally built by the puppeteers themselves, they are carved of wood and dressed in satin and velvet. In particular, their ornamented armor represents a high form of folk art. They are greatly admired by puppeteers and folklorists the world over. Along with the storytelling performances, the puppet theater reenacted the tales of the Carolingian cycle, and the two traditions were closely linked. In fact, we know of performers who were both puppeteers and storytellers (Di Palma 1991:72-73). Together the two traditions were for many years the primary forms of popular entertainment.⁹

In Sicilian the art of epic storytelling is known as *cuntu* (with the same Latin origin as the Italian *racconto*). The *cuntu*, Italianized by folklorists to *cunto*, was performed by a *cuntista* or *cuntastorie*.¹⁰ Pitre discusses other modes of one-man epic performances, such as singing and recitation in verse or in alternating sung verse and spoken prose. But throughout the nineteenth century the *cunto* was the most popular form.

⁷ Di Palma discusses the reasons why Pitre is so important as an early folklorist, including his ability as an acute observer who reports intelligently, unhindered by dogmatic adherence to any of the theoretical schools of the time (1991:12-28).

⁸ My father, Luciano Scuderi, who was born in 1922, remembers the epic storytellers of the Marina section of Catania from his youth. Occasionally, traveling companies of puppeteers would come to his village of Belpasso. As an example of how diffused the stories were: when I was a child he could improvise adventures of the Paladins as bedtime stories.

⁹ For the Sicilian *pupi* tradition see Buonanno 1990 and Cavallo 2001.

¹⁰ Among folklorists and performers of this tradition, there is a distinction between the Sicilianate word *cuntastorie*, a performer who recounts his tales in narrative prose, and the Italian *cantastorie*, a ballad-singer who actually sings his stories, usually in octaves. In modern Italian, *cantastorie* is the generic term for "ballad-singer" or "epic storyteller." Pitre uses the Italianized *contastorie* for *cuntastorie*.

Surrounded by an audience of men and boys, elevated on a small wooden platform, and with only a cane or wooden sword as a prop,¹¹ the storyteller would recount the epic tales. These were based primarily on medieval prose compilations, such as *I Reali di Francia* and *Guerrino il Meschino* by Andrea da Barberino (c. 1372-1432), and the seventeenth-century novel *Il Calloandro fedele* by Giovanni Ambrogio Marini (c. 1594-1662) (Pitrè 1884:348), though elements of other literary epics were present as well. Like the performances of the puppet theater, some *cuntastorie* could perform each day, until the cycle of tales would end with the ambush at Rencesvals.¹² There the heroes of Charlemagne's court, *i paladini*, meet their doom at the hands of the Moslem infidels, aided by the treacherous Gano di Magonza. (In the Sicilian tradition, Gano often becomes Cani, "dog.") In one of the brief autobiographical sketches of a *cuntastorie*, Pitrè mentions one fellow named Salvatore Ferreri who, although illiterate, was able to perform each day for 18 months (1884:361).

The *cuntastorie*'s presentation was a captivating and, at times, hypnotic theatrical performance. Like many traditions around the world, the performer would alternately narrate the tale and enact the parts of the various characters,¹³ and from Pitrè's description we note that gestures and mimes were essential to the performance as well (1884:346-47):¹⁴

Head, arms, legs, everything must take part in the telling: mime is an essential part of the narrator's work. Standing on a sort of platform . . . he marshals his characters, presents them, has them speak. He repeats their discourses word for word, declaims their harangues, draws the soldiers up

¹¹ An account of a nineteenth-century *cuntastorie* describes how the cane could be a versatile prop, representing at times wizard's wand or a giant's club (Di Palma 1991:44). In another account we note a twentieth-century performer who would use a cane for most of the performance and switch to a sword for the combat scenes (Di Palma 1991:74).

¹² Pitrè explains that in the puppet theaters the price for a normal performance, "a few cents," could be raised to "30 cents or 40 for a seat" on the night of the performance of the "death of the Paladins" (1884:317-18).

¹³ Cf., for example, Ruth Finnegan's description of African narrative traditions (1970:501-02). Nobel laureate Dario Fo uses these techniques in his *giullarata*, his one-man show, named for the medieval *giullari* (It. *jongleurs*). For more on Fo's *giullarata* see Scuderi 2000a, 2000b, and 2004.

¹⁴ In an account of *cuntastorie* Totò Palermo, who was active in the early twentieth century, we note the importance of facial expressions (Di Palma 1991:74).

for battle, he has them fight, agitating his hands violently and stomping his feet as if it were a real fight. The excitement grows: the orator's eyes widen, his nostrils dilate with his increased breathing, which, evermore agitated, forms the words. He stomps his feet on the platform, which, due to its empty bottom, resonates. . . . And the narration, always in monotone, returns to calm, as if no one died, as if two hundred or four hundred listeners had not been held in suspense, hearts palpitating, cruelly uncertain of the outcome. . . . This is true art, which the adult population wants and embraces.

All the important sources on the *cunto* describe the *cuntastorie*'s style of recitation as "declaiming." Fortunately, since the tradition managed to survive, even after it had lost its position as the primary mode of entertainment to variety theater and cinema, we have recordings of *cunto* performances. Two *cuntastorie* from the Palermo region, Roberto Genevose and Peppino Celano, were both recorded, Genevose in 1954 (by Alan Lomax) and Celano in 1962 (see bibliography).¹⁵ The bold and heroic tone of both performers' recitations is indeed best described by "declaiming." The climax of a *cunto* performance would be the battles or duels. Although each *cuntastorie* reveals a very distinct style, they both deliver these episodes in a syncopated, rhythmic manner, accentuated by cutting the air with the sword or stomping on the platform.¹⁶

Below we will take a closer look at how and when the *cunto* tradition may have come to the island from the peninsula. Although we cannot trace the origin of the *cunto* with absolute certainty—and it may very well represent a confluence of various traditions—it ties into the greater epic storytelling tradition, sharing many qualities and techniques (some of which will be noted below): the small platform-stage (peculiar to the Italian tradition);¹⁷ the use of *formulas* (as defined by Parry and Lord), which allows for the elasticity of the narrative (the ability to expand or contract scenes at the moment of performance); epithets and standard themes and motifs, such as the preparation for battle and description of armor and weapons; and narrative techniques such as the invocation and the abrupt interruption.

¹⁵ Both Genevose and Celano learned the art when the tradition was in decline, and neither had a formal apprenticeship. Nevertheless, Di Palma concludes that their performances retain many genuine elements of the *cunto* (1991:85-96, 99-116). Celano was recorded and filmed on other occasions besides the one cited in this study.

¹⁶ The syncopated rhythm of each performer is markedly different. Unfortunately, space does not permit detailed descriptions with transcriptions.

¹⁷ The use of a "modest bench" by epic performers of the peninsula seems to have begun during the 1500s (Balduino 1984:81-82, cited in Cabani 1989:50).

Cunto-Cantari

“If as audience or readers we are prepared to decode the signals that survive intersemiotic translation to the medium of texts, and whose recognition will require some knowledge of the enabling referent of tradition, then performance can still be keyed by these features” (Foley 1995:64). In *Le Forme del cantare epico-cavalleresco*, Maria Cabani traces techniques of the medieval epic ballad-singers and storytellers that were originally adapted in the *cantari*: “The narrative structure of the *cantare* is based on a fundamental pretense: an oral narrator recounting an ancient story to an audience of listeners” (1989:151). She discusses the process by which the performance of the medieval ballad-singer (*cantarino*) is transferred by the author to the written page. With reference to the process of performance transferred to text, Foley explains that “this scenario assumes ... an audience or readership sufficiently acquainted with the signals embedded in the register to be able to summon the special, institutionalized meanings that are those signals’ reason for being. . . . The scenario assumes an audience who can rhetorically simulate the performance arena—in the absence of the actual enabling event of performance itself—on the basis of textualized cues that engage the enabling referent of tradition” (1995:65). Considering the popularity of chivalric-epic lore as street performance at the time, we can assume the *cantari* could very well convey performance to the medieval reader.¹⁸

Cabani demonstrates how the earlier *cantari* adhered more closely to this device, while later the presence of a reader begins to be acknowledged. This process is marked by a shift from an exclusive address of *voi* (plural “you”) directed to an audience, to a more frequent use of *tu* (singular “you”), that is, the reader (1989:50-56). By the time of the Renaissance epics of Boiardo, Ariosto, and Tasso, suggesting that the author is in some way a performer had become a standard rhetorical trope of the genre. The audience is imagined to be courtiers, and the reader and the act of writing are frequently acknowledged.¹⁹ In the medieval *cantari*, on the other hand, the writer is first and foremost assuming the role of oral performer. The focal

¹⁸ Andrea da Barberino (mentioned above) wrote chivalric epics in prose and was also an established performer, reciting chivalric lore, including his own works, in the *piazzetta* of San Martino al Vescovo in Florence (Allaire 1997:6).

¹⁹ Pulci in his *Morgante*, which he wrote in a more grotesque register (in the Bakhtinian sense) than the others mentioned, presents a rustic performer.

point is the public piazza, and the idea that the author is a popular *cantarino* is essential to the text. As would be expected in a piazza, the audience is not comprised exclusively of nobles (Cabani 1989:63):

*Or ascoltate, villani e cortesi,
mezani e vecchi, grandi e piccolini* (Sp XIII 2)²⁰

Listen now, peasants and nobles,
middle-aged and old, large and small.

The writers of the *cantari* employ a series of “formulas and topoi that allude directly to a function of the text that we can define as ‘theatrical’ (invitation to gather around the singer, call for silence and for attention, allusion to a precise situation [context] in which the narration unfolds)” (Cabani 1989:14). Let us begin our comparison with a basic example of how the *cunto* represents a continuation of the epic tradition that originally inspired the *cantari*. The invocation is an aspect of oral performance that was adapted to the literary tradition as well. From Homer invoking the muses onward, it becomes standard for epic poetry of all genres, including Dante’s *Divine Comedy* and Spenser’s *Faerie Queene*, to cite two celebrated examples. As Cabani (1989:23) observes, “every *cantare* [chapter within the greater *cantare*] opens with one or more octaves of invocation to God or to the Virgin in which the narrator asks for grace for the work he is about to undertake,” and in fact Pitre reports that the *cuntastorie* began his performance “with the sign of the cross, during which the religious auditors remove their hats” (1884:347). We may note that although the *cunto* was greatly influenced by the written tradition (discussed below), what Pitre observed was not the recitation of a literary invocation but an actual prayer.

One of the most striking techniques borrowed by the literary tradition is the abrupt interruption by which the storyteller keeps his audience in suspense and assures their return. Pitre relates a passage by Vincenzo Linares, “diligent observer of Sicilian life” (1884:352), in which he describes the narrative style of a particular *cuntastorie*, Maestro Pasquale. Here, Linares notes the abrupt stoppage of action: “And when the listeners are anxious to hear the end, it’s over. Thus he moves the listeners emotionally and holds them in suspense in order to assure that they will

²⁰ Each excerpt of the *Cantari* from Cabani will be followed by her own abbreviation system: As = *Cantari d’Aspramonte*; Ri = *I Cantari di Rinaldo da Monte Albano*; Sp = *La Spagna*. For original sources, refer to the text (Cabani 1989:5-8). I will limit myself to one or two examples, whereas, due to the nature of her study, Cabani’s examples are extensive. I have taken the liberty of removing her emphases.

return the next day with the small fee of 2 cents (*un grano*) to be admitted to the show” (1884:353). Cabani offers parallel examples of sudden cessations in the *cantari* (Cabani 1989:153):

*Montò a cavallo e dice a' compagni:
 “A quella casa voglio cavalcare
 e recheronne qualche bandigioni
 con che voi vi possiate confortare.”
 Signori, andate che Idio vi perdoni (Sp XX 47)*

He mounted his horse and said to his companions
 “To that house I want to ride
 and ask for some sustenance
 with which you may reinvigorate yourselves.”
 Go now, sirs, and may God forgive you.

*Intanto fîr della rocca veduti
 que' tre cavagli e il buon destrier Baiardo.
 Cristo benigno sî a di noi riguardo (Ri X 40)*

Meanwhile from the tower were seen
 those three horses and the good war steed Baiardo.
 May Christ be gracious unto us.

Ariosto employs this technique extensively in *Orlando Furioso*. In what must be considered a parody of the trope, he brings it to heights of literary artistry, pretending to be concerned lest he should bore his reader/imaginary audience of courtiers and ladies. Here, as an example of his extraordinary wit and comic irony, he leaves Ruggiero fumbling to remove his armor in an attempt to rape Angelica (1974:245; translation 1983:106).²¹

*Frettoloso, or da questo or da quel canto
 confusamente l'arme si levava.
 Non gli parve altra volta mai star tanto;
 che s'un laccio sciogliea, dui n'annodava.
 Ma troppo è lungo ormai, Signor, il canto,
 e forse ch'anco l'ascoltar vi grava:
 sî ch'io differirò l'istoria mia
 in altro tempo che più grata sia. (X:115)*

With hasty fingers he fumbled confusedly at his armor, now this side, now the other. Never before had it seemed such a long business—for every thong unlaced, two seemed to become entangled. But this canto has gone on too

²¹ For humor in the Franco-Italian epic, see Morgan 2002.

long, my Lord, and perhaps you are growing a-weary with listening to it: I shall defer my story to another time when it may prove more welcome.

In *I Cantari di Fiorabracca e Ulivieri* (estimated to have been written sometime in the second half of the fifteenth century; Melli 1984:19), we note how the author anticipates the next *cantare* division as if it were the next day's performance (Melli 1984:112):

*Nell'altro canto ve dirrò la bactaglia;
Cristo ce guarda da pena et da travaglia* (II:40)

In the next canto I will tell you of the battle
Christ protect us from pain and travails

We also note how he picks up the story after the invocation (*ibid.*:121, 159):

Or ritorniamo all nostra novella, (IV:1)

Now let us return to our tale,

*Al nome di Colui che tutto move,
ritorno a ddire l'istoria dilictosa* (VII:1)

In the name of He who moves all,
I return to tell the delightful story

In the following example from a *cantare*, the performer interrupts his recitation specifically to take refreshment and rest, and he invites his listeners to do the same (Cabani 1989:154):

*Signori, i' vo' finir questo cantare
e gire e bere e rinfrescarmi alquanto;
e voi, se sète stanchi d'ascoltare,
potete riposare un poco intanto* (Sp VI 46)

Sirs, I wish to finish this *cantare*
and mingle and drink and refresh myself some
and you who are tired of listening
may rest for a little while

Pitrè describes what would occur during these breaks in the *cunto*. We note that the need for refreshments brought on a symbiotic relationship between performer and vendors (this goes for the puppet theater as well [1884:318]): “The *cunto* . . . lasts a few hours, in which there is an

occasional break for the *cuntastorie* to rest and catch his breath. . . . While this is happening, the snack vendor [*siminzaru*] and water vendor [*acquaiolu*] circulate with sacks of toasted seeds and glasses” (347). Thus the *cunto* actualizes what the authors of the *cantari* suggest by their recreating of public performance. Where would the listeners procure refreshment while the *cantarino* rested? Perhaps some enterprising vendors circulated there as well.

We mentioned above that the Carolingian lore had become an important part of Sicilian culture. Pitrè explains that during the breaks the *cuntastorie* would step out of his role as performer and discuss the details of the narration with members of the audience (347):

In these brief interludes, without leaving his platform, he ceases to be what he is [a performer], accepts a bit of snuff from a bystander, and lets a listener engage him in conversation on a passage of the story in progress. . . . He resolves doubts, settles issues, reconciles apparently contradictory facts. This is a difficult moment for someone who is not profoundly versed in the lore, and he could compromise himself with an answer that is not anchored in the lore, well known to the listeners. But the Sicilian *cuntastorie*, although he works from memory, is not easily confused.

Foley discusses how the interpretation of an oral performance that is part of a living tradition remains, to some degree, open to the individual receiver, while at the same time maintaining a certain degree of homogeneity that is shared by all receivers. It is the tradition itself that provides the homogeneous quality and encodes the frame with indexical meaning that goes beyond the literal level. Words or units of utterance, within the frame, are informed with special significance that is understood within the tradition (1995:5-47). This requires an audience that is steeped in the tradition (as were the audiences of the *cunto*). Key to this process is the concept of *immanence* in verbal art. “For the record, immanence may be defined as *the set of metonymic, associative meanings institutionally delivered and received through a dedicated idiom or register either during or on the authority of the traditional oral performance*” (Foley 1995:7, emphasis in the original).²²

²² A book that has been germinal to the study of oral performance is Richard Bauman’s *Verbal Art as Performance* (1984). A special edition of the *Journal of American Folklore* (115:455 [2002]) was dedicated to reassessing the influence of *Verbal Art*.

This encompasses many aspects of a given storytelling tradition, but let us focus on a basic example: the epithet, whereby “‘grey-eyed Athena’ would serve as an approved traditional channel or pathway for summoning the Athena not just of this or that particular moment, but rather of all moments in the experience of audience and poet” (Foley 1995:5). In both written and oral traditions, epithets may also function aesthetically for completing lines and/or for metrical purposes. An example from *I Cantari d’Aspramonte* (estimated to have been written sometime between the end of the fourteenth and the beginning of the fifteenth centuries, Fassò 1981:xii) demonstrates the use of an epithet to finish the rhyme of the couplet, which closes each octave stanza (*ibid.*:12):

*Il maggiore avea nome Ricardo
e ‘l minore nome avea Ricciari gagliardo* (IV:32)

The elder was named Ricardo
and the younger was called Ricciari (the) valiant

Throughout the *cantari* we find many epithets, typical of an epic tradition. As examples we may cite:

Re Carlo Mano; Carlo imperator romano (cf. first stanza of Ariosto’s *OF*)
King Charles the Great; Charles (the) Roman emperor

il conte Orlando; il forte Oralando,
the Count Orlando; the strong Orlando

Rinaldo paladino; Rinaldo, quel da Monte Albano
Rinaldo paladin; Rinaldo, (the one) from Monte Albano

marchese Uliveti; Uliuieri della gran gesta
Marchese Uliveti; Uliuieri of the great geste

el pregiato arcivescovo Turpino
the esteemed Archbishop Turpino

Looking again at a line in a passage cited above (Cabani 1989:153), we also cite:

que’ tre cavagli e il buon destrier Baiardo. Ri X 40
those three horses and the good war steed Baiardo

We note how Rinaldo’s horse, Baiardo, is distinguished from “those three [ordinary] horses,” while at the same time invoking for the knowledgeable

audience the exceptional qualities and almost human acumen of the wonder horse.

In the recording by the *cuntastorie* Peppino Celano (1962), the heroic cousins, Orlando and Rinaldo, are fighting (as usual) over Angelica. Rinaldo, the master swordsman, is getting the better of his cousin and we note this rather hefty epithet, in this case replacing his name altogether. The performer explains that when it came to sword play,

. . . *vinceva sempre 'ddu ladruni di Montalbanu che cummannava a settecentu ladruni*²³
(Celano)

. . . that thief of Montalbano who commanded 700 thieves would always win.

It is well documented that in the Sicilian tradition most people favored Rinaldo, even over Orlando, who in the overall Carolingian tradition is supposed to be the primary hero. Much has been written on this phenomenon. The character of Orlando is steeped in extreme heroic righteousness, epitomized by his refusal to blow his oliphant and call for help at Rencesvals until it is too late. This quality appealed to the Sicilian folk to a certain extent, but also conveyed a sense of naiveté, not a recommended quality for the difficult life of a poor peasant, often forced to survive by his wits. Rinaldo is wily and cunning, never the dupe or sucker. Falsely accused, cast out of Charlemagne's court and forced to steal, he is the quintessential underdog. These qualities also tie into a sense of social justice for the Sicilian peasantry. Antonio Pasqualino discusses this issue and how, in the Sicilian cultural context, it differs from its medieval French roots (1978:194):

In the *chansons de geste*, rebellion is seen as a social evil which must be remedied by a sacrifice of pride on both sides, even if the rebel is more appealing than the sovereign. Judging from the *Story of the French Paladins* [mentioned below] in the Sicily of yesterday and today, the feeling for social order is less than it was in medieval France. In fact, the deterioration of the figure of Charlemagne²⁴ is extreme in the Sicilian versions. The contrast between the rebel baron and the sovereign may even come to be identified with that between the hero and the traitor. . . . Part of what makes

²³ My transcription of Celano's performance language, which is a Sicilian-Italian hybrid. To listen to this performance, visit the eCompanion to this article at www.oraltradition.org.

²⁴ The deterioration of the Charlemagne figure began early in the Italian tradition; see Vitullo 2000:1-29.

Rinaldo better liked than Orlando is that he is cunning, sagacious, and capable of deceit for the sake of winning.

The Sicilian public was engaged both intellectually (knowing the lore) and emotionally as well. At both the *cunto* and the *opra*, the audience would discuss the story after the performance, cry at the death of the Paladins at Rencesvals, and, specifically at the *opra*, vent their anger, even throwing objects at villain puppets.²⁵ The stories and the characters became real. In Pitrè's article we read the following excerpt from an account by the *cuntastorie* Maestro Salvatore (Turiddu) Ferreri (mentioned above) (1884:358):

One day I told the story of how Rinaldo was put in prison, and Charlemagne had condemned him to death. A fellow approached me with tears in his eyes: "Turiddu, there's a *carlino* [21 cents] for you if you quickly liberate Rinaldo." Admiring his affection for Rinaldo, I rushed, accelerating the tale, and had Rinaldo released by Malagigi, by means of his diabolic art. As soon as he saw [sic] Rinaldo released, he jumped up and yelled, "Bravo, Turiddu, for liberating Rinaldo! Go fry yourself, Charlemagne, you asshole"! And he left his place to give me a *carlino*.

Thus, in the specific context of the fight between the heroic cousins of Celano's performance, Rinaldo's status as a thief and commander of seven hundred thieves is not immediately relevant. However, in the greater context of the Sicilian *cunto*, through indexical meaning, we may get a glimpse of the import such an epithet signalling Rinaldo might have had. For the *cunto*'s audience Rinaldo was "a victorious instrument of fantasized revolt, free from a sense of guilt and from the contradictions associated both with the bandits of nineteenth-century popular narrative and with the rebel barons in the *chansons de geste*" (Pasqualino 1978:196). As would be expected from the basic dynamics of a new figure in a host culture, the figure, in this case Rinaldo, takes on new meaning that is informed by the needs and in the idiom of the host culture.

²⁵ Mike Manteo, head puppeteer of the Manteo Family, recalls such an incident from his youth, in New York's Italian community, when during a performance a spectator fired two shots at the marionette which Mike was manipulating (Gold 1983:72).

Literary Text in Performance

We will probably never trace with certainty the origins of the oral epic tradition in Sicily. The *chansons de geste* may have originally come with the Normans, whose invasion of the island began in 1060, though we have no firm evidence of this advent. We know that during the Middle Ages, *jongleurs* and mimes were as active in Sicily as they were in the peninsula (Di Palma 1991:34). As far as actual performances of the *chanson* tradition, however, Pitrè reports one tantalizing allusion from a poem, *Battaglia celeste di Michele e Lucifero* (Celestial Battle of Michael and Lucifer) by the Sicilian poet Antonino Alfano, which dates back to 1568: “per le piazza alle volte ragionar s’ode dell’arme d’Orlando e di Rinaldo, sogni e favole di poeti” (in the piazzas one could sometimes hear about the swords of Orlando and Rinaldo, dreams and tales of poets) (1884:346).

Di Palma, who studied the *cunto* in depth, concludes that the tradition in the manifestation we know came to Sicily via Naples, sometime during the nineteenth century. Like the Sicilians, the Neapolitans were partial to the renegade Rinaldo, and the Neapolitan performers were known as *cantarinaldi* (“Rinaldo singers”), often shortened to *rinaldi*. The *rinaldi* based their performances primarily on verse in octaves.²⁶ They typically held a cane in one hand and a book in the other, and this is where they most differed from the *cuntastorie*; “a book to hold, upon which one must look every half second, is a powerful obstacle, even for those who are inclined to gesticulate by nature” (Rajna 1878:568). By contrast, even if a literate or semi-literate *cuntastorie* would refresh his memory by reading before a performance, he would lose prestige if he were to come before his audience book in hand (Pitrè 1884:348).²⁷ Unencumbered by reading and with both hands free, the *cuntastorie* performed in a more animated fashion with mime and gesticulations.²⁸

²⁶ For the specific books the *rinaldi* used, see Rajna 1878:571-74. Prose works, such as those by Andrea da Barberino, were rewritten in octave verse.

²⁷ Pitrè was writing at the height of the *cuntu*’s popularity. Later, in 1907, Nino Martoglio (1870-1921), dialect author and champion of Sicilian culture, lamented that as the old *cuntastorie* were dying, the remaining ones “have taken to reading (!), to a much more cultured (!!) audience, old detective novels” (1983:64). His exclamations are obviously intended to express outrage and sarcasm.

²⁸ In Rajna’s account, the one *rinaldo* who performed from memory is presented as an anomaly (1878:577-78).

The germinal work by Milman Parry and Albert Lord on the South Slavic oral epic defined the *formulae* upon which the *guslari* based their extemporaneous compositions in performance. The original concept of the formula, specifically and narrowly defined for its use in the Homeric Greek and South Slavic contexts, defined a “unit of utterance in performance” (Foley 1995:2). Since then the term has been elaborated, and the formula has been adapted to other contexts and other traditions. It has become an analytical tool for understanding oral performances that entail extemporaneous composition. The formula, in the least specific and most general sense, is a mnemonic element that is contextualized at the moment of performance and must perforce be defined for the specific tradition being studied. The actual mechanics underlying a performance based on formulas is best explicated by Albert Lord in his discussion of memory and fixity in the south Slavic epic (note here that Lord uses *improvise* in its usual connotation of inventing offhand, without preparation): “Not memorized, not improvised either, not even exactly repeated, but presented in ‘more or less the same words,’ while expressing the same essential ideas. The text is not really fixed, yet because the essential ideas have remained constant, it is ‘more or less fixed’” (1987:453).

If we accept Di Palma’s conclusion that the *cuntu* came to Sicily via Naples in the nineteenth century, then it was in fact a relatively recent and relatively short-lived phenomenon.²⁹ Di Palma discusses how the *cuntu* lacked homogeneity, and only began to define itself in mid-century (1991:43).³⁰ The mechanics behind its performance are indeed multifaceted, since *cuntastorie* ranged from illiterate, to semi-literate, to literate performers. Though, as Pitrè explained, a *cuntastorie* worth his salt would never appear before an audience book in hand, some did use a written text in their preparation. Focusing on the use of written texts, we note an account by Paolo Emiliani Giudici of a private performance by a *cuntastorie* given in a nobleman’s home in 1822. He explains that the performer prepared himself by reviewing Andrea da Barberino’s *I Reali di Francia* which served as a “repertory outline” (Di Palma 1991:36-37). The books, when used, provided the various narrative elements of the tales that were then contextualized in performance. The *cuntastorie* retold the tale in the oral medium, “expressing the same essential ideas.” Moving from written text to performance, the

²⁹ Trying to determine how it was shaped by indigenous performance traditions presents another avenue of investigation.

³⁰ In fact, it is his opinion that the *cuntu* does not constitute a “true tradition” (*idem*).

stories were “not repeated but *re-created*” (Foley 1995:47, emphasis in the original).

We have an earlier example of epic literature serving as a formulaic reservoir. In Spain the epic tradition is also primarily based on the medieval stories from the French tradition, both Arthurian as well as Carolingian. As a literary style, the culmination of its popularity came with the romances of chivalry in the sixteenth century (Eisenberg 1982:35). For evidence of the input from the oral tradition, L. P. Harvey (1974) examines the case of Román Ramírez, a Morisco storyteller who was arrested by the Inquisition in 1595 for a number of offences, including witchcraft and apostasy. What is of interest to us is his professed ability to “memorize” novels of chivalry, which brought an accusation of having diabolical assistance.³¹ In an attempt to exculpate himself, Ramírez explained how he gave the illusion of having memorized texts for his performances. From the Inquisition trial, we read how he revealed his trade secrets (Harvey 1974:283):³²

What happened is that the accused would commit to memory however many books and chapters were in *Don Cristalián* [chosen by the Inquisitor to test Ramírez] and the gist of the adventures and the names of the cities, realms, knights, and princes that the said books contained, and he would commit them very well to memory. And later, as he recited, he would expand and shorten the accounts as he wished, always being careful to conclude with the gist of the adventures, so that to all who heard him recite, it seemed that he was very precise and that he did not alter anything of the accounts and the language of the same books.

Harvey concludes that the essence of the technique for oral performance as employed by Ramírez was much the same as that described by Parry and Lord: “They were improvised narrations of known stories in a known style, but not in a fixed form. That is to say that they varied in the same way that the text of Yugoslav epics vary from one performance to another, or in the way that a performance of the *Poema de Mio Cid* would have varied” (283). Harvey concludes that Ramírez was “possibly one of the last in the long line of narrators in Spain” (284).

³¹ It is interesting to compare the story of Brother Cædmon (reported by Bede c. 680 C.E.). Although Cædmon had no formal education, “when any passage of Scripture was explained to him by interpreters, he could quickly turn it into delightful and moving poetry in his own English tongue.” It was determined by “many learned men” that his talent was a gift from God (Bede 1974:250-53).

³² Harvey cites the original Spanish text.

One of the reasons why the *cantari* poets claimed they were writing in the first place was in order to *traslatare* (a word which denotes both “translate” and “transfer”) the original stories from Latin or French, thus popularizing them for their audience (Cabani 1989:137):

*secondo che ne' libri mi dimostra,
vo ringraziando della gran vertute
ch'i' ricevo di questo traslatare* (As XXII 1)

according to what the books revealed to me
I want to give thanks for the great virtue
that I receive from this translating

la bella storia che io ho volgarizata (Ri XXVII 1)

the beautiful story that I have vernacularized

Andrea da Barberino also wrote with the intent of presenting “old material that a new audience may enjoy” (Allaire 1997:15). The process of *traslatare* continued throughout the life of the epic as a living tradition. For the Sicilian *cunto*, the most important work in this vein was *Storia dei paladini di Francia* by Giusto Lo Dico (1826-1909), which came out in four volumes between 1858 and 1862. This voluminous work, approximately 3,000 pages, chronicles the adventures of the *paladini* in simple prose, as a note to the original title for the first publication explains, “from Milone count of Anglante until the death of Rinaldo.” Lo Dico felt a need to gather and to rewrite in a simpler form the stories of the major epic poems, not only to make them more accessible to a less educated audience, but also to facilitate the literary input into the oral tradition, which he felt lacked an accurate chronology (Pitrè 1884:350). *Storia dei paladini* achieved its desired effect and became *the* sourcebook for both *cuntastorie* and “the bible of puppeteers” (Cammarata 1971:jacket notes). It also enjoyed a widespread popularity with the literate, semi-literate, and illiterate populations. Since it was very common for people to read to each other at the time, sociologically speaking this is significant because it was the means by which women, who did not normally frequent the *opra* or follow the episodes of the *cunto*, could become familiar with the epic tales (Cammarata 1971:17).

The Carolingian epic tradition began as an interchange of oral and written narrative. In Italy the stories came via oral performance in the Middle Ages and continued in a oral/written dialectic until the twentieth century. The oral tales, committed to text, became a source for verbal art, both as verbatim readings and as a source for formulae to be contextualized

in performance, keeping the Carolingian epic as part of a living tradition. This living tradition, which lasted long enough to be observed empirically in the context of folklore studies, provides important clues to the historical dialogue of performance and text.

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***Daimokutate*: Ritual Placatory Performance of the Genpei War**

[*eCompanion at www.oraltradition.org¹]

Elizabeth Oyler

Introduction

The Japanese performance art known as *Daimokutate*² articulates one of Japan's most important historical narratives. A coming-of-age ritual once practiced in numerous rural villages in central Japan, *Daimokutate* involves a group of young men taking the roles of characters from the *Heike monogatari* (*Tale of the Heike*), Japan's epic war tale chronicling the Genpei War (1180-85), a conflict that brought the warrior class to power both politically and socially. In *Daimokutate*, the participants take turns recounting one of several felicitous narratives derived from the *Heike* as a dedicatory ritual before the god of their local shrine. Performances occur annually at the end of the harvest season.

As a vestige of local ritual practice reaching back at least to the late medieval period,³ *Daimokutate* is of inherent interest to anthropologists and scholars of folklore and the performing arts. Its reliance on stories from the *Heike* also places *Daimokutate* in the constellation of narrative and dramatic genres that interpreted episodes from the *Heike* during the medieval and

¹ To watch an example of *Daimokutate*, visit this article's eCompanion at www.oraltradition.org.

² Literally, "Presentation of a Theme." The term *Daimoku* more familiarly refers to the recitation of the title of the Lotus Sutra, a practice common in the Nichiren sect; there is no evident connection between it and the *Daimokutate* considered in this paper.

³ Broadly defined, Japan's medieval period lasted from the thirteenth through the sixteenth centuries. The fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, after central power had begun to disintegrate and there was widespread civil unrest, represent the segment of this period most analogous to European mediocrity.

early modern ages: the *nō* theater; the ballad-drama *kōwakamai*; ⁴ the *kabuki* theater; and *otogizōshi*, a narrative genre embracing both fictional and historical tales.

The material shared across these genres comprises much of what Barbara Ruch (1977:294-307) has termed Japan's "national literature": a body of stories and characters spread across the realm and to broad segments of the population primarily by peripatetic storytellers and performers. Because these tales were told and retold in numerous genres, they reached audiences far more socially and geographically diverse than any earlier works, and they continue to be considered some of the most beloved and culturally defining narratives in Japan. Stories of the Genpei War, and particularly those based on events and characters found in the *Heike*, constitute an important segment of this "national literature."

One hallmark of this corpus is the inclusion of verbatim segments of specific narratives across the various generic and textual interpretations of a story, a practice that suggests something other than conventional allusive textual relationships between these variants. Together, the trans-generic variants of a story act as a work-in-progress experienced by diverse audiences, where each version or performance reshapes and contextualizes a fundamental story underlying them all. The global, shared narrative engendered by their multiple incarnations supersedes the authority of an original text to form the ultimate referential network for an audience of any performance (and in fact the reader of any textual version). When looking at relationships among variants, therefore, we benefit from acknowledging the importance of what John Miles Foley defines as "traditional referentiality" (1991:45): "All members of an audience interpret the text according to a shared body of knowledge." This knowledge acts as "the equivalent of a critical methodology, evolved and practiced by a 'school' or 'interpretive community' unified by the act of (re-)making and (re-)reading' traditional verbal art" (*idem*).⁵

The relationship between Daimokutate and the general narrative originating in the *Heike* is the focus of this essay. How are parts of the *Heike*

⁴ This term was coined by James T. Araki (1964) in his study of *kōwakamamai*, the only monograph-length study of the genre to date.

⁵ The idea of "interpretive community" used here is articulated by Brian Stock (1990:30-52) in his discussion of "textual communities." Stock addresses cultural contexts like that of Daimokutate, where both writing and performance were important factors in the creation of meaning for such interpretive communities. For descriptions of the Japanese context in which multiply-told tales represented the "text" for the interpretive community, see Ruch 1977 and Oyler 2006.

narrative articulated in Daimokutate? In what ways does Daimokutate as a genre mold that narrative to make it function in a ritual context? And how does this version of an important historical narrative contribute to further reinterpretation of the better-known source narrative, particularly in the isolated, rural areas in which Daimokutate was performed? After a brief explanation of the Genpei War, the *Tale of the Heike*, and the cultural context generating Daimokutate, I will introduce the genre of Daimokutate, then move on to an analysis of *Itsukushima*, one of the three pieces of the extant repertoire. The performance upon which this analysis is based occurred in the village of Kamifukawa, Nara Prefecture, on October 12, 2002.

The Genpei War and the *Heike monogatari*

The Daimokutate repertoire consists of narratives describing events connected to the Genpei War. A clash that came to be seen as the turning point between Japan's classical period and its age of warriors, the war set the stage for institutionalizing the office of *shōgun* and the rise of the warrior class both politically and culturally. The war was also the first protracted conflict to affect the capital, Heian-kyō (modern-day Kyoto), since its establishment in 794.

The Genpei War was waged between partisans of two clans: the Taira and the Minamoto.⁶ The Taira, originally a provincial military house, had risen to a point of such power that Kiyomori, the scion of the clan, was able to marry his daughter to the reigning sovereign, Takakura (r. 1168-80).⁷ The birth of a son to this daughter made Kiyomori the grandfather of a crown

⁶ The Taira clan (also known as the “Heike,” an alternative reading of the characters for “Taira family”) descended from a prince who had been reduced to commoner status in the practice of dynastic shedding common throughout Japan's classical age. In this case, the prince was a son of the Sovereign Kanmu (r. 781-806), and he was given the surname “Taira”; his descendants are referred to as the Kanmu Heike. The Minamoto (also known as the “Genji,” an alternative reading of the characters for “Minamoto clan”) similarly originated with the son of a sovereign—in this case Sovereign Seiwa (r. 858-76). They are known consequently as the “Seiwa Genji.” In both cases, the sloughed-off princes were given provincial holdings, in effect removing them from the upper aristocracy that held central governmental positions in the capital. That the Taira managed to rise to heights allowing them to marry into the royal family was unprecedented and became the source of resentment within the established nobility.

⁷ The rise of the Taira was due in large part to the patronage of Kiyomori's father, Tadamori, by the royal house, and particularly the retired sovereign, Toba (r. 1107-23).

prince. The child was appointed sovereign at the age of a little over one year upon the abdication of his father. As de facto regent, Kiyomori was in a position to control political affairs. He began to exercise his authority autocratically, banishing or executing members of the highest aristocracy who threatened his power.

Disgruntled aristocrats and members of the royal family whom Kiyomori had disenfranchised gave tacit approval for the Minamoto, another military house, to punish the Taira. The Minamoto had suffered a debilitating defeat 20 years earlier at the hands of Kiyomori,⁸ and, according to the narrative record, had been awaiting the opportunity for vengeance. The resulting struggle, what we know as the Genpei War, ensued sporadically for six years. Although not as divisive as a full-fledged civil war, it rent much of the symbolic infrastructure underlying the realm's stability: the child sovereign was removed from the capital by his maternal relatives as they fled the Minamoto, as were the three sacred regalia justifying his rule. A new sovereign was appointed in the capital, which meant that two sovereigns in essence were claiming legitimacy simultaneously. The capital was overrun by provincial warriors, who were given heretofore unheard of prerogatives from the retired sovereign, paternal grandfather of both sovereigns.⁹ In the final battle of the war, one of the sacred regalia—a sword—was irretrievably lost at sea. Following the war, the victors established the new political office of *shōgun*, which attenuated royal authority permanently. Authority of the Japanese royal family (which has ruled unbroken throughout history) is predicated on their possession of the three sacred regalia bequeathed on the first human sovereign by their mythical ancestor, the sun goddess Amaterasu. The loss of the sacred sword at this moment of chaos and redefinition of power relationships thus represented a significant symbolic crisis.

The rupturing of paradigms represented by the loss of the sacred sword and the resulting shift in power to the Minamoto clan contributed significantly to the need to articulate a coherent story about the war.

⁸ During the Heiji Uprising, an extremely short and ill-fated rebellion in 1159-60 that decimated the Minamoto. Minamoto Yoshitomo, head of the clan, as well as all of his adult sons, was killed during or after the uprising. Those of his sons who were still children at the time of the conflict were spared; they were the Minamoto who rose to arms against the Taira in 1180.

⁹ Go-Shirakawa (r. 1155-58). He was the father of Takakura, who fathered both Antoku (r. 1180-83), Taira Kiyomori's grandson, and Go-Toba (r. 1183-98), who was elevated to sovereign when Antoku was taken from the capital by the Taira as they fled. Takakura died in 1180, shortly after having abdicated in favor of Antoku.

Narratives explaining the loss of the sword in particular are very common in medieval Japan.¹⁰ From almost immediately after its conclusion, archivists of the newly prominent warrior class needed to define the war in terms that justified their rule. But perhaps more importantly, members of the Buddhist clergy and others responsible for ritual placation also were called upon to perform memorial services for the war dead. On the most superficial level, memorializers were concerned about the victims of the war. Death on the battlefield was cause for resentment in the afterlife, and the unquiet dead were a potential source of misfortune in a here-and-now already destabilized by the general effects of the conflict.

Such worry about restless spirits was a commonplace in early Japan. Large-scale misfortunes including fires, droughts, or earthquakes were thought to be caused by the resentful or angry dead, and memorial services and other techniques—posthumous elevation in court rank, for example, or, in extreme cases, apotheosis—were routinely practiced in aristocratic society. Memorialization of this sort necessarily involved recasting stories about the dead in a context so as to neutralize their destructive potential. We find, for example, enemies of the court eulogized for their valor as warriors and commanders, the loss of whom was lamentable; their rebelliousness becomes a secondary concern. *Itsukushima*, as we shall see, represents one particularly powerful example of how the process works.

The intimate connection to recounting past events and the placation of spirits gave rise to the great narrative of the period, the *Heike monogatari*. The *Heike* actually refers to approximately 80 variant texts of divergent styles and practical uses. In addition to those performance variants connected to or derived from ritual placatory practice, there are also many versions designed specifically as written records; they all, however, share enough material to be considered variants rather than unique texts. The popularity and spread of the *Heike* narrative depended most vitally on the performative variants, which, like the *nō* drama, derived from, and maintained strong connections to, formal placatory ritual practice.¹¹ Today, most people think of the *Heike* as a textual version of a performance art,

¹⁰ The significance of compensatory narratives about the sword is an important topic in historical, cultural, and literary studies about the Genpei War and its effects on medieval culture. See, for example, Abe 1985:38-45; Bialock 2002-03:270-81; Tomikura 1967: 544-45.

¹¹ The placatory function of *Heike* recitation and its relation to narrative in the medieval context is discussed in Bialock 2002-03:293-308 (which includes as well a consideration of the Dragon King's daughter discussed below); Mizuhara 1971:144-63; and Yamashita 2003:41.

originally created and transmitted by religious or pseudo-religious men who sang the narrative and accompanied themselves on the *biwa* lute.¹² Canonically, these men, referred to generically as *biwa hōshi* (“biwa priests”), were blind, although there is no evidence that the original performers were.¹³

The *Heike* narrative proved to be both portable and malleable: its episodes became the basis for many other works, including, prominently, plays of the *nō* theater and the *kōwakamai*. The proliferation of scenes and characters from the *Heike* is characteristic of the general medieval trend toward the repetition and reinterpretation of favorite stories making up the “national literature,” but repeated *Heike* episodes are particularly significant because of their historical dimension: they describe a divisive and defining actual event. Because performance was the primary means for circulating stories of the Genpei War, however, new stories about the war were conditioned strongly by the generic restrictions of ritual performance. Historical events, in other words, entered the vernacular via performance traditions with strong ritual dimensions, and these popular versions were in turn validated because they appeared in historical records as well. The interplay of the historical and the ritual, therefore, is vital in creating the referential web underlying all tellings of the Genpei War narrative, including *Itsukushima*, which addresses the specific issues of the rise of the warriors and the loss of the sacred sword within the context of ritualized performance.

¹² Modern scholars divide the variants generally into two lineages, the “recited (performance) lineage” or *kataribonkei*, and the “read lineage” or *yomihonkei*. Although there is considerable overlap between the two, the recited lineage texts tend to be less linear, more colloquial in style, and more concerned with lament and placation, whereas the read lineage texts are more linear, cast in Chinese terms and grammatical structures (hence more “literate”), and concerned with authoring, and authorizing, a specific history of the period.

¹³ During the Tokugawa period (1600-1868), Japan’s “early modern” age, the practice of reciting the *Heike* was legally placed in the custodianship of the blind guild (*tōdōza*), through which transmission of the work—a text, originally written in the fourteenth century—as well as licensing of performers and arrangement of performances was regulated. It is safe to assume, therefore, that the connection between blind performers and the *Heike* originates well before that time.

Daimokutate

Performed today by 17-year-old males as a coming-of-age rite, Daimokutate is a vestige of a ritual performance tradition originating in the medieval period. The earliest reference to Daimokutate appears in an entry from the Priest Eishun's *Mugenki* (*Record of Dreams and Reality*).¹⁴ The account, dated 1534, relates the following under an entry dated at 1516, which discusses a Daimokutate performance: "Daimokutate was performed when a new building was constructed at a shrine in the countryside. [The performers] presented themselves as heroes of old, following a book written in *katakana*¹⁵ of old" (Kanai 1985:89).¹⁶ At this time, therefore, the art was prominent enough to catch the attention of a high-ranking clergyman, and performance utilized a libretto written in the simplest available writing system. From this we can surmise that the performers were only nominally literate, as those members of the educated elite read and wrote using Chinese characters (*kanji*). In other words, Eishun's diary strongly implies that even during his time the performers were not from among the elite classes.

Daimokutate seems to have flourished as a ritual performance associated with construction or relocation of a shrine building in numerous locales in the Yamato region (modern-day Nara Prefecture) during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,¹⁷ after which it was gradually

¹⁴ Included as Book 43 of the *Tamon'in nikki* (*Record of the Tamon Cloister [of Kōfukuji Temple]*).

¹⁵ *Katakana* is one of the two Japanese syllabaries. The text referred to here was written in *katakana* (rather than *kanji*, or Chinese characters). Mastery of Chinese characters was limited to the highly educated.

¹⁶ The original can be found in Takeuchi 1994. Eishun's *Mugenki* is found in vol. 42, 39-48. In this citation (Takeuchi 1994:44), Eishun is talking generally about pronunciation in recitation. He quotes the beginning of one Daimokutate piece as an illustration. The particular line he quotes identifies the character speaking as Minamoto Yoshitsune (the general credited with the Minamoto victory and one of Japan's favorite heroes), who does not figure in any of the three pieces of the current repertoire, which leads to the conclusion that the repertoire was once larger. The similarity of this name-announcing passage to those in extant pieces suggests that the content of the lost works resembled those that remain.

¹⁷ Ichiko 1984:vol. 4, 119. Local records from the Nara region suggest that this practice was relatively widespread between at least 1575 and the early 1700s. In Kamifukawa, records show that such performances regularly took place there between 1634 and 1733. After that, it is thought to have shifted toward its current form as a coming-of-age ritual. See also Kanai 1988:111.

transformed into a coming-of-age ritual. It currently survives only at the Habashira Shrine in Kamifukawa, a hamlet in the mountainous region east of Tenri city in Nara Prefecture, where it is performed on the remnants of the Ganyakuji Temple within the shrine's precincts (Kanai 1988:112).

Daimokutate is performed annually every October twelfth. Although the original repertoire seems to have been larger, libretti for only three pieces remain: *Ishibashiyama*, which narrates the early Genpei War battle between Minamoto Yoritomo¹⁸ and the Taira; *Itsukushima*, which describes a pilgrimage made by Taira Kiyomori and other members of his clan to their tutelary shrine, Itsukushima; and *Daibutsu kuyō*, which details Yoritomo's dedication of the Buddhist image at Tōdaiji temple to replace the one destroyed by the Taira shortly before the war (Kanai 1988:111-12).¹⁹

The structure of the three extant Daimokutate pieces is fairly similar. Each piece opens with the "leading along the road" (*michihiki*), in which the actors follow an elder (*chōrō*) from the green room (an outbuilding on the shrine grounds) to the stage. They then take up positions along its edges, facing inward. The elder announces each "act" (*shōdan*) and the identity of the character who will speak. Only one speaker performs in each act. When first summoned, the character identifies himself and then recites a substantial amount of narrative. He is called upon in later acts to deliver lines of similar or shorter length. One actor takes the role of a deity; this actor does not perform until the end of the piece. The play culminates with a dance referred to as *fusho*, which is accompanied by song. The actors then recite a final speech (*iriku*) in unison, and are finally led from the stage. *Itsukushima* consists of 26 acts, the *fusho* dance, and the *iriku*.

The extant Daimokutate libretti (*banchō*) were first collected and published by the folklorist Hosen Jungo in 1953-55. Hosen's timely work brought Daimokutate the necessary prominence to be designated as a Prefectural Intangible Cultural Property in 1954 (Kanai 1985:88). Since

¹⁸ Yoritomo was heir to Minamoto Yoshitomo, scion of the Minamoto killed following the Heiji Uprising. Yoritomo went on to become the first *shōgun* of Japan in 1192, establishing his headquarters in Kamakura, a seaside village far from the capital Heian (present-day Kyoto). This attenuated political control by the aristocracy.

¹⁹ The destruction of the Nara temples, including Tōdaiji, is blamed on Taira Shigehira, one of Kiyomori's sons. The temples were burned as the Taira sought to punish Prince Mochihito, a disenfranchised member of the royal family who was goaded by members of the Minamoto clan to confront the Taira. Mochihito was killed in the ensuing battle, but it is the destruction of the oldest and most venerable Buddhist temples (and the deaths of the many clergy and local peasants who had taken shelter there) that is seen as the more ominous sin.

then, Daimokutate has received limited scholarly study, most of it by Kanai Kiyomitsu, who compiled and comprehensively annotated editions of the libretti for all three pieces in *Chūsei geinō: Daimokutate shōkai (The Annotated Daimokutate: Medieval Performing Art, 1986)*.

In a regular three-year rotation, *Itsukushima* is performed twice and *Daibutsu kuyō* once. However, when a building is reconstructed or rededicated, *Itsukushima* is performed for three years running (Kanai 1985: 89). That remodeling would trigger this shift is probably a remnant of Daimokutate's original function of marking renewal and dedication of sacred space. *Ishibashiyama* is excluded from the current repertoire most likely because of its length (it is approximately twice as long as the other two).

Habashira Shrine is small and of primarily local significance. Located in the rugged terrain of rural Nara Prefecture at the edge of a little basin in the valley holding the village of Kamifukawa, it is tucked into the foot of one of the surrounding mountains. The entrance to the shrine is off the road passing through the valley, and most of the main working buildings (and the performance space) are up a short set of steps from the entrance, on a piece of level ground abutting the side of the mountain. The deity is enshrined on a little ledge further up the hill, at the top of a steep moss-covered stone stair lined with lanterns.

In a shrine of this size, it is probably not surprising that the performance space is not actually a stage, but a square area of earth marked off by a bamboo rail on three sides and backing against the mountain on the fourth. The audience stands outside the bamboo borders of all three open sides of the performance space, as well as on the narrow ledge above the wall forming the stage's fourth side.

Much of the Daimokutate script is comprised of lines that take more than five minutes each to perform, so the memorization requirements for the actors are not insubstantial; Kanai sees the fluent performance of each role as the heart of Daimokutate as coming-of-age ritual. He emphasizes in particular the importance of the *nanori*, or name-announcing.²⁰ In *Itsukushima*, the boys presenting themselves as individual Taira noblemen before the Itsukushima Deity metaphorically also present themselves as new adults to the Habashira deity (Kanai 1985:89). For Kanai, this is the most important aspect of the ritual; he relegates the narrative content of the

²⁰ *Nanori* refers to calling out one's name in a variety of contexts. Name-announcing is particularly prominent in the *Heike* and other war tales, in which warriors conventionally announce their names, lineage, and province of origin before engaging in battle.

recitations to a secondary concern (1979:38). In this study, I will give that content its due, demonstrating its fundamental significance for the meaning of the ritual and adding a more nuanced appreciation of the mutual workings of story and performance.

Itsukushima

Itsukushima articulates a narrative about the passing of the Sword of Commission (*settō*)—a symbolic blade bequeathed by a sovereign to a military commander—to Taira Kiyomori by his tutelary deity.²¹ The appearance of the deity and the transfer of the sword are elicited by repeated ritual performances of *bugaku* and *kagura*²² at Itsukushima Shrine, situated on an island in modern-day Hiroshima Bay. *Itsukushima* is celebratory piece about the scion of the Taira house set at a time when his fortunes were rising.

Itsukushima Shrine lies within the pre-modern province of Aki,²³ over which Kiyomori was granted the governorship in 1146, a position held almost continuously by Taira clansmen until the early 1180s. The Taira became well known for sea trade based in Aki, and the province consequently held an important position for Kiyomori and his heirs economically, politically, and spiritually. In both fictionalized and basically factual accounts, Kiyomori's devotion to the shrine housing the clan's tutelary deity is prominently recognized. The gorgeously ornamented *Heike*

²¹ In ancient Japan, a reigning sovereign gave the Sword of Commission to a general setting forth on a military campaign. By the time of the Genpei War, this practice had been abandoned. Only in an otherworldly context such as direct communication with a deity could a transaction of this sort be imagined for Kiyomori and his contemporaries.

²² *Bugaku* and *kagura* are traditional ritual art forms reaching back to Japan's earliest times. *Kagura* consists of musical performances, sometimes accompanied by dance, performed by a group of three to four musicians. *Bugaku* refers to several continental styles of dance imported during the Nara Period (710-94), usually performed to the accompaniment of a larger group of musicians playing strings and woodwinds. These could be performed at religious sites or on special occasions at the royal palace or homes of the nobility during Japan's classical age.

²³ Present-day Hyōgo prefecture. The island on which it is situated, Miyajima, sits in the bay facing Hiroshima. Itsukushima is famous for the large, often-photographed vermilion shrine gate (*torii*) built in water in front of the shrine. For images of the *torii*, the shrine, and *kagura* and *bugaku* performances held there, see Sightseeing Section, Miyajima-cho 1996.

nōkyō, a copy of the Lotus Sutra dedicated by Kiyomori together with 31 other members of his clan in 1164, stands as a testament to the importance of this connection for the Taira.²⁴ The pilgrimage enacted in the Daimokutate almost certainly refers to the rituals associated with the presentation of the *Heike nōkyō*, although the focus of the Daimokutate is not the sutra, but rather the ritual performances that would have accompanied its dedication.

The Itsukushima Deity is identified in the play as Benzaiten. In the Heian Period (794-1185), the native deities of Itsukushima Shrine, identified as Ichikishimahimenomikoto, Tagorihimenomikoto, and Tagitsuhiomenomikoto, were reconfigured as the conventional Buddhist triad of Kannon, Dainichi (Skt. Mahavairocana), and Bishamon; overlaying indigenous deities with Buddhas and bodhisattvas in this manner was a common practice in early Japan. The main deity, Dainichi, is among the most revered Buddhas in Japanese context; devotion to Dainichi was thought to enable “attainment of Buddhahood in one’s own body” (*sokushin jōbutsu*), an extremely popular belief in the medieval period.

Sometime during the medieval period, Itsukushima’s Dainichi also became conflated with Benzaiten, originally one of the seven gods of fortune and the patron deity of performers. Although many medieval accounts of Kiyomori’s relationship to the shrine identify Benzaiten with the Itsukushima Deity, this attribution is probably somewhat anachronous. But, as is the case with *Itsukushima*, it became a vital element in medieval narratives of the Taira’s rise and fall. The merging of Dainichi with Benzaiten was not unusual, nor was the identification of the main deities of island shrines (including Itsukushima, Enoshima, and Chikubushima) as Benzaiten, for reasons that will become evident below.

The characters in *Itsukushima* include Kiyomori; his sons Shigemori, Munemori, and Shigehira; his brother Tsunemori; a Retainer (*kurōdo*); the Shrine Priest (*kannushi*); and Benzaiten. As in the other plays, the costumes are simple. The performers wear robes and *tate-eboshi* hats to indicate their status as classical aristocrats. The deity Benzaiten wears a gold headdress identifying her as a god. The robe worn by the performer depicting Kiyomori has a different pattern than that of the other youths, but this is the only distinction in costume.

²⁴ The *Heike nōkyō* contains the 28 chapters of the Lotus Sutra (*Hokekyō*), plus four other one-chapter sutras, each copied out by one Taira noble. It was dedicated by the Taira as a prayer for their success; its elaborate and luxurious decorations reveal the wealth financing its production. For images of the *Heike nōkyō*, see Nara National Museum 2004.

All of the members of Kiyomori's party except Kiyomori carry bows, which both mark their status as members of a warrior household and suggest the catalpa bows conventionally used to summon the gods (Kanai 1986: 96).²⁵ Kiyomori is empty-handed at the beginning of the play, but by the end, he has been given the Sword of Commission by Benzaiten, who originally carried it (*idem*). The Shrine Priest holds the ritual *heihaku*,²⁶ which he utilizes in his enactment of prayers. Note that in all cases, the accoutrements carried by the actors enable communication between this realm and the world beyond.

The Daimokutate performance begins shortly after sundown, when the actors follow the elder from the greenroom to the stage. They position themselves within its bamboo borders, and the Itsukushima Deity sits in a bamboo-woven hut backing against the wall. Kiyomori stands directly opposite her, with the Shrine Priest at his left and Shigemori (Kiyomori's heir) to his right. The other Taira clansmen and retainer are arrayed facing each other along the other two edges.

The elder sits with several other older men on the verandah of a multi-use building behind Kiyomori. The performers deliver their lines as they are called by the elder; the pattern in which they recite generally moves the speaking voice from one side of the square to another and then to the third and back again. This movement among the three sides of human characters throughout the first two-thirds of the performance emphasizes the silence of the deity, who does not emerge until later.

Although Daimokutate is a performance art, it is, like *kōwakamai* and to a lesser extent *nō*, primarily dependent on narrative recitation. The performers *tell* rather than *act*: in libretti and commentary, the verb used to describe the articulation of each passage is *ifu*, "to say." This contrasts with other medieval arts, in which voicing is usually described in terms of singing (*utafu*) or recounting (*kataru*) (Kanai 1985:90). What interests us is the connection between this narrative dimension, *Itsukushima's* ritual content, and Daimokutate's general ritual form.

²⁵ Catalpa bows were twanged in ritual contexts to summon a deity or spirit to possess a *miko* ("shamaness").

²⁶ An implement used in performing various rituals. It consists of a rod to which white strips of paper, cut in a zig-zag pattern resembling a lightning bolt, are attached.

Enacting and Re-enacting Ritual

One can work in the subjunctive mood as seriously as in the indicative—making worlds that never were on land or sea but that might be, could be, may be, and bringing in all the tropes, metaphor, metonymy, synecdoche, etc., to endow these alternative worlds with magical, festive, or sacred power, suspending disbelief and remodeling the terms of belief.

Victor Turner (1988:26-27)

From a structural point of view, *Itsukushima* is a ritual performance comprised of a narrative about ritual performance: the actors describe (but do not enact) ritual, and their description of a ritual performance becomes the content of the Daimokutate ritual. In this section, I trace the various levels at which these narrative imaginings occur, drawing attention to places where *Itsukushima* invites the spectator to conflate performances and performance spaces in ways that provocatively recontextualize an important *Heike* narrative. In particular, I focus on the ways in which the themes of doubling and mirroring are introduced and, within the context of ritual performance, revealed to enable a re-envisioning of the source narrative. I call attention to these themes as they develop from act to act in order to emphasize the effects of repetition, layering, and conflation of places and performances on the story underlying the coming-of-age ritual.

Similar to many plays from the *nō* repertoire, *Itsukushima* begins with a journey to a site that, either inherently or through exposition in the performance, is imbued with otherworldly significance. In the *michihiki*, the actors are led onto the stage, with its clearly demarcated (if permeable) boundaries. Their movement is reflected in the development of the narrative as well: the imagined space of (the actual locale) Itsukushima is cited as the destination of the journey described in the *michihiki* and first act. Notably, the Taira clan's journey that comprises the *michihiki* is the only physical movement occurring in the piece until the emergence of the deity, and it is conceptualized explicitly as pilgrimage. As such, it emphasizes the destination (both the stage and Itsukushima) as, first, a goal (upon which attention should be focused) and, second, a sacred site (where something special will happen). This sort of conscious imagining, of transforming one space (an almost empty stage) into another (Itsukushima), introduces a fundamental theme that will be expanded as the play progresses.

In the first act, Kiyomori recites the Taira lineage, stretching from his royal ancestor Prince Katsurawara, second son of the Sovereign Kanmu, to the years just before the Genpei War. Importantly, this act establishes the connections between the Taira and Itsukushima Shrine. Kiyomori states:

“Because of [my] victories in the battles in Hōgen and Heiji, I was promoted to Chancellor; this is all because of the blessings of the deity of Itsukushima in Aki.... And so it is that I decided to travel to Itsukushima to perform this dedication” (Kanai 1986:59).²⁷ By mentioning his rise to power following his victories in the Hōgen and Heiji Uprisings, Kiyomori alludes to the opening episodes of the *Heike*, thus situating *Itsukushima* in relation to this source narrative.

In the second act, however, the narrative begins to overlay Itsukushima with several other spaces, all of them mythical. Shigemori first describes the descent of the deity Amaterasu (mythic progenitor of the royal house) from the inner palace of the Tusita heaven²⁸ to “our realm,” from which, after building dwellings at the headwaters of the Minosuso River, the myriad deities set forth to subdue other lands.

The narrative of the descent of Amaterasu mirrors the movement in the preceding act, in which Kiyomori describes the pilgrimage from the capital to Itsukushima: both move out from a center (the Tusita heaven; the earthly center of Heian-kyō). Shigemori continues, characterizing the destination of his clan’s pilgrimage (Kanai 1986:79-80):

Itsukushima is the island prized as an ages-old treasure. It is just like the Dragon Palace. The Palace of Eternal Youth also belongs to the deity of this place. Itsukushima is written with the characters meaning “prized” and “island.” Those who step but once upon it and worship by brushing even one character of the [Lotus] Sutra have their desires filled in both this life and the next. It is truly a blessed, sacred place.

This passage emphasizes the theme of layering mythical locales, which will activate an important narrative shift later in the piece.

The Dragon Palace, submarine home of the Dragon King, and the Palace of Eternal Youth are both mythical realms famed in classical literature, art, and culture.²⁹ Itsukushima thus represents a sort of middle

²⁷ All translations from the Japanese are my own.

²⁸ A Buddhist geographical term frequently mapped on the Plain of Heaven from which pre-Buddhist narratives describe her descent.

²⁹ The Dragon Palace is alleged to lie at the bottom of the sea. It is the destination of the journey of the legendary Urashimatarō, among others. The Devadatta Chapter of the Lotus Sutra recounts that one of the Dragon King’s daughters studied so devotedly that she became enlightened at the age of eight when she presented a jewel to the Buddha. One manifestation of Benzaiten we will encounter here casts her as this daughter. The Palace of Eternal Youth, a mythic locale of Chinese legendary provenance,

(liminal) ground—it parallels the Daimokutate stage in creating a site where intercourse between this world and the other (or several others) will occur, as the final line of this act suggests.

Notably, both the Dragon Palace and the Palace of Eternal Youth are depicted as destinations of arduous travel: they are places to which people undertake difficult journeys in order to receive magical reward. Their miraculous character is mirrored by Itsukushima, whose specialness is described in terms of its power to amplify: by simply stepping on its grounds and brushing one Chinese character of the sutra, Shigemori states, the efficacy of the entire Lotus Sutra is enabled. The belief that reduced forms (one character) could activate full forms (the Lotus Sutra) was common in pre-modern Japan and will reappear later in this piece as well.

In the third act, the doubling of spaces we have already encountered is replicated in a conflation of the identities of Itsukushima's deity. Munemori states (Kanai 1986:103-04):

They built the *torii* [gate] in the ocean, and we worship our clan's god here. This place where our clan's god is worshipped: graciously, Benzaiten of the Matrix-store realm, avatar of Dainichi and third daughter of the Dragon King Sâgara, manifests herself. In her six arms she holds the six virtues. Grasping a bow and carrying a halberd, she protects heaven and earth. The Itsukushima Deity is the reason for all our blessings.

The daughter of the Dragon King was alleged to have attained enlightenment at the age of eight despite the obstacles represented by her female sex and her beastly form. As mentioned above, the particular conflation of Benzaiten with Dainichi was popular in medieval Japan, as is her merging with the daughter of the Dragon King. This relationship will be explicated more fully as the piece progresses, but at this juncture it is noteworthy because it contributes to the general theme of merged identities initiated in the second act.

was also the destination of (Chinese) arduous journeys and very much part of the medieval Japanese imaginary landscape. For a discussion of the Dragon King's daughter in the Lotus Sutra, see Yoshida 2002; in connection to the *Heike* narrative, see Bialock 2002-03:293-308. Both share with Itsukushima a connection to the sea: the Dragon Palace lies in its depths, and the Palace of Eternal Youth is usually described, like Itsukushima, as an island. Further, the Palace of Eternal Youth is frequently associated with or compared to other islands and mountains in premodern Japanese narratives and geographies; among these the most salient for this study is Enoshima, also an island sanctuary associated with Benzaiten, to which it is compared in the *kôwakamai Hamade*. For a discussion of the relationship between Daimokutate and *kôwakamai*, see Tokue 1980:32-58.

In the sixth act the narrative returns to the particulars of the Taira visit to the Itsukushima, and, through the fifteenth act, *Itsukushima* devotes full attention to performances held at the shrine on the occasion of the Taira pilgrimage (Kanai 1986:135):

[Tsunemori speaking] The *bugaku* musicians and the dancing youths are at ready; the banners, the ceremonial vases, and the Dragon's Heads are aligned at the Buddha's seat and the high priest's seat. The figured silks and embroidered brocade are spread on the stage. The monks who perform the rituals at this shrine number 120.

A paean to the grandeur of the occasion, this section invites the viewer of the Daimokutate to visualize offerings at Itsukushima Shrine. Importantly, the dedication is presented in terms of spectacle, and the images of ritual objects (banners, vases, dragon's heads) and offerings (silks and brocades) are lavish and concrete, attesting to the wealth of the clan, a theme amplified in the description by the Shrine Priest in the seventh act (Kanai 1986:153):

I am the Shrine Priest who serves the Itsukushima Deity. Because the Taira have reached such heights, we have been well blessed. Now they come to perform prayers at our shrine. All the shrine's personnel are arrayed here; the offerings for the god are displayed. The paper offerings are in front of the sanctuary, eight maidens swing the bells, and the sound of the *kagura* dance reverberates in the shrine's fence. It will surely wake the god.

Although the narrative describes a dedicatory performance designed specifically to please the god, we should note that it simultaneously provides a spectacle for the Taira party. They have come to witness the presentation and to benefit from the rituals associated with the dedication. There are, in effect, two audiences: the divine and the human. This doubling of audience is then mirrored by the Daimokutate performance, itself performed before the god as well as human spectators.³⁰ On a number of levels, therefore, this scene explicitly sets the stage for a performance, which begins with *kagura*. The reverberation (*hibiki*) of the music makes the fence at the shrine's border quiver, in effect disrupting that boundary and arousing the god.

³⁰ Since its designation as an Intangible Cultural Property, the audience of human spectators is further enlarged and variously interested; Daimokutate in its current incarnation is perhaps even more significant for scholars than locals. It is not presently the object of considerable tourism, although its potential tourist value was certainly a factor in its promotion and recording in the 1950s.

Communication between this world and the realm beyond is visually and aurally manifest within the narrative (and narratively manifest within the Daimokutate performance) in the (musically facilitated) vacillation of the boundary between the god and its audience.

In the ninth act, the ornately costumed dancers whirl in a confusion of fabric and ornamentation: “[Shrine Priest speaking] ‘And now the prayers are over, the dancing youths are in line, they have cut sprays of flowers; their jewel-bedecked caps, the jeweled decorations; they raise high the halberd with its banner unfurled, and on the stage they whirl in their dance’” (Kanai 1986: 169).

In the tenth act, the day draws to a close, pulling the audience into the twilight realm so often the setting for ritual performance (Kanai 1986: 174):³¹

[Tsunemori speaking] First come the congratulatory dances, then the “Dance of the Ryo King” which keeps the sun from setting. When the “Hatō Dance” is completed and the day has sunk into evening, they dance the “Taiheigaku.” The number of dances totals 120. It is said that to dance them all, even the secret pieces, takes 21 days.

The lavishness of this performance is not enacted on the Daimokutate stage, but rather narratively described, as were the imagined landscapes of the Dragon Palace, the Palace of Eternal Youth, the Matrix Store Realm, and indeed Itsukushima: nothing on the bare Daimokutate stage itself evokes the vistas the actors describe. These scenes are early indicators of the blurring of boundaries at the formal level that underscores those described in the piece: performance of the Daimokutate *is* narration, yet the sole focus of that narration is evoking performances; the imagined performances functionally mirror that of the Daimokutate as dedicatory acts performed before a god.

At this pivotal moment, the Taira, who have until now provided one audience for the imagined performances, reemerge as central actors. First, Kiyomori bestows gifts (Kanai 1986:183): “I, Kiyomori, in veneration of the deity [am unmatched]. First, I present tall piles of figured silk and embroidered brocade to the dancers’.” The luxury of the gifts here matches the splendor of the occasion, and the giver, by association, is equal to the role.

In the twelfth act, the retainer speaks: “And then all the members of the Taira clan, so gifted at woodwinds and stringed instruments, perform

³¹ The dances listed here are all conventional *bugaku* pieces that would be performed on such occasions.

together from their seats in the audience. They play everything, even all the secret pieces, upon the *biwa*, *koto*, *wagon*, and *shō*” (Kanai 1986:186).³²

The Taira now become performers, demonstrating their ability to play even the repertoire’s “secret pieces”; in other words, they have mastered the entire repertoire. They are described here as in the *Heike*: elite courtiers, skilled at music, a characteristic well-matched to the current task of pleasing the god.

In the thirteenth act, the music builds (Kanai 1986:200-01):

[Shrine Priest speaking] Ah, what appealing music! The voice of the *shō* is like the sound of the pine wind reverberating through the three realms. The flute resembles the voice of the phoenix, the *taiko* [drum] the beating of the waves. The rhythm of such music will stop the voice of the wind blowing in the pines, cause the birds soaring in the air to return to earth and fold their wings, and quiet the waves of the four seas. The enormity of it is unending.

The performance rises to a climax with these musical images. The instruments take on characteristics of natural and ethereal phenomena: the *shō* is the pine wind, the flute the voice of the phoenix, and the *taiko* the waves. Each instrument is so well harmonized with these natural sounds, in fact, that it can still them: performance by these talented Taira noblemen brings harmony and peace. Reverberation (*hihiki*) once more marks this point at which divine communication takes place—it is the physical (both aural and visual) manifestation of the efficacy of the music. The attribution of such power to music here echoes the famous statement made by Ki no Tsurayuki, Japan’s most famous early poet and critic, about the value of well-wrought Japanese poetry, which soothes disruptive forces and brings harmony to the world.³³

³² The *biwa* is a four-stringed Japanese lute, the *shō* a mouth organ with a wooden base, bamboo pipes, and metal reeds, and the *koto* and *wagon* thirteen- and six- or seven-stringed zithers, respectively. Stringed instruments are conventionally thought to facilitate communication with the gods, and all four instruments play in *bugaku* pieces. For detailed descriptions and photographs of these instruments, see de Ferranti 2000. The Taira clan was famed for its musical skill, as described in various episodes from the *Heike*. For several examples see McCullough 1988:226-27, 246-50.

³³ Tsurayuki’s famous preface to the *Kokinshū* (c. 905), the first poetry collection officially sanctioned by the sovereign, challenges the superiority of Chinese by asserting the beauty and power of poetry written in the native Japanese language. Both his preface and the collection itself proved greatly influential on the development of poetry and prose in Japanese.

The power of performance here resonates on several important levels. For the performers of the Daimokutate, it asserts the significance of their own performance, inasmuch as that performance mirrors that described in the narrative. Additionally, however, it affirms the power of this *specific* narrative: by reanimating the spirits of these dead Taira in this context, the Daimokutate performers enable communication between the scions of that house and their tutelary god. Their role here is much like that of the *Heike* performer, who similarly reanimates precisely these Taira nobles to assuage their spirits.

With the fourteenth act, the performance is brought to a conclusion (Kanai 1986:208):

[Shrine Priest speaking] The dances of the youths have run their course and the audience listens attentively to the pine wind that scatters the blossoms. They soak their sleeves with tears sprung from deep emotion, and the god receives their offerings. The rattan blinds of the sanctuary rustle wondrously, and 15 young pages, each with hands laden with treasure, emerge from the sanctuary.

The wonder of the music has been wrought, and all human hearts are inclined to the pine wind as it carries off the last strains of the performance. The Taira are moved to tears, and the blinds separating the god from her audience rustle, again marking a moment of weakening of the border between her realm and that of the audience: music (and more generally, perhaps, performance) activates communication (Kanai 1986:216, Act 15): “[Munemori speaking] ‘How could the beauty of the vermilion shrine gate glinting on the waves possibly be surpassed by even the Zenbōdō in Tenjiku with its 13,000 Buddhas aligned on lotus seats surrounded by music?’”

We return here to the theme of spatial layering, as Itsukushima is compared to yet another sacred space: the Zenbōdō on Mt. Sumeru, mythic home of the 33 deities who live constantly surrounded by music.³⁴ Again, the musical performance enables the intermingling of the spaces of Itsukushima and the Zenbōdō.

Next, the scene of the *torii* shrine gate reflected in the water gives way to another imagined vista, this one seeming to arise from the sea itself (Kanai 1986:221, Act 16):

³⁴ Note the congruence between islands and mountain peaks, both of which rise from the depths and stretch upward from apparent boundaries (the water, the clouds). As with the Palace of Eternal Youth, the Zenbōdō is mapped on both types of landscape in medieval Japan.

[Shigehira speaking] Ah, look there! On the surface of the sea in front of the shrine, five hundred boats are rowing along. There are gangplanks placed across the tops of the boats; many seats are arrayed on them, and they have set up rattan blinds. The boat of the retired sovereign and that of the retired consort stand out from the rest. The tops of the boats are decked with figured silks; figured silks and embroidered brocades are all about, and the banner on the halberd, unfurled by the wind, is dyed crimson as it glistens in the setting sun. There is nothing with which to compare the wonder of this sight!

The “retired sovereign” and the “retired consort” in this passage are otherwise unidentified; the spectacle they create, however, is a stunning visual image, again lavish with silks and brocades. The unfurled banner on the halberd doubles that from the original musical performance described in the piece, and the crimson of the setting sun mirrors the vermilion of the *torii* gate reflected on the water.³⁵ The images developed earlier now seem to have created never-ending reflection and refraction; they repeat in constantly expanding circles, summoning forth parallel realms and performances. At this point, yet another musical performance begins (Kanai 1986:226-27, Act 17): “[Retainer speaking] ‘And then from the boat of the retired consort a musical performance begins and from all the other boats, reeds and strings are poised; thinking to please the god, each strives to be best, and on land and sea the reverberations spread; the awesomeness is incomparable.’” The performance of winds and strings by the Taira nobles before the god has inspired an otherworldly performance, and this duplication causes (again) reverberations on land and sea.

This sort of doubling and cosmological patterning we have seen throughout *Itsukushima* articulates the kind of otherworldly power held, in pre-modern contexts, by performance—be it poetry recitation, calligraphy, or music. More importantly, however, this patterning occurs against the backdrop of the reduplicated spaces manifest on *Itsukushima* (and, of course, the *Daimokutate* stage). The site is, in fact, rendered within the performed narrative in a form evocative of a *mandala*, a pictorial representation of the unity-in-multiplicity of the Buddhist cosmos used for meditation practice. The most famous *mandala* in Japan are the Diamond and Matrix-Store *mandala*, both associated with meditation on Dainichi (one manifestation of the *Itsukushima* Deity), who is usually portrayed in the

³⁵ The color red is further associated with the Taira clan: battle scenes in the *Heike* are coded with the Taira in red versus the Minamoto in white.

center of the *mandala*, surrounded by parallel heavens inhabited by parallel deities.³⁶

In *Itsukushima*, this unity of existence is mirrored in the overlapping of superficially discrete sacred spaces and performances. The vocal narrative enactment of the various levels of ritual musical performance, like meditation on a *mandala*, creates rifts in the usual spatial and temporal alignments that reveal the unity in the apparent multiplicity of those locales. Here *bugaku* performance, enabled by Daimokutate narration, evokes this sort of patterning. As in meditation, successful performance is rewarded by the revelation of the deity: Benzaiten, holding in one hand a bow and in the other the Sword of Commission, now appears.

Kiyomori, the Sword of Commission, Ritual, and Genpei Narrative

The final several acts of *Itsukushima* return specific attention to the Taira, emphasizing Kiyomori's status as scion of that house. In the eighteenth act, Kiyomori asks to see two precious objects that the Itsukushima Shrine is alleged to possess: a fan and the Sword of Commission (which in the Daimokutate is in fact a *naginata* or halberd). In the nineteenth act, the Shrine Priest describes the sword in the context of doubled spaces (Kanai 1986:234): "They say Itsukushima is just like the Dragon Palace. The sword kept in the Dragon Palace is also that kept at this shrine. These mysteries of the gods . . . are in accordance with the promises of the gods'." The identification between the Sword of Commission at Itsukushima and that kept at the Dragon Palace is of great significance within the context of narrative traditions concerning the Genpei War, as we shall see. Most important for the progress of *Itsukushima*, however, is a thematic turn toward the awesomeness of the gods, heightening the audience's anticipation of the appearance of Benzaiten, which occurs in the twenty-second act.

In performance, Benzaiten's emergence is a climactic moment. The actor portraying the god has remained within the bamboo shelter until this point, as the narrative circulated among the other performers. Now the deity emerges, her headdress glittering, enlivening the narrative through her physical presence after long anticipation (approximately an hour and one-half).

³⁶ Images of the Matrix-Store ("Womb" or *Taizōkai*) and Diamond ("Vajradhatu" or *Kongōkai*) *mandala* can be found at Sjoquist 1999.

Benzaiten is significant here as patron deity of both the Taira clan and, more generally, performers. Although her relation to the performing arts does not become an explicit object of narrative in this piece, the ability of musical performance to rouse the god described repeatedly in *Itsukushima* clearly resonates within the general context of medieval musical performance, including, importantly, performed *Heike*. Within the performed *Heike* tradition, the connection between Benzaiten and *Heike* performers is most commonly suggested by episodes referring to her patronage of musical performance, particularly *biwa* playing.³⁷ In many of these, the musician is a Taira clansman, as we see in the “The Visit to Chikubushima” (McCullough 1988:226-27); Taira Tsunemasa (son of Tsunemori) plays the *biwa* so beautifully at another island sanctuary dedicated to Benzaiten that the deity manifests herself in the form of a white dragon. The complex of relationships implied here is an essential link between the *Heike* and the Daimokutate: the *Heike* performer identifies his art with the Taira via the patronage of Benzaiten, and we find again the common medieval association between Benzaiten and dragons, an allusion to her manifestation as the Dragon King’s daughter. Thus, although the Itsukushima pilgrimage central to the Daimokutate is only peripheral to the *Heike*, the relationship between the clan, the shrine, and Benzaiten is vital in the *Heike* narrative, as is a metatextual affinity between performers and Taira nobles (and particularly musicians).

The deity expresses her delight with Kiyomori’s many gifts to the shrine and promises (Kanai 1986:245): “I am truly Kiyomori’s guardian deity. I bestow the *naginata* known as the Sword of Commission upon Kiyomori; I give it to Kiyomori’.”

Kiyomori kneels to receive the sword in both hands, and in the twenty-third act bows in obeisance—one of the few physical actions within this narrative performance—as he receives the sword from the god. In the twenty-fourth act, Benzaiten speaks again (Kanai 1986:258-59):

Now, Kiyomori, listen well: I am at an assembly of the gods. Amaterasu asks that her clan be given control of the world. The Kasuga Deity asks that its clan be given control of the world. And Hachiman asks that the Minamoto be given control of the world. Among all these requests of the gods, I declare that at this moment the control of the world shall go to Kiyomori. By giving you this sword to pacify the realm, I insure that there will be no cause for concern in the world.

³⁷ Benzaiten is classically depicted in painting and sculpture holding a *biwa*; the special connection between *biwa* players and Benzaiten stems in large part from this portrayal of the deity.

In the twenty-fifth and twenty-sixth acts, the Taira party dances in gratitude and celebration, culminating in the *fusho* dance.

The introduction of this assembly of the gods arguing over the Sword of Commission concretely returns the Daimokutate to the *Heike* narrative. The assembly described in the twenty-fourth act derives from an episode entitled “The Young Samurai’s Dream” found in most recitational *Heike* variants.³⁸ In the *Heike* passage, a samurai in service to one of Kiyomori’s retainers dreams that he sees a meeting of the gods resembling the one described by Benzaiten in the Daimokutate: the Kasuga Deity, Hachiman, and the Itsukushima Deity all claim the sword for their favored clans. The Kasuga Deity supports the Fujiwara, an aristocratic family that had, until the rise of the Taira, monopolized top governmental positions. Hachiman, god of war and patron of the Minamoto, asks that it be given to Minamoto Yoritomo, currently living in exile. The Itsukushima Deity wishes it to remain with the Taira. The presiding god (Amaterasu, in most variants) declares that it shall be passed to Yoritomo.

In the *Heike*, the samurai’s dream account is included shortly before the onset of the Genpei War, in an episode describing numerous inauspicious signs that predict the imminent downfall of the house of Kiyomori, now a despotic ruler. The implied cause of the disagreement among the gods in the samurai’s dream is Kiyomori’s failure to wield authority justly. A similar permutation of the dream-interpretation episode appears in the *Genpei jōsuiki*, and an oblique reference is also made in a dream-interpretation sequence in the *Heiji monogatari*.³⁹ Significantly, the meeting of gods detailed in the Daimokutate seems to predate that of the dream sequence of the *Heike* variants; here the sword is first given to Kiyomori.

What, then, is the significance of this *Heike* narrative as the frame (within the frame) for the ritual performance in *Itsukushima*? Most centrally, it points to Daimokutate’s engagement with an important *Heike* preoccupation: the loss of the sword Kusanagi, one of the three sacred regalia, in the Battle of Dan-no-ura. Although the general tenor of most

³⁸ The “Strange Occurrences” sequence of portentous dreams immediately precedes the beginning of the end for Kiyomori and, after his death, his descendants. In English, see McCullough 1988:171-73.

³⁹ The *Genpei jōsuiki* is a much longer variant of the *Heike* thought to have been composed in the Muromachi period (c. 1333-1567). The *Heiji monogatari* recounts the Heiji Uprising of 1159/60 in which the Minamoto were defeated by the Taira under Kiyomori.

Heike variants leans either toward lament for and placation of the losing side or celebration of the victors, all are confronted with the task of explaining cracks in the political, social, and symbolic infrastructures caused by the war. And the most difficult from a cosmological point of view was the loss of the sword bequeathed on the royal family by their mythological ancestor, the sun goddess Amaterasu.

Compensatory narratives about the sword abound in both *Heike* variants and other medieval works. Most texts include a sequence relating that, after the war, diviners learned that the eight-year-old sovereign Antoku was in fact the reincarnation of an eight-headed serpent who in the legendary past had been killed by the god Susano-o. As Susano-o cut through one of the beast's tails, the story goes, he found Kusanagi, which he later presented to Amaterasu, his sister. It then was entrusted to the royal family as a marker of the goddess' sanction. Medieval accounts state that after Kusanagi's loss it was revealed that the serpent was in fact the Dragon King, and by jumping into the sea with the sword Antoku was restoring it to the Dragon Palace, its original home.⁴⁰ In addition to the *Heike*, this story is overtly or obliquely mentioned in numerous dramatic and narrative works, including the *Taiheiki*, a war tale concerning a conflict in the thirteenth century between the Kamakura government and the royal house. The prominence during the medieval period of the *Nihon shoki* (c. 720), an ancient record of the mythological origins of the realm, derives in large part from its inclusion of the story of Susano-o, the necessary antecedent for the narrative of the serpent's return as Sovereign Antoku to reclaim the sword (Bialock 2002-03:276-81).

Although the Sword of Commission in the *Daimokutate* is not specifically identified as Kusanagi, a slippage enabling a partial conflation is suggested in the play by the overlaying of Itsukushima Shrine with the Dragon Palace and the revelation that the Sword of Commission resides in both. Itsukushima is the Dragon Palace, and Antoku resides there: by the same sort of metonymic relationship employed throughout the *Daimokutate*, the holder of Kusanagi thus becomes the holder of the Sword of Commission as well.⁴¹ By pointing to the well-known *Heike* narrative, the *Daimokutate* engages the same problematic puzzle at the core of the *Heike*:

⁴⁰ For the *Heike* episode, see "Swords" in McCullough 1988:383-86.

⁴¹ Although Antoku is generally identified as the Dragon King, there is another potential slippage here between Antoku and the Dragon King's daughter: both are identified as eight-year-olds and both are residents of the Dragon Palace.

what is the meaning of the royal seat bereft of one of its divine markers? And what does it mean that the sovereign removed it?

As a ritual performance art, *Itsukushima* contextualizes these questions in a framework that defies the conventions of narrative: the piece is a continuous evocation of parallel places and performances, a *mandala*-like visual and aural depiction of a universe of repetition, where each manifestation resonates and is endlessly refracted by others. Until the appearance of Benzaiten, the reduplications model space: Itsukushima is an incarnation of heavenly realms; music at Itsukushima is that of those realms. At this point, however, the existence of the sword at both Itsukushima during a pilgrimage by the Taira at the height of their power and at the Dragon Palace, where Kusanagi resided after their fall, also suggests a negation of the temporal dimension. And without time as its vehicle, narrative, too, collapses.

The effect of using the same *mandala*-like patterning to order time as well as space is profound. Without a progression of actions through a teleological narrative, troubling questions about causality, responsibility, and loss, so central to the narrativization of the Genpei War, are rendered meaningless. The ritual performance, then, is very much Turner's "magic mirror," which refracts as well as reflects. It absorbs the various narratives contained in *Itsukushima*—the Taira pilgrimage, the ritual performances, the spaces in which they are performed—into a representation that resists plot development toward resolution. Instead, *Itsukushima* focuses on the timeless and omnipresent reality that contains all truths simultaneously. And it relies on the efficaciousness of music to reveal their underlying harmony.

The *iriku* that ends the piece articulates this perspective (Kanai 1986: 303):

And so peace has been brought to the earth. The good fortune of those who prayed to the god is like the green of the pine that lives for a thousand years. The rains of the four seasons fall in their time; the winds that blow five times a year do not rustle the branches of the trees. Rain dampens the soil of the land, and there is no end to prosperity. The blessing of this shrine is ultimate.

This is one more a manifestation of the only causal relationship within the narrative: beautiful patterning of ritual music (and performance) brings about a harmonious realm. All other narrative movement is toward demonstrating this truth and negating a sense of temporal and spatial distinction, toward a representation of reality in which spaces and times are not contiguous but piled upon each other, a reality evoked in a *mandala*-in-performance rather than a tale.

The sword, indicative of ritual, military, and political power, becomes the instrument for the refiguring of the compensatory *Heike* narrative within the Daimokutate. In this context, it comes to stand symbolically and metonymically for all of the processes enacted in the play: the creation of the land, the representation of imperial authority, the representation of military authority, the glory of the Taira house upon which it is bestowed, and the grandeur of the ritual dances and music that summon forth the god and reveal the ultimate unity in multiplicity of the sword and of reality. It prefigures the loss of Kusanagi, and also the end of the Taira line, when the gods decide to pass it on to Yoritomo; and that transfer of power is, ultimately, the unspoken narrative underlying this piece.

What significance, then, does Daimokutate have in the development of Genpei narrative? Daimokutate, like the *nō* drama, is a genre in which time and space are collapsed. But here this collapsing is enacted upon the historically difficult narratives of the fall of Kiyomori and the loss of Kusanagi, traumatic episodes of a sort that also seem to generate *kōwakamai* and other narrative interpretations of other Genpei episodes. In Daimokutate, episodes are taken up and treated as worthy of repetition and reinterpretation by performers not only in society's upper echelons, but also in local communities as part of their annual ritual practices by the Tokugawa period. Even by Eishun's time, it is evident that performers were locals, probably only nominally educated if at all. The profound cultural significance of these events to the newly empowered warrior class is self-evident; that some of the thorniest concerns from the *Heike* had spread to local communities attests to the growing awareness at all levels of society of a shared cultural (and perhaps even proto-national) history that centered on that warrior class.

This choice of subject matter thus points toward the import of this initiatory performance as something beyond imprinting familiar historical (warrior) identities onto youths as they ritually enact their fitness as men. Daimokutate is also intricately involved in the narrative dilemma shared by other Genpei narrative from this period: how do you explain the difficult or inexplicable past to link it to a viable present? Through the re-contextualization of this episode in the non-narrative realm of ritual, Daimokutate offers one somewhat unique approach: it negates the very validity of the questions narrative usually seeks to answer. Like the performance itself, this proper patterning evokes a cosmic harmony, one that puts the realm at rest and calms fierce warriors—a significant claim to make in the local communities that were increasingly burdened by the needs of the dominant warrior class through the age of warring states (c. 1450-1600) and the Tokugawa period. More than a coming-of-age ritual, then, Daimokutate

is also a placatory performance, aimed not only at the god but also the spirits of the warriors restless in the other world and, most importantly, the members of the society created in the wake of the Genpei War as they tried to make sense of their present. It is through the ritualization of the narration of ritual that, ultimately, a workable cosmology is created for the chaotic and unpredictable medieval world from which Daimokutate emerged.⁴²

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Elaborate Versionings: Characteristics of Emergent Performance in Three Print/Oral/Aural Poets

[*eCompanion at www.oraltradition.org¹]

Kenneth Sherwood

From Page to Performance

The significant influence of oral literature, song, and vernacular speech forms on nineteenth- and twentieth-century American literature is generally recognized by scholars, teachers, and editors. The authoritative, four-volume *American Poetry* series published by the Library of America serves as an index of this consensus, with sections on anonymous ballads, blues lyrics, popular song, Native American poetry (song and narrative), folk songs, and spirituals.² These and other popular teaching anthologies that represent poems from oral contexts effectively subsume the poems within an economy in which they are appreciated, taught, and analyzed as though they were originally written, literary texts—according minimal attention to the mechanisms of transposition (from performance to print).³

¹ To listen to the four performances described in this article, visit the eCompanion at www.oraltradition.org.

² A brief list of American writers from the vast catalogue of oral/literate cross-pollinations would have to include: Walt Whitman, seen as an originator of distinctively American poetry, who drew upon contemporary speech forms and the Old Testament; Ezra Pound, who studied and translated the troubadour poetry of Provence (as did his apprentice, Paul Blackburn); Langston Hughes, Sterling Brown, and James Weldon Johnson (among other poets associated with the Harlem Renaissance), who drew upon vernacular oral genres, blues lyrics, and African American sermons, as did writers associated with the Beats, like Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsburg; Jerome Rothenberg, Ann Waldman, and others associated with Ethnopoetics, who translated and incorporated elements of the traditional poetries of the Americas into their writing.

³ The texts have been collected, transcribed, translated, and edited. In this highly respected anthology, print sources are indicated in the notes; typical of academic and general-interest literary collections, it omits detailed contextual information about performance.

Given the general lack of appreciation, within literary criticism, of the oral/textual dynamics relevant to orally produced poetries, it should come as no surprise that little attention has been paid to the analysis of the oral delivery of poems composed on paper. Should a “poetry reading” be classified as a dramatic reading, a recitation, or a performance? Can the oral delivery of a written poem constitute a significant or primary means of publication and reception? These have not often seemed like fundamental questions or meaningful distinctions for literary criticism.

The very phrase “poetry reading” shows how criticism marginalizes performance, tending to see it as subsidiary, a secondary mode of presentation.⁴ The reluctance of literary criticism to conceive of orality as a medium for modern poetry is at least partly a reflection of the success, over a half-century ago, of New Criticism in casting a focus upon the autonomous text. Scholars of oral poetry have derived useful interpretive guidance from focussing on “performance as the enabling event” (Foley 1995:27), with a consequent emphasis on the “radical integration, or situatedness, of verbal art in cultural context” (*ibid.*:30); New Criticism moved literary study in the opposite direction: towards an approach to analysis as an interaction between reader and text, with a minimization of cultural, intertextual, or authorial context.⁵

This essay considers the implications of situating literate, postmodern poetry in a performance context. Using recordings/transcriptions of “poetry readings” by Amiri Baraka, Kamau Brathwaite, and Cecilia Vicuña, its aims are: 1) to demonstrate that each event constitutes an emergent performance; 2) to explore how the performativity draws upon classically oral dynamics⁶;

⁴ Several recent critical texts, such as *Wireless Imagination* (Kahn and Whitehead 1992), *Close Listening* (Bernstein 1998), and *Sound States* (Morris 1997), have initiated a discourse about sound and performance in literature. The special topics of each tend to circumscribe the implications, limiting them to more marginal avant-garde or intermedia contexts such as radio art.

⁵ The remarkable shifts in literary critical methods during the second half of the twentieth-century—from Structuralism, Psychoanalysis, and Marxist criticism to Feminism, Deconstruction, New Historicism and gender and ethnicity theory—have opened certain contextual or extratextual spheres and showed the text itself to be less than stable and determinate but, with respect to performance, have effectively left the published text firmly anchored as the object of literary study.

⁶ Each of the poets analyzed below has some direct and indirect knowledge of some traditional verbal art. I am not, however, arguing that their work represents a specific continuation of particular oral traditions, only that it is informed by these traditions and as such needs to be received performatively.

and 3) to show how the emergent qualities of the performances are achieved through the specific means of “elaboration” and “versioning.” By means of elaboration and versioning, these poems break through into performativity; literary criticism cannot be content to receive them as conventional texts but must consider their emergent dimensions.

Looking at print poetry within a performance context implicitly creates a friction with the lingering, teleological narrative (of the passage from orality to literacy), but it explicitly challenges the habitual privileging of the written text in literary studies. Scholars of both written and oral traditional literature have often operated, perhaps under the guidance of the paradigms of their fields, as if boundary questions belonged properly to the other’s domain. The literary critic who ventures into the terrain of oral tradition and orality frequently finds such exploration discouraged. Beginning with a classic text in the scholarship, she or he finds Albert Lord claiming that “once the oral technique is lost, it is never regained” (1960: 129). Reflective as it may be of the situation of the oral epic in Yugoslavia, the extrapolation to oral art more generally serves as a rebuff to the literary critic. Committed to a strict definition of oral poetry—centered on the use of formula and composition-in-performance (the necessity for which, he quite rightly observes, is obviated by literate technologies)—Lord holds that there can be no transitional texts, because literacy impels oral composition in the direction of “simple performance of a fixed text” (130).⁷ Walter Ong is led

⁷ I draw here from the classic *Singer of Tales* (1960) because it is the text with which a literary scholar is most likely to be familiar. Perusing subsequent work, one notes that whatever softening occurred in his position, Lord continued to take a course observing the Great Divide, as when he worried: “Just as there are those who would overemphasize ‘oral performance,’ there are those who would underemphasize, to the point of eliminating, the concept of ‘traditional’” (1986:468); and “oral traditional literature without a clear distinction between it and ‘written literature’ ceases to exist” (*idem*). This boundary policing continues in *The Singer Resumes the Tale* (1995), where the notion of a transitional text is cautiously admitted, in relation to medieval texts particularly, but the focus on delineating the oral and written as sharply as possible (a maintenance of the concerns that led to investigations in formula density) continues: “. . . at what point does a singer pass from being traditional to being nontraditional? Could it be that point when he does begin to think of really fixed lines, when he actually memorizes them?” (1995:213). The continued preoccupation with oral-formulaic narrative over other forms of oral art and the notion that fixity marks a poem as non-oral does not invite ready application of his thinking to contemporary poetry readings.

One should perhaps stop short of venturing an overall critique of this dichotomization of oral tradition and literature, given both the necessity to establish a discipline and methodology for oral study and the existence of an ongoing discussion that exceeds the sphere of this essay. I do want to emphasize that the formative basis for oral traditional study has effected a kind of barrier against literary criticism.

to a similar theorization of orality and literacy as discrete, by his biding interest in the psychodynamics of orality (that is, how literacy reshapes consciousness). The passage from orality into literacy is seen by Ong as a kind of irreversible, teleological narrative (the exteriorization of ideas: orality giving way to literacy). In this view, one might engage in the identification of oral elements in contemporary literature, but they would at best constitute an “oral residue” (115) or a diminished kind of “secondary orality” (115)—a formulation that seems almost to validate the marginalization of the performative in literary contexts.

Of course, as any discipline must when isolated, literary criticism suffers when it respects the absolute divide between the oral and the literate. Among scholars and theorists of orality, interest in the “interface of oral and written literature” has recently grown, leading as far as the questioning “if in fact these are still viable opposite categories” (Foley 1995:107). This readiness to draw on oral theory to explore intermediate texts opens a door for literary critics, though they have not been universally ready to follow.⁸ For instance, slam poetry—a primary instance of contemporary “voiced texts,” poetry which is composed in print but performed orally and received aurally (Foley 2002:39)—is often discounted as non-literary by critics, according to Maria Damon. She critiques as retrograde the perspective common in literary study that holds that the theatrical qualities of delivery and appeal to audience in performance-based poetics are irreconcilable with aesthetic quality (1988:326-30).

The poems I consider are all products of written composition; their composers are established authors, each credited with many books. Because their publication (performance) and reception are both written and oral, these poems are not identical to what Foley calls “voiced texts” (such as the slam poem, which is a written composition performed and received orally/aurally).⁹ But poems that may be encountered both in print by readers and in

⁸ Sobol deals with the “distinction between oral traditional and oral interpretive modes,” or intermediate texts in relation to storytelling (1992:72).

⁹ John Foley’s “system of media categories” proposes four main “guises” of oral poetry: oral performance, voiced texts, voices from the past, and written oral poems (2002:39); they are distinguished in terms of the means of composition, performance, and reception, which provides a more subtle means of thinking about texts than does the simple “oral/literate” binary opposition. While it has an unfortunate print connotation, I must substitute the term publication for Foley’s performance because the argument of this study involves the claim that print-published poetry may become “performative” when also made public through oral means.

performance by audiences are located upon a curious threshold. Does the poem composed by a writer become a voiced text whenever it is read aloud? When its initial publication is oral? When its maker claims to have prioritized the voiced over the printed form? When its audience receives the voiced text as the authoritative one? As tangled as these questions may be, some means of figuring when performance becomes constitutive is necessary if literary criticism is to become capable of responding to print/oral/aural poetry.

Three Performances

Amiri Baraka

Do we enter a performance each time and in whatever context a poem is spoken aloud? If we want to mobilize some of the concerns of orality more selectively, perhaps we can adopt the notion that performances can be distinguished from non-performances by a set of features which “key” performances (framing or marking them for an audience). According to Richard Bauman in *Verbal Art as Performance* (1977), these keying features may include “special codes; figurative language; parallelism; special paralinguistic features (e.g., speaking tone, volume, style); special formulae; appeal to tradition; disclaimer of performance” (16). Of the keys in this catalogue, paralinguistic features have special bearing for this study. The contemporary poet Amiri Baraka has a reputation for giving performances in which he uses his voice to skillfully and dramatically work with paralinguistic features highlighted by Bauman, such as “rate, length, pause duration, pitch contour, tone of voice, loudness, and stress” (20).¹⁰

¹⁰ Bauman bemoans that fact that in the print publication of traditional oral poetry “paralinguistic features, by their very nature, tend not to be captured in the transcribed or published versions of texts, with the exception of certain aspects of prosody in clearly poetic forms. . . . [and] in many cases, especially before the ready availability of tape recorders, the conditions of recording artistic texts *required* that conventional paralinguistic patterns be distorted . . .” (19-20). In the study of traditional oral poetry, sound recordings have become essential for addressing the issue of the exclusion of paralinguistic features from transcriptions/translations. These extratextual elements in some performance traditions may be exactly what constitute the telling of a story or poem as verbal art in the eyes of the culture. At the same time, these features, along with other markers such as parallelism, serve as more than simple frames of performance. They play a powerful role in the casting of the form of the art. In this sense, one might argue that they are as crucial to the poetics of the oral poem as is end-rhyme in an English sonnet.

Amiri Baraka (formerly Leroi Jones) began to earn renown as a writer within the context of the Beat and then the Black Arts movements, working with other Black Nationalists to produce plays and poetry performances that were both political and populist. Importantly, this reading scene meant that for many writers oral performance became a significant (usually the initial and sometimes the sole) means of publication. Lorenzo Thomas observes that in the Black Arts period “the poetry reading as a characteristic mode of *publication* reinforced poets’ tendency to employ ‘dramatic’ structures and direct first-person address” (1988:310). In explaining Baraka’s poetics, Thomas emphasizes a further pair of touchstones: projective verse,¹¹ a post-war avant-garde movement, which emphasized that “poetry is an act of *speech*, that its element is *breath*, and that writing it down is a skill” (308); and the black vernacular, which he accessed by exploiting the “time-honored techniques of street corner orators” and “rhetorical conventions of the black church” (309). The speeches and sermons become like traditional models, so that in the poetry “what you hear is the speaking voice that trespasses into song; and an antiphonal interaction with the congregation that reveals the same structures that inform the early ‘collective improvisation’ of New Orleans jazz, bebop, and the avant-garde jazz of the 1960s” (310).

Amiri Baraka’s poem titled “In the Funk World” is collected in his 1996 volume *Funk Lore*.¹² A diminutive, four-line poem in the mode of a sardonic riddle, it immediately precedes a sequence of similarly short, pithy and direct poems that Baraka ironically names Lowcoup.

¹¹ The influence of projective verse on the poetics of Amiri Baraka has additional connections with oral tradition. The phrase was coined by the influential poet and idiosyncratic theorist Charles Olson (1997) in an essay of the same name. Through his polemical essays and as rector of the experimental Black Mountain College (with which some of the most influential figures in twentieth-century writing, music, architecture, and dance were associated), Olson was a major figure in American poetry after World War II. His essay not only proposed ideas about breath and speech rhythm as essential to all poetry (leading to a kind of reoralization in United States poetry), but also proposed that poets make use of the typewriter and contemporary printing technology to produce visual texts that could serve as scores for performance. His application of this theory reveals his own poems to be visually formatted as scores in only the loosest sense, but the spirit was influential. Not incidentally, Olson, and the movement he championed, led ethnopoetics scholar Dennis Tedlock (1999) to develop his own method of transcription that premiered in *Finding the Center*.

¹² In their extended, discursive play with speech-driven rhythms, poems like “The Politics of Rich Painters,” “Black Dada Nihilismus,” and “Pres Spoke in a Language” are perhaps more representative of Baraka’s work over five decades than is the minimalistic “In the Funk World” or other lowcoup.

If Elvis Presley / is
King
Who is James Brown,
God?

The following analysis of the performativity of the poem is based on Baraka's delivery of the performance at an October 1996 event in Buffalo, New York. The reading was part of a celebration for fellow poet Robert Creeley that was sponsored by City University and a local arts organization and was hosted by a performance art center located in a former windshield wiper factory. The audience was comprised largely of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, community members, and art patrons—most of whom had some previous acquaintance with Baraka's poetry, at least through his books. On this evening, Baraka augmented the poem known to readers of his *Funk Lore* in several ways, skillfully controlling its paralinguistic dimensions and demonstrating a particular kind of performativity. The transcription below reveals significant changes in the language and marks variations in rate, tone, loudness, and stress.¹³

FIGURE 1

In the **Funk World**

Well you know, we created ah, you know, small band music, in New Orleans, and uh, they said it was
Dixie Land, and then we created Big Band, and they said it was Swing but it didn't swing,

[audience laughter]

and then they told us that, uh, Paul White Man, was the King of Swing and no, he was the king
of jazz, that's right, Benny Good Man was the king of swing **What I want**
to kno___w

In the Funk World
If El_vis Presley
is King

Who is Ja__mes Brown?
God?

¹³ To listen to the audio clip (Baraka 1996b), visit the eCompanion to this article at www.oraltradition.org. For the printed text, see Baraka 1996a.

With the announcement of the title—a framing gesture—Baraka introduces the poem in a strong voice. The pace and tone with which the next lines are delivered give them the feel of an improvisation, perhaps even of an aside. This quickly, quietly delivered historical catalogue of the misrepresentations and appropriations of African American musical forms is marked by the modulation of such paralinguistic features as rate, pause, pitch, tone, loudness and stress. As the listeners lean forward to audit the rapid, soft stream of words, they are brought up short by the final phrase of the second line, which is shouted and followed by a pause. The short lines that make up the second half of the poem are delivered forcefully, with a definite, rhythmic timing that establishes a contrast and leads to a close that arrives with the force of a comic punchline.

To begin with the methodological questions raised by what we might call the new material: Do we consider the additional material as an intervening “commentary”? Or is it a part of the poem? It follows the announcement of the title but has not, as far as I know, been published in any of Baraka’s books. Does the second articulation of the title render the prior one a false start? Would an audience member encountering the poem for the first time and listening with closed eyes respond in the same way as a reader following the printed text in *Funk Lore*? Whether improvised or prepared, the off-script catalogue that Baraka included in this performance establishes the poem’s theme and so increases the pointedness of the punchline, even as it sets up the aural contrast with the published closing, which is delivered in an exhortative style.

Evidencing some of the characteristic “keys to performance” proposed by Bauman, this Baraka clip exemplifies how such keys frame a given event as a performance. Regarding it as a potential performance allows for thinking about what significance the distinction between performance and recitation holds. Baraka’s approach to the occasion reflects what Bauman identifies as a central element of a true performance—an emergent dimension. As an emergent event, the performance must be dynamic, in flux at some level (1977:40):

The point is that completely novel and completely fixed texts represent the poles of an ideal continuum, and that between the poles lies the range of emergent text structures to be found in empirical performance. The study of the factors contributing to the emergent quality of the oral literary text promises to bring about a major reconceptualization of the nature of the text, freeing it from the apparent fixity it assumes when abstracted from performance and placed on the written page.

The augmentation of performance in Baraka's "In the Funk World" marks its affinity with oral composition-in-performance, in which, according to Ruth Finnegan, "there [is] no concept of a correct version. Each performance [is] unique in its own right" (1992:120). Aspects of composition in performance have been identified in most oral traditions, and characteristically it is expected among the performers to demonstrate their skill by incorporating into the piece current events, audience response, even an accident in the midst of the performance itself. And though Baraka has composed the poem in writing, using a notebook or a typewriter, he draws on particular African-American oral forms such as blues lyrics, the dozens, and jazz improvisation in his performances, which do indeed vary from event to event.¹⁴

The cluster of generative or improvisational moves that distinguish an emergent performance from a poetry recitation can be indicated by the term "elaboration." Though a common practice, elaboration is not always reflected in the transcription of a traditional oral performance; in some cases, extended performances are reduced to minimal texts (even sometimes made to resemble haiku) and then celebrated for the spare aesthetic (Sherwood 2001). In literary study, the published print version of a poem may occupy a similar space. But when recognized as an emergent technique, elaboration gives powerful new weight to the particulars of the event, specifically "keying" it as a poetry performance, and distinguishing it from a recitation or reading.

Cecilia Vicuña

Where Baraka, operating with text in hand, enacts an elaboration that augments the source text through the addition of new material and vocal shaping, Cecilia Vicuña gives a demonstration of another way in which a minimal text may be elaborated, through the repetition and variation of patterns implicit in the source text. The Chilean-born poet and artist, who now works out of New York, explores the themes of sound, voice, writing, and weaving in all her major volumes of English and bilingual poetry (*Unravelling Words*, *The Precarious*, *El Templo*, *InStan*). Recognized as an

¹⁴ The degree of variation between performances will vary with the poet. As in the study of traditional oral poetry, literary analyses of voiced texts manifesting elaboration will want to theorize this phenomenon. It may be useful to stipulate that some degree of variation is necessary for a rendering to move from being a recitation or dramatic reading to a true performance. For instance, the staged reading one might expect of an actor, which is memorized and rehearsed towards a singular ideal, may need to be distinguished from a performance.

installation artist as well as a poet, Vicuña frequently prepares the site for a poetry performance in advance by weaving threads throughout a space.¹⁵ Her Texas performance began with the silent screening of a video featuring dancers weaving on a Hudson River pier at twilight. As the video closed, Vicuña began singing from her seat at the rear of the audience. Rising, she slowly moved to the podium, still singing and using a hand-held light to cast thread-like lines upon the walls, ceiling, and audience.

Published Version: <i>El Templo</i> (np 16)		Performance Transcription	
Adiano y Azumbar		Adiano y Azumbar	
Adiano y azumbar	1	Adia__no	1a
se huaca el purpur	2	Adia__no	1a
		Adia__no	1a
Temblando siempre	3	Adia__no	1a
su pobre arenal	4		
		adiano y azumbar	1
Con qué celo	5	adiano y azumbar	1
se adumbra	6	se huaca el purpur	2
		se huaca el purpur	2
su manantial	7		
		Temblando siempre	3
Con qué celo	8	Temblando siempre	3
bebe	9	su pobre arenal	4
		su pobre arenal	4
Su seco	10		
caudal	11	Con qué celo	5
		se adumbra	6
El manque y el hue	12	Con qué celo	5
apurpurándose están.	13		
		adumbra su manantial	6a/7
[np 16]		su manantial	7
		Con qué celo	8
		Con qué celo	8
		bebe	9
		Su seco	10
		cau / dal	11
		El manque y el hue	12
		El manque y el hue	12
		apur___/ pur___/ ándose	13a
		apurpurándose están.	13

Coming early in the performance, the poem “Adiano y Azumbar” was published in *El Templo* as a text that consists of 13 lines (only one of which is repeated). Exemplifying elaboration through performance, the performance of the poem that Vicuña sang (in March of 2002, in Odessa,

¹⁵ See chapter two of Sherwood 1997 for an extended performance analysis in relation to Andean aesthetics. Further context for Andean cultural connections as well as discussion of Vicuña’s installation and visual art can be gained from the essays collected in de Zengher 1997.

Texas) might easily be transcribed at twice the length of the print version, or 26 lines with 14 repetitions.¹⁶

Elaboration, through the repetition of lines, stanzas, and whole songs, is common in the songs of traditional oral cultures (Evers and Molina 1990; Densmore 1910) and Vicuña's study of Andean song influences her performance style. Without being mechanical, Vicuña patterns her performance repetitions in a delicately proportioned manner, extending or elaborating the material in the print-text.¹⁷ The first stanza consists of the four-fold repetition of the first word in the print-text, "adiano," which is itself drawn out. The second and third stanzas each double the lines in the first two print-text stanzas (lines 1-4). Stanza four begins a series of partial repetitions that, with the insertion of pauses at variance with the print-text, effectively present a new, syncopated lineation. The penultimate stanzas of both versions are nearly identical, with a slight pause interrupting the performed "cau/dal" (perf.-tran., line 11). The final stanza returns to the pattern of absolute doubling with a repetition (lines 12, 12) then a partial repetition with the single word "apurpurándose" elongated before the poem concludes with the final line, "apurpurándose están." Review of several of Vicuña's performances suggests that the patterning is neither fixed nor predetermined; the unit and frequency of repetition varies to suit the expressive emphasis of the poem.

The mode of elaboration that Vicuña adopts varies from poem to poem and performance to performance. In most performances, one also hears Vicuña move into a purely improvisational mode, relating a narrative or spontaneously composing a song. She sometimes performs an occasion-specific poem, composed on paper but not previously published. The poem above, published in facing Spanish and English, was performed in Spanish alone, perhaps in acknowledgment of the large number of Spanish speakers

¹⁶ To listen to an audio clip (Vicuña 2002), visit the eCompanion to this article at www.oraltradition.org. For the printed version, see Vicuña 2001.

¹⁷ Rosa Alcalá's translation is as follows: "Ancient and Star Flowered / the purpur huacates divine // Transforming dunes // With such fervor / she enshadows // With such fervor / she drinks // Her arid / riches // The manque and the hue / dusking purpur." Vicuña glosses "el manque y el hue" as the condor-shaped mountain watching over Santiago, Chile; the Quechua *huaca purpur*, as "arid sacredness [and an] ever-changing dune" of Peru's Viru valley. She associates *purpur*, a bilingual pun, with the polluting haze that produces brilliant sunsets in Santiago. Numbering in the righthand column marks repetitions and repetitions with variation in relation to the print-text. Since many of the repetitions are absolute, they do not constitute parallelism in the strictest sense; but the effect on reception is similar, and helps to key performance in this case.

in the audience. The Texas performance from which the last poem was drawn allows me to sketch out a second way in which print-texts may be inserted into an oral/aural performance context.

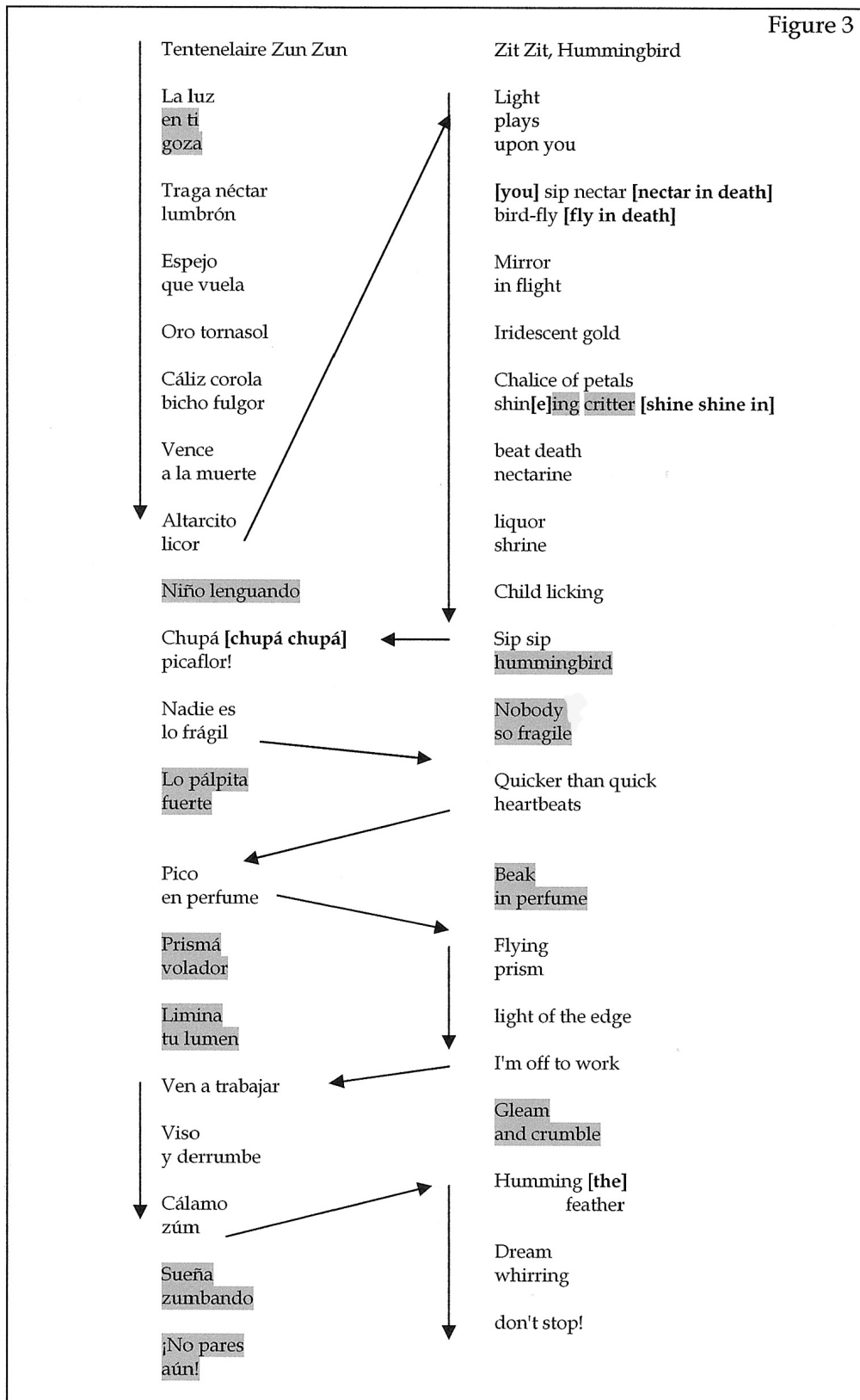
With “Tentenelaire Zun Zun” (“Zit Zit, Hummingbird”), Vicuña offered a more characteristically bilingual performance of a text published years earlier in the familiar, facing-page format of bilingual editions. However, Vicuña chooses not to simply voice the piece as published, beginning on the left in Spanish and following with the righthand English. Rather, the performance dances deliberately back and forth between Spanish and English, creating a new arrangement—a poem in two languages that does not fully correspond to either of the two published versions.¹⁸

Vicuña’s performance cannot be called oral composition in the usual sense; it begins from a text, and with the exception of the improvised “death” in two lines and an additional “the,” little new material is added. Yet the virtuoso oscillation between Spanish and English, along with selective omissions and repetitions, present a poem that is quite unlike the print-text (see Figure 3).¹⁹ Even without considering the expressive contributions of the stylized vocal qualities (paralinguistic features keying performance), it seems clear that in the active rearrangement of the poem’s elements a new work has been constructed—a version.

Versioning—creating a radically new arrangement of a poem during performance—shifts the literary critic’s orientation with respect to “the” poem even more dramatically than elaboration, particularly when the aesthetic impact of the version is comparable to that of the print text. In writing about the effects of performance, Henry Sayre observes (1995:94): “The concept of the ‘original,’ the self-contained and transcendent masterwork, containing certain discernible intentions, has been undermined, and a plurality of possible performative gestures has supplanted it.” This seems to be an apt characterization of the effect of Vicuña’s versioning with, perhaps, one qualification. Sayre’s description recalls the indeterminacy that deconstruction proposes as an ineluctable aspect of textuality. As deployed by Vicuña, at least, the performance does not call meaning into question so much as it invites a sensual, creative engagement in the continuation of meaning-making (by virtue of the metaphors of song, flight, weaving, and so on).

¹⁸ In the following transcription, the course of the reading is mapped graphically with arrows. Omitted words and lines are matted gray; added or varied language is bracketed and printed in boldface.

¹⁹ To listen to an audio clip (Vicuña 2002), visit the eCompanion to this article at www.oraltradition.org. For the printed text, see Vicuña 1992:74-77.



Kamau Brathwaite

The emergent dimensions of the oral performance by Kamau Brathwaite are more subtle than those identified in the analyses of Baraka and Vicuña above. Deeply committed to the forging of what he calls Nation Language—an English reflective of the sociohistorical richness of his Afro-Caribbean vernacular speech—Brathwaite also draws on observations of oral performance in Ghana, where he worked for some years. The way in which aspects of traditional orality serve an emergent function in Brathwaite’s work can perhaps be understood in light of comments by Henry Sayre about literary performance (1995:94):

A good way to think of performance is to realize that in it the potentially disruptive forces of the “outside” (what is “outside” the text—the physical space in which it is presented, the other media it might engage or find itself among, the various frames of mind the diverse members of a given audience might bring to it, and, over time, the changing forces of history itself) are encouraged to assert themselves.

For Brathwaite, the spoken language and the lived culture of Caribbean peoples have been historically relegated to a space outside the literary realm. His project involves opening up poetry to history, to excluded registers of language and, in particular, to forms of language that sustain diasporic memory or the sounds and physical rhythms of island life.

Music and song have had a place in all three poets’ work. In several poems from the same event discussed above, Baraka explicitly brings his poems into relation with music by humming or scatting recognizable jazz melodies to frame a poem or to establish a syncopation between word and song. Vicuña delivered one of the poems analyzed above by singing it, introducing a melody; she also often frames a performance with chants. Brathwaite’s poem, “Angel/Engine,” published most recently in the revised *Ancestors* (2001), opens itself up to dance, drumming, and the interactive space of ritual. The poem loosely narrates a woman’s spiritual possession by Shango, whom he explains is the “Yoruba and Black New World god of lightning and thunder.” Shango is also closely related to Ogun, his complement “in the ‘destructive-creative principle’ One of their (technological) apotheoses is the train. The jazz rhythms of John Coltrane . . . and the forward gospel impetus of Aretha Franklin . . . are other aspects of this” (2001:101).

Brathwaite performed a portion of “Angel/Engine” at the University of Minnesota in October of 1997 in the context of a combined talk and

poetry reading. He framed the event with a warm, introductory speech establishing his deep allegiance to the theme of the gathering—cross-cultural poetics. More emphatic than the usual acknowledgment given by a public speaker at the outset of a talk, the gesture established a reciprocal relationship with the audience—emphasizing aural reception, in a specific space, for a determined occasion.

A theme of this poem is the spiritual force of sound and rhythm, which, without venturing into the territory of high drama, Brathwaite nonetheless manages to convey performatively. His voicing displays how parallelism and the oral vocables, which are also present on the page, are themselves performance keys. The two sustaining motifs of the poem—“praaaze be to/praaaze be to/paaaze be to gg” and “bub-a-dups/bub-a-dups/bub-a-dups/ /hah”—establish a rhythm that opens the poem into a spatial dimension, articulate the presence of a speaking body, and even imply an associated dance. The rhythms set in play and the viscerally physical articulation of paralinguistic vocables and grunts do not simply ornament or enrich the text; they mark it as a temporal experience (1997):

praaaze be to
praaaze be to
praaaze be to gg

praaaze be to
praaaze be to
praaaze be to gg

& uh holdin my hands up high in dis place
 & de palms turn to

praaaze be to
praaaze be to
praaaze be to gg

an the fingers flutter and flyin away
 an uh crying out

praaaze be to
praaaze be to
praaaze be to

Though the implied temporal dimension is not specifically one of the performance keys enumerated by Bauman, the dramatic way in which words transform into purely percussive vocables constitutes a kind of special code—a metonym for the dance and drum beat that activate the language in

and through performance. The use of irregular line breaks and visual spacing to indicate stanzas suggests possibilities for oral delivery. A kind of visual rhythm also appears that graphically establishes some of the repetitions (in a way not unlike Dell Hymes' transcription preferences [2004]). As a performance score, the printed poem is radically underdetermined. In performance, Brathwaite renders the lines with such emphatic rhythmic patterning as to evoke percussion. The use of a guttural /g/, nearly unpronounceable in English by itself, emphasizes this blending of articulate speech and purely rhythmic sound.²⁰

A curious dimension of this performance is the commentary that Brathwaite interjects. Unlike Vicuña's versioning, the transcription of Baraka's performance of the poem varies only minimally from the published version. The context and mode of delivery leads me to distinguish this interjection from the elaboration in the Baraka poem; a shift in tone and pace seems to frame the comments as non-performative asides (marked by square brackets):

hah

is a hearse
is a horse
is a horseman

is a trip
is a trick
is a seamless hiss

that does rattle these i:ron tracks

bub-a-dups
bub-a-dups
bub-a-dups

huh

bub-a-dups
bub-a-dups
bub-a-dups

²⁰ The audio version of Brathwaite's performance (1997) may be heard at the eCompanion to this article at www.oraltradition.org. For a recent published version, see Braithwaite 2001:132-38. A full, comparative transcription of the portion of this poem performed by Brathwaite, side-by-side with the published text, is provided in the appendix to this article.

hah

is a scissors gone *shhhaaaaa*

[For the moment, for the first time, the sibilant song comes in and release is started. When she's been going now to become that sound that the engine makes when it ... whoo... she becomes at last the sibilance of sea and Shango. And the gutturals begin to disappear in her performance and in the poem.]

under de rattle an pain

i de go
huh

i de go
shhhaaaaa

an a black curl calling my name

praaaze be to
praaaze be to
praaaze be to

Brathwaite frames the comments that punctuate the performance of this poem by altering pace and volume. Each also enacts a shift in address (speaking to a scholarly audience, making demonstrative observations), directly commenting on the poem, and is further marked by an alteration in the register of diction. The significance of these moves can best be understood in contrast to conventions of the contemporary poetry reading. Poets giving such readings, particularly in academic or high-cultural contexts (such as conferences or festivals, as opposed to a slam or open-mic night) often provide commentary. However, that latter kind of commentary is usually of a biographical or anecdotal nature, often narrating the context that inspired the work, naming relevant persons or clarifying potentially obscure references and allusions. Almost always introductory, such commentaries rarely intrude into the body of the poem. More rarely does the commentary comment on the space created by the poem—its activation of language—as Brathwaite's performance does.

Each of the three poets discussed creates performance events by drawing on different aspects of orality, with related but distinct motives. For Baraka, a vernacular consciousness of “how you sound” and a jazz-derived

interplay with audience shape his practice. For Vicuña, the spiritual symbolism of sound and the way its deployment can spatially weave listeners into an event leads to her emphasis on voice. For Brathwaite, vernacular expressivity and traditional/sacred notions of efficacious language are equally informing. Each poet begins with published texts and transforms them into emergent events through the use of elaboration and versioning. Bringing these two concepts to the poetry of Baraka, Vicuña, and Brathwaite allows for a fuller appreciation of the oral and performative dimensions of their work, rendering their performances as significant instances of the poems rather than as imperfect and secondary representations of prior texts. The full measure of such contemporary written poetries cannot be taken if they are considered only in relation to the conventional, text-oriented terms of literary analysis. Scholarly consideration of how these performative poetries are positioned with respect to the speakers' mouths and listeners' ears should lead to transcription, performance analysis, and the development of new critical practices that adapt and extend the best practices of oral and literary studies.

Representing the Emergent

Treating elaboration, versioning, and other emergent dimensions of print poetries in performance involves literary critics in some of the practices and issues familiar to scholars of oral tradition. I have made use of audio tape and transcription as a way to begin attending to emergent dimensions of the poems. Readers may have puzzled over the variation in the systems by which the poems were transcribed. The first of several transcriptions follows the ethnopoetic method exemplified by Tedlock and further theorized by Elizabeth Fine (1984), preferring some simplification with the aim of approaching a performable script. Type size represents perceived volume and emphasis, while internal and interlinear spacing indicates pace and pausing, with additional comments and descriptors placed in brackets.

This approach reflects something of the skepticism about the ideal of maximizing data through ever thicker transcription practices that is voiced by Eric L. Montenyohl (1993). The alternative method of narrative embedding that he proposes produces an interesting result, though it may best serve the kind of minimal, quotidian materials that interest Montenyohl, that is, jokes and proverbs. The objections to the Tedlock variant on total translation presented in *Finding the Center* and developed by various authors in *Alcheringa* (Goodwin 1972, Titon 1976, and Borgatti 1976) seem to me to be misplaced, since it is not at all difficult for readers to develop the

skills to give passable renderings of score-like transcriptions. Whether the reader chooses to re-perform the texts or, as digital technology makes increasingly possible, to read along with an audio recording, a graphic transcription helps the critic to draw out relevant paralinguistic features.²¹

Attractive though it would be to posit the modified form of total transcription as an authoritative method for the analysis of print/oral/aural poets, I have varied the format for each of the examples. The second transcription, (Figure 2, Cecilia Vicuña's "Adiano y Azumbar") appears in a comparative, two-column format. It juxtaposes the print version and performance transcription and adds line numbering to emphasize repetitions, partial repetitions, and the general elaboration. The third transcription (Figure 3, Vicuña's "Tentenelaire Zun Zun") uses graphic symbols to simulate the reading path taken by the performer as she composed a new version, through performance, by mixing elements of the print-published poems in Spanish and English. The rhythmic effect of Brathwaite's "Angel/Engine" is conveyed through descriptive prose rather than graphic rendering. In practice, this flexibility facilitates concentration on specific elements of elaboration and versioning in each of the poems. The use of a variety of methods also underscores the necessary insufficiency of any transcription, which can only render selected elements, in the face of multidimensional oral performance. Finally, it avoids the false impression that performance practices are largely homogenous, an impression that would otherwise be conveyed by presenting non-heterogeneous scripts. Following this argument, it may be advisable to develop particularized transcription methods adequate to each genre, performance tradition, even customized to each individual performer.

In the cases of the three poets whose poems are addressed in this study, all have extensive grounding in their respective literary traditions as well as significant life experience with and study of some oral traditions. As publishing poets, all three are also familiar with issues of performance and textualization that have been formative of twentieth-century poetics on several continents—from the experimentalism of Mallarmé in France, to the Dadaist Tristan Tzara's collection and translation of African traditional

²¹ Montenyohl seems to assume, somewhat puzzlingly, that total translation texts are not only unreadable but inaccurate, in that paralinguistic features are often produced in one language but translated into the target language of the scholarly audience. Rothenberg (1983) has famously (if controversially) translated Navajo vocables into their English "equivalents." But the challenge seems to dispute without actually engaging Tedlock's fundamental argument of *Spoken Word and the Work of Interpretation* (1983), that the paralinguistic features utilized in formal, spoken performance are roughly comparable, and thus "legible," across languages and performance traditions.

poetry, to concrete poetry in Brazil, and on to the Pound/Black Mountain tradition in the United States. These literary traditions include experiments with suggestive visual and typographical design as well as texts formatted as oral performance scores. Literary criticism adequate to the multiple dimensions of their work will need to become fluent in these same multiple traditions and, stepping outside of current disciplinary conventions, learn from the insights and errors of allied fields.

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Appendix

Transcription of Edward Kamau Brathwaite, “Angel/Engine.” Lecture/Poetry Reading. 19 October 1997. XCP: Cross-Cultural Poetics Conference, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis, MN.

Published Version: Ancestors 132-8

Performance Transcription

<p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to gg</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to gg</p> <p>& uh holdin my hands up high in dis place & de palms turn to</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to gg</p> <p>an the fingers flutter and flyin away an uh crying out</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to to</p>	<p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to gg</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to gg</p> <p>& uh holdin my hands up high in dat place & de palms turn to</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to gg</p> <p>an the fingers flutter and flyin away an uh crying out</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to</p> <p>[What was also very frightening about this situation, if this were a Jamaican context, where this activity was taking place, if it were Haiti or Cuba, there would be this agony of transformation. But in Barbados, where that English imprint is so pervasive and so powerful, even in the secret, submerged umfor,</p>
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<p>softly</p> <p>an de softness flyin away</p> <p>is a black is a bat is a flap</p> <p>a de kerosene lamp</p> <p>an it spinn an it spinn an it spinn</p> <p>in rounn -an it stagger- in down</p> <p>'to a gutter- in shark a de worl</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to gg</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to gg</p> <p>de tongue curlin back an muh face flowin empty all muh skin cradle and cracle an ole</p> <p>i is water of wood ants crawlin crawlin</p> <p>i is spiders weavin away my ball</p> <p>headed head is ancient &</p>	<p>the change from Christian, the change from west, and to return to [. . .], gave that women who let's say is not an academic, she does not know anything about the history of it, even then her subconscious gave her to[. . .] It was as if she were torn apart with the forces of west. It was an amazing experience. Here was a big woman being torn to pieces by some . . . by forces of cultural [return]. That's why I'm using these words like "an de softness flyin away."</p> <p>is a black is a bat is a flap</p> <p>a de kerosene lamp</p> <p>an it spinn an it spinn an it spinn</p> <p>in rounn -an it stagger- in down</p> <p>'to a gutter- in shark a de worl</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to gg</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to gg</p> <p>de tongue curlin back an muh face flowin empty all muh skin cradle and cracle an ole</p> <p>i is water of wood ants crawlin crawlin</p> <p>i is spiders</p>
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black &	weavin away
is fall from de top a de <i>praaaze be to</i>	my ball headed head
tree	is ancient &
to de rat-hearted coco-	black &
nut hill	is fall from de top a de <i>praaaze be to</i>
so uh walk-	hill
in an talk	to de rat-hearted coco-
-in. uh steppin	nut tree
an call-	so uh walk-
in thru	in an talk
echo-	-in. uh steppin
in times	an call-
that barrel and bare of my name	in thru
thru crick	echo-
crack	in faces
thru crick	that barrel and bare of my name
crack	thru crick
uh creakin-	crack
thru crev-	thru crick
ices. reach-	crack
in for icicle light	uh creakin-
	thru crev-
	ices. reach-
	in for icicle light
who hant me	[You see she's breaking through, and the
<i>huh</i>	rhythm has now become that train. That was
who haunt me	what was so amazing that night. That as soon
<i>huh</i>	as she got out of that turbulence, what we
my head is a cross	suddenly sense is a coming home, as many of
is a cross-	the gospel songs do.]
road	who hant me
	<i>huh</i>
	who haunt me

<p>who hant me is red</p> <p>who haunt me is blue</p> <p>is a man is a moo is a ton ton macou</p> <p>is a coo is a cow is a cow-</p> <p>itch</p> <p><i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i></p> <p>huh</p> <p><i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i></p> <p>hah</p> <p>is a hearse is a horse is a horseman</p> <p>is a trip is a trick is a seamless hiss</p> <p>that does rattle these i:ron tracks</p> <p><i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i></p> <p>huh</p> <p><i>bub-a-dups</i></p>	<p><i>huh</i></p> <p>my head is a cross is a cross-</p> <p>road</p> <p>who hant me is red</p> <p>who haunt me is blue</p> <p>is a man is a moo is a ton ton macou</p> <p>is a coo is a cow is a cow-</p> <p>itch</p> <p><i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i></p> <p>huh</p> <p><i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i></p> <p>hah</p> <p><i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i></p> <p>hah</p> <p>is a hearse is a horse is a horseman</p> <p>is a trip is a trick is a seamless hiss</p> <p>that does rattle these i:ron tracks</p> <p><i>bub-a-dups</i></p>
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<p><i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i></p> <p>hah</p> <p>is a scissors gone <i>shhhaaaaa</i></p> <p>under de rattle an pain</p> <p>i de go <i>huh</i></p> <p>i de go <i>shhhaaaaa</i></p> <p>an a black curl calling my name</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to</p> <p>sh</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to</p> <p>shang</p> <p>praaaze be to</p> <p><i>sh</i></p> <p>praaaze be to</p> <p>gg</p> <p>praaaze be to</p>	<p><i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i></p> <p>huh</p> <p><i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i> <i>bub-a-dups</i></p> <p>hah</p> <p>is a scissors gone <i>shhhaaaaa</i></p> <p>[For the moment, for the first time, the sibilant song comes in and release is started. When she's been going now to become that sound that the engine makes when it ... whoo... she becomes at last the sibilance of sea and Shango. And the gutterals begin to disappear in her performance and in the poem.]</p> <p>under de rattle an pain</p> <p>i de go <i>huh</i></p> <p>i de go <i>shhhaaaaa</i></p> <p>an a black curl calling my name</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to</p> <p>[_____]</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to</p> <p>sh</p> <p>praaaze be to</p>
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<p>praaaze be to paaaze be to</p> <p><i>sh</i></p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to praaaze be to</p> <p><i>ssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssshhhh hhhhhhhh</i></p> <p>></p> <p>... an de train comin in wid de rain. . .</p> <p>... ç ...</p>	<p>praaaze be to paaaze be to</p> <p>huh</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to</p> <p>shaaaaaa</p> <p>praaaze be to praaaze be to paaaze be to</p> <p><i>ssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssssshhhh hhhhhhhh</i></p> <p>... an de train comin in wid de rain. . .</p>
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Neoanalysis, Orality, and Intertextuality: An Examination of Homeric Motif Transference

Jonathan Burgess

As with other schools of thought in Homeric research, neoanalysis has experienced experimentation and change.¹ Neoanalysts have slowly become aware of points of contact between their methodology and an oralist approach, and recently some oralists have enthusiastically accepted the compatibility of the two schools of thought. Intertextual theory can also provide much insight into the phenomena uncovered by neoanalysis, particularly motif transference. A central concept in neoanalyst methodology, motif transference involves the use of non-Homeric motifs within Homeric poetry. Neoanalysts have persuasively identified examples of motif transference, but their explanation of its mechanics and significance has been lacking. An oralist perspective modifies our understanding of how motif transference is produced and received, and intertextual theory can help explain the possible significance of Homeric reflection of non-Homeric material.

Three levels of narrative are posited for this examination: A) cyclic myth, B) cyclic epic, and C) Homeric epic. Level B (cyclic epic) is an epic version of Level A (cyclic myth).² Level C (Homeric epic) exists as a self-

¹ Kakridis (1949:1-10) first coined the term “neoanalysis” and defined its method. For a concise summary of its arguments, see Willcock 1997; for explanation of its methodology, see Kullmann 1981, 1991.

² The term “cyclic” when capitalized refers to the specific poems of the Epic Cycle and their earlier versions or performance traditions; otherwise, it refers to oral epic poems of their type (countless and mostly undocumented). Burgess 2001 establishes that the Cycle poems well represent pre-Homeric oral traditions, to the extent that the tradition of the Trojan war can be termed a “cyclic” tradition. On the origins of the Homeric poems I follow, to a large extent, Nagy’s evolutionary explanation, which posits performance traditions that gradually became stabilized (e.g., 1996:107-14). The terms

conscious extension of Level A (cyclic myth) and Level B (cyclic epic). Levels B/C (cyclic/Homeric epic) are both manifestations of level A (mythological traditions) that share the same form (long narrative in dactylic hexameter), but Level C (Homeric epic) is a more complex manifestation. While Level B (cyclic epic) presents the narrative in Level A (cyclic myth) directly, Level C (Homeric epic) plays off “cyclic” myth and epic in an allusive manner. In the sense that Level C (Homeric epic) employs Level A (mythological traditions) and Level B (cyclic epic) in order to implement its full meaning, we might say that Homeric epic is “metacyclic.”³ Homeric poetry is commonly portrayed as an overwhelming replacement of pre-Homeric tradition, but it is instead a respectful and dependent outgrowth of earlier myth and epic. The traditions from which the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* stem are both assumed and appreciated by Homeric poetics.

Motif transference is the transposition of motifs from elsewhere into a Homeric context; the Homeric manifestation of the motif should be recognizably derivative and therefore considered secondary. In my analysis motif transference is not a passive accumulation of influences but an active narratological tool that evokes Trojan war material. Correspondence between Trojan war motifs and their secondary manifestations within the Homeric poems will therefore have implications in terms of meaning. For an audience informed about traditional Greek myth, the secondary Homeric motif will evoke the non-Homeric context, functioning as a subtle yet powerful allusive device. Motif transference so defined would appear to be a distinctive aspect of Homeric poetics. But it is not unrelated to typology and repetition in oral poetry, and it is comparable to such poetic phenomena as mythological *exempla*, or paradigms. Homeric motif transference is therefore an example of how Homeric technique extends oral poetics yet is not independent of it.

“pre-Homeric” and “post-Homeric” used below may seem inappropriate for this conception, but I use them to refer to material that existed before or after the Homeric poems stabilized into entities recognizably like what we think of as the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* today.

³ Cf. Finkelberg 1998:154-55, 2002:160, 2003a:79 on Homeric poetry as “meta-epic.”

Neoanalysis

Neoanalysis is a methodology that employs analyst technique in pursuit of a unitarian interpretation of the *Iliad*. It assumes the influence of pre-Homeric material on Homeric poetry and attempts to discover indications of this influence within Homeric poetry. Trojan war episodes that fall outside the narrative boundaries of the Homeric poems have usually interested neoanalysts, especially material concerning the death of Achilles. The *Iliad* and *Odyssey* directly refer to many events in course of the war, but it is the inexplicit reflection of these events that has been explored in neoanalysis.

As a source for the pre-Homeric tradition of the Trojan war, neoanalysts have primarily used the Epic Cycle. Though the poems of the Cycle are now lost, what we know of them provides important information about the tradition of the Trojan war. Reconstruction of the cyclic tradition can be difficult, and using it as an indication of the pre-Homeric tradition has been controversial. But it is revealing that early Greek artists reflected cyclic themes (but not necessarily the specific Cycle poems themselves) much earlier and much more often than they reflected Homeric themes. It is also apparent that the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* did not immediately dominate their tradition, and so post-Homeric evidence for the pre-Homeric tradition is not necessarily contaminated by Homeric influence, at least not at an early date.⁴ Using information about the Cycle available to us, we can reconstruct the outlines of early Greek mythology that an early Greek audience would have known when they heard the Homeric poems. In this way we can most fully enjoy the evocation and reception of the Trojan war tradition that would have potentially occurred when Homeric poetry was performed.

The term “neoanalysis” makes reference to the analyst school of thought, dominant in nineteenth-century German scholarship, that argued for multiple authorship of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. Neoanalysis actually belongs to the opposing unitarian camp, which insists on a single author for the Homeric poems, but it is built on the foundations of earlier analyst research and at times uses its techniques. Like analysts, neoanalysts look for discrepancies in Homeric poetry, and also like analysts, neoanalysts have speculated on the existence of hypothetical poems in the pre-Homeric past. Whereas analysts theorized compilation of material from various sources, neoanalysts have believed in a single poet strongly influenced by earlier poems.

⁴ These points are argued extensively in Burgess 2001.

What neoanalysts have stressed is that certain motifs that apparently exist in both Homeric poetry and the Epic Cycle seem to belong most naturally to the latter. Their arguments have been directed towards the *Iliad* for the most part, though the *Odyssey* is not irrelevant to the methodology.⁵ Many of the motif correspondences have long been noticed, though commentators used to routinely conclude either that the Cycle poems stole motifs from Homer or that Cyclic motifs had been interpolated into “late” parts of Homer.⁶ Building on this earlier research, neoanalysts in the post-war period argued that Homer extensively re-used Cyclic material in a highly original manner.

Kullmann (1991) has linked to neoanalysis all material that has influenced Homeric poetry, including other mythological cycles (e.g., the journey of the Argonauts), non-mythological material (e.g., folktale), and even non-Greek material (e.g., Near Eastern). Fruitful research has certainly been accomplished in these areas, and its focus on vestigial remnants of influences within Homeric poetry is comparable to the methodology of neoanalysis.⁷ But the influence of non-Trojan war material, folktale motifs, or Near Eastern concepts is essentially passive in effect. The audience is not expected to recognize the original context of the motifs, which are foreign to the story of the Trojan war. The Homeric poems may even have been composed without any conscious recognition of the origin of such motifs. Kullmann’s collocation of all pre-Homeric influences revealingly fails to recognize any special significance for Trojan war motif transference and reflects a general disinclination among neoanalysts to consider the effect of the phenomena that they have uncovered. The influence of Trojan war material on Homeric poetry should be seen as distinctive, for its presence is

⁵ Several *Odyssey* passages, notably in Book 24, are essential evidence for neoanalyst arguments. For a neoanalyst perspective on the *Odyssey*, see Heubeck 1992; Danek 1998. Katz (1991:7-14) refers to neoanalyst methodology in a postmodern reading of the poem’s multiplicity of meanings.

⁶ Some earlier scholars explored the similarities in ways that anticipated neoanalysis; see Kullmann 1960:1-3, 1981:6-7, 1991:428-29; West 2003:2-4. Davison (1962:254-58) and Kullmann (1986) discuss Müller 1910 and Welcker 1865-82, respectively, as prototypical neoanalysts.

⁷ *Argonautica* influence on the *Odyssey*: Meuli 1921. Folktales: Page 1955:1-20, 1973; Glenn 1971; Hölscher 1978, 1989; Hansen 1990, 1997; Burgess 2001:94-114. Near Eastern: Burkert 1992, 2004; West 1997; Cook 2004. *Gilgamesh* parallels: Burgess 1999; Bakker 2001.

likely to play an active role in signifying the larger story of the Trojan war in which the Homeric poems are situated.

Neoanalysis has provided many plausible arguments, even if some of its central tenets remain debatable (Burgess 1997). Yet the potential of its application has not yet been fully realized. More can be done, whether in directions that are either inherent in the methodology or are potential extensions of it. Below the possibilities of a progressive implementation of neoanalysis will be explored, though with no suggestion that there is a single best usage. The main purpose will be to provide further explanation of the cause and function of the concept of motif transference, as it exists in neoanalyst argument.

Neoanalysis and Orality

Neoanalysis developed in an atmosphere innocent of the oralist methodology pioneered by Parry and Lord, and at first glance the two schools of thought would seem incompatible.⁸ But it has been increasingly recognized that oral theory is not necessarily inimical to neoanalysis.⁹ Both oralists and neoanalysts presume a long pre-Homeric tradition. Whereas oralists focus on the poetic craft of this tradition, neoanalysts are interested in its narrative contents. In several respects, however, oral theory has challenged the practice of neoanalysis, and to some degree neoanalysts have responded to criticism with interesting revisions of their methodology. A survey of three key issues present in conflict between neoanalysts and oralists (texts, typology, and motif priority) will outline the possibilities of a neoanalyst methodology modified by an oralist perspectives.

⁸ Kakridis (1971:19-20) doubted the South Slavic analogy and espoused a literate Homer. Though Kullmann has sought connections between neoanalysis and oralist method (see below), he has criticized the Parry/Lord comparative approach and insisted on a literate composition of the *Iliad*. See Kullmann 1960:2 n. 3, 152 n. 2, 372 nn. 2, 3; 1981:13-18, 27-42; 2002:170-73 (where the oralist perspectives on Homeric composition and transmission in Burgess 2001 are deemed outside the boundaries of neoanalysis).

⁹ Comparison of the two schools of thought: Heubeck 1978; Kullmann 1984. Schoeck 1961 is the first neoanalyst study to employ oral theory extensively, while Fenik 1964 is an early melding of ideas from both schools of thought. More recent mixtures of the two include Slatkin 1991; Janko 1992; M. Edwards 1990, 1991 (the conclusions in M. Edwards [1990:323] are said to be “in accord with the results of the studies of Milman Parry and Albert Lord”); Danek 1998; Burgess 2001. Finkelberg 2003b celebrates the potential of oralist/neoanalyst research.

Texts

In early manifestations of neoanalysis the influences on Homer were considered written texts that Homer had “before his eyes.” Neoanalysts postulated hypothetical poems like an “Achilleis” or “Memnonis” in written form and tried to reconstruct their contents. Schadewaldt (1965) outlined and graphed a “Memnonis” with no fewer than twenty scenes in four books. At times neoanalysts even argued that the poems of the Epic Cycle were pre-Homeric poems.¹⁰ After these views were met with objections, neoanalysts tended to shy away from them. Occasionally, however, claims for the pre-Homeric date of Cyclic poems have been revived.¹¹ Recently new opportunities for this line of argument have arisen because of a general tendency to down-date the Homeric poems.¹² Although I am in sympathy with this trend in dating, I see no need to postulate the influence of the Epic Cycle poems on the Homeric poems. It is not just that our sources for the date of early Greek epic are missing or obscure. The oral context of the composition and performance of early epics should make us wary of pinning an early epic to a specific point in time. And even if early epics could be dated, one cannot assume that one poem at an early date would necessarily be known well enough to influence another. For these reasons it is not advisable to portray identifiable texts as the influences on the Homeric poems.

Some have intelligently posited the existence of oral Cyclic poems in the pre-Homeric tradition.¹³ This is likely enough, though these should not be conceived of as static or single oral prototypes of later poems in the Epic Cycle. It is more likely that fluid performance traditions preceded the fixed epics in the Cycle of which we know. And there must have been many pre-Homeric epics that had no direct relationship to the Cycle poems at all, even

¹⁰ For an overview see Kullmann 1991:428-30; Willcock 1997:175-76. Kullmann has long argued for a seventh-century date for the *Iliad*, but insists his arguments do not depend on a pre-Homeric date for the Cycle poems.

¹¹ Kopff 1983; Dowden 1996; Ballabriga 1998:22-32.

¹² For an overview and further bibliography, see Osborne 1996:156-60; Burgess 2001:49-53; van Wees 2002; Cook 2004:48-51. The tide has turned and an eighth-century date should no longer be viewed as the *communis opinio*.

¹³ Dihle 1970:149-50; A. Edwards 1985:219-20; Davies 1989:5.

if they covered the same type of narrative (that is, cyclic). The Epic Cycle poems were essentially just verse manifestations—though perhaps particularly prominent ones—of oral mythological traditions that were known in various forms and media. In this sense it is best to regard “cyclic” mythological motifs, episodes, and narratives in general as the sources for the Homeric poems. Whereas neoanalysts have looked for specific Cyclic epics (in Level 2), whether oral or textual, as the source for motifs transferred into a Homeric context, I consider it most plausible to view oral mythological traditions (Level 1) as the primary or source material. The Homeric poems would have also been aware of cyclic epic (Level 2) that exemplifies such myth, but they probably do not allude to specific poems.

Focus on pre-Homeric oral traditions, not texts, eliminates the need for a practice once common in neoanalysis: the attempt to find in the *Iliad* word-for-word quotations of pre-Homeric texts. Though still occasionally attempted, identification of “quotations” of lost Cyclic verse within Homeric poetry is not only very speculative, but has dubious justification in the context of the early Archaic period.¹⁴ It is sometimes tempting to associate certain phraseology with narrative contexts, but that does not mean that it belongs to a single text. Rather it might be regarded as phraseology that tended to be employed in connection with a specific narrative.

One aspect of the textual nature of the early work of neoanalysts was the assumption that motifs found in Homeric poetry reflect another narrative in a very exact manner. Neoanalysts as a result argued for very detailed correspondences between Homeric motifs and their non-Homeric counterparts. But one cannot suppose such a degree of detail if the motifs have been transferred from traditional myth (or generally from multitudinous cyclic epics) and not specific, fixed texts. Though traditional narrative will remain stable in its essential elements, minor details do not remain uniform, and minor details are likely to be omitted or modified when a motif is transferred. Once the possibility of textual sources for Homeric poetry is rejected, the old neoanalyst strategy of seeking as many detailed correspondences as possible becomes unconvincing. What remains plausible

¹⁴ Surviving Cyclic fragments display a high degree of correspondence with Homeric phraseology. This most likely results from the typology of oral composition (Notopoulos 1964:18-45; Burkert 1981), as opposed to Cyclic imitation of Homeric features (Kirk 1976:183-200; Curti 1993) or *vice versa*. Formulaic typology in early epic constitutes an intertextuality of immanent meaning (Foley 1991; see also Foley 1995:42-47, 1999:13-34) but does not suggest a connection between texts. See Todorov 1981:24-25 on intertextuality that evokes not specific texts but an “anonymous ensemble,” such as technique, style, genre, and tradition.

is the identification of a shared central element, or “pivot” (Schoeck 1961:101).

Typology

Another issue that stems from oral theory that neoanalysis has had to confront is typology. Typology comes in many shapes and sizes. Parry focused on the noun-epithet formulaic system, which involves phraseology that usually is less than a line of verse. He also readily accepted the typology demonstrated by Arend of certain recurring scenes, like preparation of meals, arming, and so on. Lord extended the scope of typology to “themes,” and certain kinds of typological structures have also been observed within similar narrative situations, like battles or speeches.¹⁵

Oralists tend to think of motifs in oral traditions as adaptable to any story, much as formulas and type-scenes can be employed in different situations. They therefore view correspondence between Homeric and non-Homeric motifs as insignificant. Especially objectionable from the oralist perspective is the argument that one example of a motif has priority over another. This is a serious challenge to neoanalysis: if there is no significant relationship between two forms of a motif, or it is unclear that one is primary and the other secondary, then much of neoanalyst theory is undercut.¹⁶

The term “motif” has been used variously, signifying a wide range of material.¹⁷ This flexibility is certainly useful, but it can be vague and confusing. In the context of motif transference, the term for the most part refers to actions that are part of a narrative. This reduction of a narrative to a series of motifs owes something to the work of Propp, who broke the Russian folktale down to its basic elements.¹⁸ But whereas Propp demonstrated the typology of motifs and stock characters in folktale,

¹⁵ Parry 1971 (404-7 on Arend); Lord 1960; Fenik 1968; M. Edwards 1992.

¹⁶ See Lord 1960:159; Page 1963:23; Fenik 1964:32-33, 1968:229-40; Nagler 1974:24-26; Jensen 1980:30-36; Nagy 1990b:130-31.

¹⁷ See Todorov 1981:48; Bremond 1982.

¹⁸ Propp 1984. Such an analysis follows the superficial narrative level of a story, to be distinguished from the hidden deep-structure elements in structuralist studies. Burkert (1979:5-14) compares the approach of Propp and Lévi-Strauss. Application of Propp’s method to scenes in the *Odyssey*: Hölscher 1978:55; M. Edwards 1987a:62.

neoanalyst argument is concerned with specific characters committing particular actions.

In an important article Kullmann acknowledged that typical motifs exist, but argued that there are also “more specific motifs or specific nuances in general motifs” whose adoption by the Homeric poems can be recognized (1984:312). This argument is undeniably true to some extent. For example, Agamemnon’s return from the Trojan war is not idiosyncratic; *nostos* is a general motif shared by a number of heroic myths. But the murder of Agamemnon upon his arrival is an aspect of his return that can be said to belong to him. Because the return of Agamemnon is generally similar to that of Odysseus, the two returns are repeatedly compared in the *Odyssey*. Yet a mythologically informed audience would be shocked by a narrative in which Penelope and a lover ambushed Odysseus upon his return. It is true that the poem effectively allows the question of Penelope’s fidelity to emerge from time to time as a potentiality, and it is also true that the existence of variants would leave an audience in doubt as to how exactly Odysseus would achieve his successful return.¹⁹ But the essential plot that resulted in Odysseus’ successful return would normally be respected. The return tale is generic, but there are specific details for particular mythological versions of this tale-type.

Traditional mythological narrative always contains aspects of typology, but at some level is never completely typical. To be mythological it must have some stable and specific elements, such as major characters and a main plotline. Otherwise a myth-teller would be free to gather together a new collocation of motifs every time the story is told. Achilles could wear a lion skin and brandish a club, Odysseus could command the *Argo*, and Agamemnon could put out his eyes after marrying his mother. Such was not the case in Greek myth, for typology does not overwhelm the distinctiveness of individual characters and their stories. If specific elements regularly appear in a particular myth, then it should be noticeable when these specific elements appear in a different myth in which they do not belong. In this situation one myth has influenced the narration of another as a result of motif transference.

¹⁹ Cf. Katz 1991; Ahl and Roisman 1996:205-72; Danek 1998. Foley (1999:115-67) demonstrates that return to a wife is a tale type in South Slavic and Indo-European oral epic.

A key criterion in the analysis of typology is degree of repetition.²⁰ A motif that reoccurs often in different contexts appears to be typical, and one cannot suppose that one instance has any relationship to another. Matters are not so clear when the repetition is limited. If there are only a few examples of a motif, it becomes tempting to investigate the possibility of a relationship between them. A pair of repeated elements suggests correspondence even more strongly. One instance may serve to foreshadow or prepare for a second instance, in what is called an “anticipatory doublet.”²¹ An example is the flame that burns around Diomedes’ head (*Iliad* 5.4-8) that seems to anticipate the flame that burns around Achilles’ head (18.205-14, 225-27). Encouraging one’s inclination to see a connection between the two passages is the extensive manner in which Diomedes seems to be a doublet of Achilles.²²

In a more extensive sequence of anticipatory doublets, scenes at Scheria in the *Odyssey* seem to provide extensive anticipatory mirroring of elements in Odysseus’ later experience at Ithaca. The reception of Odysseus is pleasant and welcoming for the most part, but some unsettling details serve to foreshadow the trials of his homecoming.²³ In both situations Odysseus remains initially disguised, encounters a powerful but enigmatic queen, and engages young rivals in contests. Though the Scheria scenes have their own intrinsic value for the poem, certain motifs within them look forward to later material found in scenes at Ithaca. In effect, the Scheria motifs constitute a series of anticipatory doublets. From this type of significant repetition within the Homeric poems, it is only a short step further, *mutatis mutandis*, into the world of neoanalysis, where Homeric motifs are thought to reflect paradigmatic Trojan war material external to the

²⁰ On the various types of Homeric repetition and analogy, I have found the following especially helpful: Lohmann 1970; Austin 1975:115-29; Andersen 1987; M. Edwards 1991:11-23; Lowenstam 1993:1-12.

²¹ Fenik 1968:213-14; M. Edwards 1987b:50-51, 1991:19-20.

²² See Schoeck 1961:75-80; Alden 2000:169-75. Trojans explicitly compare the two at 6.96-101. Their prayer that Diomedes will fall at the Scaean gates at 6.306-7 could be an allusion to Achilles’ fate.

²³ See Lang 1969; Lowenstam 1993:207-28.

Homeric poems.²⁴ Homeric motifs that reflect material outside the poem function in ways that are comparable to the anticipatory doublet.

Repetition of motifs in motif transference is not finite in the way it is in the case of anticipatory doublets. According to my analysis, motif transference involves a Homeric motif reflecting innumerable manifestations of a motif in oral myth. There are parameters to the repetition in motif transference, however. The Homeric instance of the motif will refer to a motif that is traditionally linked to a particular narrative context. The mythological context may be expressed multiple times and in various manners, but its basic contours remain stable. So motif transference is essentially limited to a Homeric instance and a source motif that is contextually bound, even if it occurs in a multiple and fluid manner. In this sense motif transference is a pairing, analogous to the pairing of anticipatory doublets within the Homeric poems.

Though oralists are correct to note that typology can undercut the arguments of neoanalysts, not all motifs are “building blocks. . .with which the oral poets could create an endless variety of scenes using the same basic materials” (Fenik 1964:33). Typological motifs coexist with other more specific elements. Typology with unlimited repetition resists the linkage of two instances of a motif, but limited repetition invites recognition of a correspondence between different manifestations. The existence of a wide spectrum of types of repetition is often recognized in oralist works, like the seminal *Singer of Tales* by Albert Lord. Though Lord states that the movement of motifs is so fluid that they cannot belong to a tradition (1960:159), in his arguments he repeatedly traces the transference of what neoanalysts would call specific motifs to new contexts in the Homeric poems. The essential pattern of withdrawal, devastation, and return that he discusses (186-97) is typical, and neoanalyst methodology could not be applied to it. But his comments recognize that sometimes correspondence is derivative, not merely parallel, as when Patroclus in his death is recognized as a double of Achilles (195). Discrepancies are cited as evidence for such phenomena. This type of argument, that there are motifs that belong to one context and their transference to the context of the Homeric poems is discernible, is essentially a neoanalyst argument.

Priority of Motifs

Neoanalysts assume priority in their description of motif transference. One of two examples of a motif is considered primary and the other

²⁴ An analogy made by McLeod (1987:35).

secondary (the one that occurs within Homeric poetry). In the example of the flame motif, it seems certain that its application to Diomedes reflects its later application to the more major character Achilles at an important point in the poem. But it not always clear to whom a motif “belongs,” and neoanalysts have expended much effort in establishing that certain motif manifestations are primary and others secondary.

Critics have complained about the lack of objective criteria in neoanalyst categorization of primary and secondary instances of motifs.²⁵ If a Homeric version of a motif seems as appropriate as a corresponding extra-Iliadic version, then the question of priority is not easily resolved. Arguably, motifs labeled “secondary” by neoanalysts were actually invented for their Homeric occurrence and then subsequently imitated elsewhere. Subjective neoanalyst arguments that portray the non-Homeric manifestation of a motif as somehow superior (more dramatic, more aesthetically pleasing) than the Homeric manifestation can be less than convincing. As a result, even scholars who have accepted correspondence between the *Iliad* and cyclic motifs have not always agreed with the neoanalyst premise that they are used in a secondary manner in the *Iliad*.²⁶

For a neoanalyst argument about motif transference to be persuasive, priority or unequal status must be established. Neoanalysts have often plausibly established such status by stressing peculiarities in the re-use of motifs. Indeed, the uncovering of a secondary motif’s inappropriateness lies at the heart of neoanalysis; in this activity it is heir to the analyst tradition. A close reading of the Homeric text is employed in search for evidence that a motif has been imperfectly adapted to a new context, and the Homeric instance is portrayed as a single and unusual manifestation of a motif that usually exists in a different context. Another method of recognizing motif transference is to identify the re-use of specific, as opposed to typical, motifs. Repetition is common in Homeric poetry and the Epic Cycle, but in itself is not necessarily significant.²⁷ Correspondence may indicate nothing

²⁵ E.g., Page 1963:22; Lesky 1967:75; Dihle 1970:11-26. For a reply to such criticism, see Kullmann 1960:29-50.

²⁶ For example, Evelyn-White (1914:xxx) assumes that the *Aethiopsis* has taken motifs from the *Iliad*; West (2003) reverts to this type of argument, with a complexity comparable to the tangled pedigree of textual conflation at Reinhardt 1961.

²⁷ Homeric: Fenik 1964:148-54, 1974:133-232; Nickel 2002. Cyclic: Welcker 1865-82, 2:13; Pestalozzi 1945:34; Kullmann 1960:224; Fenik 1964:10, 38-39, 1968:237-38.

more than expansion of themes or roles, as for example the paired doublets Mentor/Mentes, Melantho/Melanthius, or even Circe/Calypso in the *Odyssey*. In Trojan war myth the early, failed Teuthranian expedition is essentially a doublet of the campaign against Troy (usually assumed secondary, though it has been argued that it is primary).²⁸ Other cyclic repetition includes the various foreign defenders of Troy (Rhesus, Penthesileia, Memnon, and Eurypylos), or conditions necessary for the fall of Troy (e.g., the stealing of the Palladium, the summoning of Philoctetes). Achilles and Memnon share characteristics (children of goddesses, Hephaestean golden armor) that seem more than coincidental, but it is not certain that one was created in imitation of the other; more likely, a degree of polarity or ironic correspondence developed over a long period of time. Motif transference needs to involve more than correspondence.

Priority does seem to be discernible in the case of several characters in the *Iliad* who appear to be Achilles doublets. Above it was noted that Diomedes has been considered a doublet of Achilles. Diomedes is a major character with his own important role in the poem, but several motifs associated with him seem to belong to Achilles. A number of very minor characters have also been considered to be doublets of Achilles because of certain characteristics readily associated with Achilles specifically (like foreknowledge of dual fates).²⁹ The most notable doublet of Achilles in the *Iliad*, however, is Patroclus. Motifs pertaining to Patroclus in the *Iliad* (e.g., his duel with a foreign defender of Troy, a death brought about with Apollo's assistance, an elaborate funeral with games) correspond to motifs we know were featured in the later life of Achilles. The sequence of motifs, which we might call the "Achilles *fabula*," features some motifs that are specific to myth about Achilles (e.g. death before the walls of Troy, with Apollo involved), and others that are typical but more appropriate for a hero of the stature of Achilles (e.g., funeral games).³⁰ The resemblance of Patroclus to Achilles seems to result from expansion of the traditional character of Patroclus so that his actions reflect events in the traditional story

²⁸ Carpenter 1946:54-64.

²⁹ Achilles~Euchenor: Kullmann 1960:309, 1981:4-25, 1991:441 n. 65; Fenik 1968:4, 148-49. Achilles~Menesthus: Schoeck 1961:54; Asius~Achilles (and Patroclus): Lowenstam 1981:115; Achilles~Hippothous: Rabel 1991.

³⁰ In narratological terms a chronological sequence of actions is a *fabula*, a narrative abstraction that is not identical to a specific poem's version of that *fabula*. See de Jong 1987:xiv, 31-32; 2001:xiv.

of Achilles. What distinguishes Patroclus as an example of an Achilles doublet is that the primary motifs are located outside the boundary of the poem, in myth about Achilles. Patroclus thus serves as doublet in true neoanalyst fashion, for the motifs attached to him are secondary and reflect a primary situation external to the *Iliad*.

In another type of motif transference, a specific motif is applied to the same character with whom it was originally associated but transferred to a new chronological time in his story. The reflection of Achilles' funeral in Book 18 of the *Iliad* is an example. Achilles lies in the dust, Thetis and the Nereids wail and surround Achilles, and Thetis cradles the head of her son in her arms. This behavior seems insufficiently motivated by the death of Patroclus, but is reminiscent of the mythological scene of the funeral of Achilles. A traditional event in his story has been chronologically displaced.³¹

Motif transference, the secondary Homeric reflection of a primary specific motif that exists in oral traditions, appears to be one aspect of Homeric poetics. It is a rather sophisticated poetic device, much different from mere repetition. The transference of specific motifs from one character or situation to another is not possible in the normal course of myth, for the stability of tradition precludes it (as discussed above; Agamemnon does not marry his mother, for instance). On the basis of the limited evidence that we have, motif transference does not seem to be a feature of non-Homeric epic either (though below I argue it is not unrelated to certain phenomena in oral poetics). As such, motif transference is a distinctively Homeric device, and the central component of what I term the "metacyclic" nature of Homeric poetry.

Neoanalysis and Intertextuality

Neoanalysts have been more energetic in establishing correspondences between motifs in the *Iliad* and outside the *Iliad* than in explaining exactly how and why a motif is re-used by the Homeric poems. The effect and function of motif transference requires further exploration. It will be useful in this regard to introduce the term "intertextuality" into the discussion.

³¹ Kakridis 1949:65-75; Pestalozzi 1945:26, 32, 42; Schadewaldt 1965:166; Kullmann 1960:331-32, 1984:310, 1991:441; Schoeck 1961:43-44; M. Edwards 1990:312.

Can one describe the relationship between the Homeric and non-Homeric that results from motif transference as a kind of intertextuality? A word featuring “text” might seem inappropriate for the Homeric poems, which in the very least stem from oral compositional techniques, were certainly not first publicized with the aid of texts, and were textualized at an uncertain date by unknown processes. And as discussed above, Homeric allusions to extra-Homeric narrative would not likely refer to specific texts, but rather to mythological traditions. But much depends on the meaning of the term “intertextuality,” which has been variously employed. In its common, debased usage, intertextuality refers to literary allusion and influence. This will not fit the oral circumstances of epic composition in the Archaic Age very easily. A more theoretical formulation of intertextuality could potentially engage with oral circumstances quite well, though the appropriateness of this application needs to be scrutinized carefully.³²

Most intertextual studies by classicists have focused on the relatively textual world of Roman literature and its sources. Several recent studies display an admirable theoretical sophistication and are generally helpful to our concerns here.³³ But the oral circumstances of early Greek epic present a different and more daunting challenge. Can oral poems influence one another? If that is conceivable, is the process of influence recoverable? “Weak” intertextual analyses that have modernized source criticism and yet remain textually bound cannot address such questions.

The fluidity of oral narrative poses no insurmountable difficulty for a postmodern exploration of intertextuality, however, since from this perspective all cultural constructs can be considered “texts” (though I will not refer to oral narratives as “texts” because of the high potential for confusion). On the other hand, the infinite regress of many postmodern approaches, in which everything potentially connects in an endless intersection of “texts,” is inimical to reaching an understanding of the poetics at work. The challenge for an intertextual examination of oral epic is

³² Peradotto (1997:10) distinguishes between the “weakest, least provocative sense of the word” comparable to old-fashioned *Quellenforschung* in classical studies (cf. the title of Kullmann 1960) and its “strong or postmodern sense.” The term was coined by Kristeva; see espec. Kristeva 1980:36-91. Useful general discussions of types of intertextuality include Jenny 1982; Genette 1997:1-15; Allen 2000; Fowler 2000. See Danek 1998:13-15 for a sensible application of intertextuality to oral epic.

³³ Hinds 1998; Fowler 2000:115-37; Edmunds 2001. For an intertextual exploration of Hellenistic literature, see Hubbard 1998. Fowler (2000:131) notes that the issue of orality has made Hellenists more cautious than Latinists about intertextuality.

to respect the fluidity of the oral circumstances without losing the ability to discern the possible effect of correspondence.

The most ambitious and thorough attempt to delineate “intertextuality” in early Greek epic has been made by Pietro Pucci.³⁴ The focus is on how the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* “read” one another. The argument is subtle and rewarding, though some aspects remain problematic. Pucci employs the terminology of literacy (“texts,” “reading”) that, though applied with postmodern sophistication and acknowledgment of the poems’ oral origins, can seem inappropriate.³⁵ An ahistorical approach, with only vague references to a formative period in which the two Homeric poems evolved together (1987:18, 41, 61), leaves many implications of the argument hanging. Though the intertextuality theoretically involves mutual interaction between both Homeric poems, the argument in practice tends to characterize the *Odyssey* as reactive in relation to the *Iliad*. This priority actually suggests a later historical date for the *Odyssey*, or at the very least assumes a secondary status for this poem.

More troubling in my view is the exclusively Homercentric manner of the explored relationship between the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad*. References in the *Odyssey* to the charm of the Muses, or the *klea andrôn*, or “giant texts (songs) of the Trojan war” are all interpreted as references to the *Iliad*.³⁶ But such passages more plausibly allude to the general tradition of the Trojan war, that is, the cyclic epic tradition. A careful reader will find small signs that Pucci is conscious of this weakness in the argument, and occasionally he apologizes for the exclusion of the Cyclic evidence by reference to the paucity of its surviving evidence (1987:17, 143). This strikes me as at least defeatist in its disinclination to consider the wider expanse of early epic traditions.

Gregory Nagy has sought to explain apparent intertextuality in early epic within the context of orality. In Nagy’s formulation, “When we are dealing with the traditional poetry of the Homeric (and Hesiodic) compositions, it is not justifiable to claim that a passage in any text can refer

³⁴ Pucci 1987; see also Pucci 1998.

³⁵ Nagy 2003:9-10. The practice is defended at Pucci 1988:27-28; Pedrick 1994:85, 94 nn. 38, 39.

³⁶ Pucci 1987:198, esp. n. 21, 209-13, 216, 220. See also Pucci 1998:5-6.

to another passage in another text.”³⁷ Instead, Nagy sees longstanding poetic performance traditions continuously influencing and reacting to other longstanding yet still evolving poetic traditions (diachronic cross-references, in Nagy’s terminology).³⁸ The denial of textualized reference is justifiable, since intertextuality at this time period cannot confidently be reduced to influence from one text to another. That leaves long-term intertextuality between fluid poetic traditions a possible form of poetic interaction, however difficult it may be to conceptualize.³⁹

The *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* themselves are often portrayed as competitors, and this is a plausible possibility.⁴⁰ The “metacyclic” nature of the two Homeric poems places them in a special, circumscribed category (level C, Homeric poetry). Self-awareness of their metacyclic nature would allow and encourage interaction between the two poems (how this is conceived depends on a scholar’s stance toward the Homeric Question). It may have sometimes happened that non-Homeric epics became so valued, not least for their sociopolitical functions, that they would be stabilized by re-performance, with identifiable performance traditions eventually resulting. Different performance traditions with different functions could conceivably lead to agonistic rivalry.⁴¹

But intertextuality between non-Homeric epics (or epic performance traditions) cannot be readily assumed in the Archaic Age. The ontological status of performance traditions is not clear at an early date. We speak of

³⁷ Nagy 1979:40; discussed further and given different emphasis at 2003:8-9; see also 1990a:53-54.

³⁸ This concept is applied to the Cyclic epics at Nagy 1990a:70-79. Cf. Lang 1983 on “reverberation,” an argument that tends to assume that secondary Homeric motifs instantly received equal status with primary motifs in longstanding mythological traditions. But the Homeric poems did not immediately dominate their tradition in the Archaic Age; see Burgess 2001.

³⁹ For concerns, see Beye 1993:30-34, 262-65; Clay 1997:241-46 (reply at Nagy 2003:7-19).

⁴⁰ Besides Pucci 1987, see Burkert 1997; Usener 1990; Danek 1998:509-12; Schein 2001; Rengakos 2002. Page (1955:158-59) argued that the *Iliad* was unknown to the poet of the *Odyssey* because the *Odyssey* seems to avoid allusion to its material.

⁴¹ For speculative attempts to recover the diachronic permutations of rival performance traditions, cf. Aloni 1986:51-67; Burgess 2002; Marks 2002, 2003.

early Greek epic poems with hindsight from the perspective of their fixed and recorded artifacts, and we cannot be sure that performance traditions would have had the self-awareness about either themselves or other performance traditions to engage in allusive intertextuality. It should also be wondered whether all early epic can be herded into particular performance traditions. Many poems would not have been re-performed to such an extent as to result in an identifiable performance tradition, and not every epic performer would have performed exclusively in a recognized poetic tradition.⁴² Direct connections between evolving performance traditions within level B (cyclic epic) or between specific performance traditions in levels B (cyclic epic) and C (Homeric epic) may not have been common at a time when individual poetic compositions were not necessarily celebrated as distinct entities. Competition was an essential aspect of the performance of epic, as of so many areas of Greek culture, but this does not necessarily translate into competition between poetic traditions as distinct entities.⁴³

What does all this mean for neoanalysis? Since neoanalysis can be mixed with oralist methodology, as was seen above, its practice need not depend on the literacy inherent in source criticism or in “weak” intertextuality. On the other hand, neoanalyst attempts to trace the process of motif transference cannot easily function within the world of postmodern intertextuality, at least as it is often practiced. Motif transference, even as modified by an oralist perspective, has certain parameters—for instance, the labeling of motifs as primary or secondary, with the secondary evoking the primary—that would be deemed overly restrictive by some theoretical

⁴² One bard might potentially sing a wide range of various narratives: Woodhouse 1930:242-43; Lord 1960:151; Willcock 1976:287; M. Edwards 1990:316, 1991:17-18; Anderson 1997:56; West 2003:6.

⁴³ On competition and early Greek verse, see Griffith 1990 (especially relevant on narrative variation and contradiction); Ford 2002:272-93; Collins 2004. On this issue my analysis differs from that of Finkelberg, who argues that the “meta-epic” nature of Homeric poetry is intended to “supersede” or “neutralize” other traditions (2003a:75, 78-79). I see the metacyclic nature of Homeric poetry as more parasitic in nature, in the sense that the full extent of its potential meaning is dependent on cyclic myth. Scodel (2004) effectively questions the agonistic nature of Homeric poetry. I would add that it is misleading to conflate myth and epic; a Homeric stance on, e.g., Heracles is not necessarily directed towards an epic about Heracles. Agonistic rivalry at the level of narrative presentation need not entail hostility at the level of narrative content.

stances.⁴⁴ Within this range of possibilities, which is indeed rather wide, neoanalyst arguments can be reinterpreted as demonstrating an “intertextuality” between Homeric epic and mythological traditions (that is, cyclic traditions, but probably not the Cycle poems or specific cyclic epics). Intertextuality in early epic is doubtful in textual terms, and does not even need to be conceived as a relation between fluid performance traditions. Often it is more plausible to posit intertextuality between a poem (or its performance tradition) and mythological traditions variously expressed in different media and notionally known throughout the culture. This intertextuality involves paradigmatic correspondence between motifs outside of Homeric poetry and within it, most strikingly in the phenomenon described above as “motif transference.”

An Oral, Intertextual Neoanalysis

What purpose can be served by neoanalysis practiced from an oralist perspective with consideration of intertextual theory? One hopes that it might better explain the poetic function of the phenomena that have been observed by neoanalysts. The purpose of motif transference has not been adequately addressed by neoanalysts, who have in fact often assumed that it is passive in effect. A different analysis is possible, one that perceives an actively allusive significance for motif transference, though such difficult issues as authorial intention and audience reception need to be taken into account.

Neoanalyses

In general, neoanalysts imply that they are uncovering a compositional process that was not recognized by the audience. The unitarian perspective of neoanalysis has emphasized not allusion to tradition but creative transformation of pre-Homeric material into something new and superior that leaves its sources behind.⁴⁵ Some neoanalysts have suggested

⁴⁴ But not all; e.g., Riffaterre (1978, 1983) offers a strong argument that a text produces intertextual significance through “ungrammaticalities” in a controlled and recognizable manner (see espec. 1978:195 n.27, 1983:6).

⁴⁵ For Willcock (1997:189) the ultimate value of neoanalysis is the isolation of creativity, which in turn is seen to point toward a single original poet.

that “Homer” was occasionally unsuccessful in his transformation of available material to a new setting, allowing us to discover his sources. This view is best exemplified by Schadewaldt, who speaks of looking over the poet’s shoulder and discovering the secrets of his composition (1965:155). It is assumed that the audience, as opposed to the neoanalyst scholar, is not able to recognize inconsistencies resulting from motif re-use, or is not bothered if it does.⁴⁶ A variant of this view suggests that Homer was so thoroughly steeped in traditional material that he unconsciously slipped into it when he made his own compositions. His inappropriate use of this material allows the critic to discover influences on the poet, influences that the poet would not even have consciously recognized as he composed. This view is best exemplified by Schoeck.⁴⁷

Whole War

But neoanalyst methodology can also allow for the possibility of active evocation by motif transference. The evocation by the *Iliad* of many past and future events in the Trojan war outside the boundaries of the poem has often been recognized. Much material in the *Iliad* does not seem to belong to the dramatic time of the poem but rather suggests mythological events outside the *Iliad*. This contextualization of the *Iliad* within the whole war is sometimes accomplished by direct reference, but it also occurs by means of indirect reflection that should be considered a type of motif transference.

Especially notable are scenes in Books 2-7 of the *Iliad* that seem more appropriate for the beginning of the war, such as the catalogue of ships, the marshaling of troops, the duel between Paris and Menelaus, and Priam’s inability to recognize the Greek leaders from the wall of the city. Analysts found in such temporal discrepancies evidence of multiple authorship, and so sometimes unitarians have felt compelled to deny, rather unpersuasively, that they exist at all. A different approach has been to interpret these temporal peculiarities as mistakes made by a poet immersed in oral tradition.

⁴⁶ Cf. Kakridis 1971:17-18; Kullmann 1981:23.

⁴⁷ Schoeck 1961. At 1960:29-50 and *passim* Kullmann repeatedly speaks of a traditional or oral poet as unaware of his errors.

In oral composition, it has been suggested, the focus is only on the passage immediately at hand and chronological inconsistency is not noticed.⁴⁸

Instead of thinking that the *Iliad* repeatedly “goes off track” in the opening books of the *Iliad*, we will better suppose that the early stages of the war are evoked by the use of motifs that obviously belong to a different chronological setting. This is secondary use of motifs to trigger recognition of the primary motifs belonging to the traditional narrative of the whole war, and it is comparable to reflection in the later books of the *Iliad* of events that occur after the end of the poem, like the death of Achilles and the fall of Troy. In effect, large-scale Homeric reflection of Trojan war events that occurred before the start of the narrative (external analepsis, in narratological terms) and after the end of the narrative (external prolepsis) is the result.⁴⁹

The passages in question are not mistakes that require excision or toleration, but recognizable allusions to the early years of the war. That effect would be part of the general evocation of the whole Trojan war, upcoming events as well as past events, that many scholars have noticed in the *Iliad*.⁵⁰ This observation goes back to antiquity; in Chapter 23 of the *Poetics* Aristotle states:

νῦν δ' ἐν μέρος ἀπολαβῶν ἐπεισοδίοις κέχρηται
αὐτῶν πολλοῖς, οἷον νεῶν καταλόγῳ καὶ ἄλλοις
ἐπεισοδίοις οἷς διαλαμβάνει τὴν ποίησιν

Focusing on one part [Homer] employs many episodes of other parts, such as the catalogue of ships and other episodes by which he breaks up the composition.

Else (586) comments: “Aristotle saw what modern scholarship has rediscovered: that Homer selected episodes from the whole course of the war

⁴⁸ Unitarian analysis: notably Scott 1921:167-71; Tsagarakis 1982. Oralist: Bowra 1930:110-12; Lord 1960:187-88; Kirk 1985:286-87. Kakridis (1971:31-39) and Jamison (1994) ascribe some of these scenes to a typology of bridal abduction independent of the Trojan war.

⁴⁹ For narratology and Homeric poetry, see de Jong 1987, 2001; Richardson 1990.

⁵⁰ Murray 1934:184-86; Whitman 1958:39-45, 267-71; Else 1957:585-86; Schein 1984:19-25; M. Edwards 1987a:188-97; Taplin 1992 (espec. 83-109, 257-84); Nickel 1997:307-12; Rengakos 2004. Danek (1998:511-12) links the phenomenon with oral poetics, citing South Slavic analogues.

and incorporated them into a story which, chronologically speaking, is incompatible with them.”⁵¹

Aristotle’s reference to the “breaking up” of the narrative (*διαλαμβάνει τὴν ποίησιν*) suggests, in intertextual terms, that as the *Iliad* proceeds in a horizontal or syntagmatic direction with its own story it is repeatedly interrupted by other narratives. These other narratives are connected to the *Iliad*’s story, but in a vertical or paradigmatic sense they challenge the immediate narrative at hand. In other words, the *Iliad* exists within a matrix of intertextuality. As far as Trojan war motifs are concerned, this is a recognizable intertextuality, with one part of the story of the war containing markers pointing to other parts of the story. Various inconcinnities or “ungrammaticalities” reveal this matrix. Though unitarians have sometimes resisted this portrayal of the poem, analysts, neoanalysts, oralists, and intertextualist scholars have generally agreed with it; what is disputed by these different perspectives is the degree of interruption, the effect on the narrative at hand, and the possibility of recognition by an audience.

In my view the chronological inappropriateness in the *Iliad* is a brilliant narratological manipulation of time. The complete story of the war is suggested by the narration of one incident in the war. But there is more to the phenomenon than an efficient narration of multiple events. Evocation of Trojan war material suggests the motivation and consequences of the characters’ actions.⁵² The inescapable past and the unavoidable future become conflated with the present, and the human condition is depicted as an ineffable and intense temporal implosion of longstanding causality and looming destiny.

The main interest of neoanalysts has usually been in Iliadic use of the Achilles *fabula* alone, not the whole war. When they have noticed Iliadic reflection of the whole war, they have done so with some sense of its allusive nature.⁵³ Yet this is seemingly incompatible with standard

⁵¹ Else 1957:586. The phenomenon is also recognized in Eustathios; see Rengakos 2004:292 for passages and discussion.

⁵² For a brilliant analysis of the role of time for characterization in the *Iliad*, see Kullmann 1968.

⁵³ Cf. Pestalozzi 1945:39-41, 46-52; Kullmann 1960:5 n. 2, 366-68, 1968:17-18, 1981:42; Schoeck 1961:16, 117-20; Kakridis 1971:32, 61. The correspondences themselves between the *Iliad* and the whole war are exhaustively established by Kullmann 1960. Suggestive if inconclusive are remarks on “double time” in Kullmann

neoanalyst methodology, which posits creative, transformative adaptation, discernible only in its infelicities. If Iliadic motif transference actively suggests the whole war, as I believe it does, then it should also actively suggest the Achilles *fabula* as well. Of particular importance more recently has been the original reworking of neoanalysis by Slatkin, which has convincingly demonstrated the significant role that traditions about Thetis play in the *Iliad*, and the emphasis by Danek on the impact of non-Homeric material on reception of the *Odyssey*.⁵⁴ But although some have employed neoanalysis to perceive active signification, the essential methodology of neoanalysis assumes quite the opposite. It seems that the textual nature of early neoanalysis imposed limitations on a narrative's potential meaning, whereas neoanalysis employed from an oralist perspective has allowed perception of more meaningful poetic results of motif transference. What neoanalysts have considered mistakes discernible only by the critic are better seen as important signposts recognizable by the audience.⁵⁵

Homeric poetry (Level C) does not try to obliterate the cyclic mythopoetic traditions (Levels A, B), but actively seeks to make connections to them in a complex and transformative manner (one that I call "metacyclic"). This is not stealing from cyclic tradition or accidentally misusing it; it is the employment of traditional material in a new context so as to evoke the original context. Inappropriateness does not result from unskillful composition, but rather is designed to force recognition of the context in which the material is usually set. In this way Homeric poetry achieves a sophisticated type of intertextuality.⁵⁶ Motif transference may be a distinctive characteristic of Homeric poetry, but it does not mean that Homeric poetry (Level C) overcame, vanquished, or superseded cyclic

1960:366-68, and also on time and characterization in Kullmann 1968, as noted above. Heubeck, an early adherent of neoanalyst methodology, insightfully demonstrated the *Iliad*'s portrayal of the whole war (1991, 1954:70-91).

⁵⁴ Slatkin 1991, espec. 107-10; Danek 1998, 2001, 2002.

⁵⁵ Clarke (1981:214) contends that neoanalysts demonstrate "how Homer preserved the power and the associations of the epic tradition" to give the *Iliad* "added resonances"; it is much less likely that Homer "borrowed from specific poems and somehow neglected to cover his tracks." Danek (1998:5) faults analyst and neoanalyst work on the *Odyssey* for ignoring the poetic effect of Homeric re-use of traditional material.

⁵⁶ I find my main points compatible with the characteristics of "intertextuality" as opposed to characteristics of an older sense of "allusion" in Fowler 2000.

traditions (Levels A, B). Far from it; instead of making the cyclic obsolete, the Homeric depends upon the cyclic for its poetic functioning.

Intention

An argument that favors the active significance of poetic phenomena may be found objectionable by those who suspect that this argument implies intentionalism. Identification of an author's intent that was deemed inappropriate in New Criticism had little chance of revival in later theory that proclaimed the death of the author.⁵⁷ Over time there has been a tendency to move the focus out from author to the text and on to the audience receiving the text. Intertextual studies that emphasize literary sources and influences often find this situation awkward: if there are observable connections between one text and another, how did they get there? Some classicists pursuing intertextuality have found it necessary to raise the possibility of authorial intention, usually with varying degrees of regret, embarrassment, or self-justification.⁵⁸

Neoanalysts, and their admirers among purveyors of the single genius theory, wish to ascribe phenomena uncovered by neoanalysis to a radically new technique of an inventive composer. But their arguments, persuasive or not, need not presume an author's intention. Recognition of motif transference requires the acceptance of a distinctive "metacyclic" nature for Homeric poetry, but not a monumental poet. We can sidestep the question of what was intended in composition and instead explore the effect of what neoanalysts have noticed. Using the textual evidence as a basis of such an exploration, we can conceive of meaning as something achieved by an audience in reaction to the poetry. Motif transference is not predicated upon the assumption of a master poet; its mechanics are discernible within the Homeric verse itself, and its significance can be approximated by focusing on the audience reception of the poetics involved.

⁵⁷ New criticism: Beardsley and Wimsatt 1954 ("The Intentional Fallacy"); more recently, Barthes 1986:49-55 ("The Death of the Author"). For a controversial defense of intention, see Knapp and Michaels 1985. For discussion of the issue, see Kermodé 1983:201-20 (includes response by P. D. Juhl).

⁵⁸ Cf. Farrell 1991:21-23; Hubbard 1998:14-15; Hinds 1998:47-50; Thomas 1999:1; Edmunds 2001:viii-ix, 19-38.

Audience

Above I have made periodic reference to the reception of early Greek epic by an ancient audience. It will be helpful in this regard to employ reception theory. There have been many different and independent strands of theory oriented toward the audience. Of particular relevance to my concerns is the reconstruction of reception in particular historical periods. We will have a better sense of the early significance of Homeric poetics by trying to comprehend the parameters of its reception in the Archaic Age, or the “horizon of expectations” of that time, to use the well-known phrase of Hans-Robert Jauss.⁵⁹ A central aspect of early reception of Homeric poetry must surely have been the knowledge of mythological traditions that the audience brought to a performance. The Homeric poems were not performed within a narrative vacuum, but rather within the context of traditional myth. The collective knowledge of the audience provided a “horizon of expectations” that would have necessarily affected its reception. This means that motif transference, as long as it involved motifs from traditional narrative, would have been recognizable to the audience, with an active poetic effect as a consequence. Motif transference would trigger significant recognition of mythological information known collectively by the audience.

For the ancient audience familiar with the whole story of the Trojan war, motif transference as described by neoanalysts would be readily appreciated and would have an active, not passive, effect. The modern audience has not easily sensed this effect because it is dismissive of the traditional myth on which the *Iliad* is founded; indeed, critics have usually unconsciously reflected the Aristarchan attitude that was hostile to the non-Homeric Trojan war tradition as a threat to Homer’s originality.⁶⁰ But familiarity with non-Homeric material can generally be assumed for an ancient Greek audience, which at an early date would be surrounded by the living oral traditions of mythology, especially as expressed by oral epic.⁶¹

⁵⁹ On audience-oriented theory, see Holub 1984. For the “horizon of expectations,” see Jauss 1982:espec. 28-32 in reference to ancient literature. Also relevant is the concept of the “implied reader” of a text, on which see Iser 1974, 1978, and its application to oral tradition by Foley (1991:38-60).

⁶⁰ See Severyns 1928; Burgess 2001, index s.v. “Aristarchus”; Ballabriga 1998:11-22.

⁶¹ A mythologically informed and actively interpreting ancient audience is assumed at Slatkin 1991; Danek 1998, 2001, 2002. One challenge to belief in extensive Homeric allusion to traditional material is the possibility of *ad hoc* invention, a concept

This may seem to grant priority to an ancient response over a modern response, which in modern literary theory is often seen as an objectionable.⁶² Does the original audience of the time of the *Iliad*'s creation have an authority over meaning that trumps all later interpretations? No, the Homeric poems are eternally open to all the meanings that any audience will find in them. The reception uncovered by my use of neoanalyst methodology is not the only possible one, and it need not be championed as the best one. Different ancient audiences will have had different levels of ability and interest. Performer and audience would need to negotiate the process of communication, and much would depend on the knowledge, alertness, and cooperation of an audience at any given performance. Some, rather than seek out allusions, may have chosen to accept oddities or suppressions without question, perhaps out of generosity to the performer.⁶³ A modern reader uninformed of mythological traditions can find that the *Iliad* functions beautifully in the presentation of its own story. The narrative problems that neoanalysts stress—"triggers" to external narrative, in my analysis—can be ignored or tolerated, with an absence of significance resulting.

Yet there is the potential for mythological intertextuality, and there is no question that it was at its highest with the early ancient audience. Later audiences in antiquity would not necessarily have access to living mythological traditions, even if they were able to approximate the earlier experience through preserved, fixed manifestations of these traditions, like the poems of the Epic Cycle. Eventually non-Homeric traditions lost prominence to such an extent that an audience would not approach Homeric poetry in a mythologically informed way, a situation that continues to the modern period. It is in these circumstances that neoanalyst research, by reconstructing lost narratives and uncovering traces of them within the *Iliad*, has been very useful. Much of the argumentative cogency of neoanalysis is derived from its success in recovering neglected narratives and uncovering their presence in a Homeric context. This approach has restored Homeric poetry to its early historical circumstances. It is a desirable further step to

that can be overly celebrated because of a desire to emphasize innovation over tradition (see Burgess 2001:48-49, 154-55). For skepticism about the ancient audience's knowledge and interpretative abilities, see Andersen 1998 (opposed by Schein [2001, 2002]); Scodel 2002. See also Morrison 1992 on "misdirection" of the audience. Certainly an ideal audience cannot be assumed to be universal.

⁶² E.g., Fowler 2000:131-34 deplores the "audience limitation" that results from interest in the production and reception of early Greek literature.

⁶³ Scodel 2002:1-41.

reconstruct significance that approximates that potentially realized by a more mythologically informed original audience.

One need not favor an ancient reception over a modern one, yet it would be incurious, if not self-depriving, to ignore the historical circumstances of the poem. These include not only the context of oral composition, knowledge of which has so enriched Homeric studies, but also the context of its early reception. This reception would at first have been through oral performance, and the performers and the audience would usually share a deep and longstanding knowledge of the mythological traditions on which early epic were based. The early reception of epic, in all its various forms, is now lost forever. But some sense of its potential can be re-created through reconstruction of the ancient traditions, so that we may approach the poems with some of the knowledge of the ancient audience. A sensitive reaction to the Homeric poems, then as now, would be alert to how motif transference provided the poems with a means to reflect their larger mythological contexts.

Oral Comparanda

A number of related phenomena suggest that the technique of motif transference grew organically from oral poetic traditions. It certainly is not an isolated phenomenon. In the discussion above, motif transference was related to various types of repetition, reflection, and doubling, which are common in oral traditions.⁶⁴ In a general way, motif transference is comparable to any instance of one thing being compared to a different thing. The Homeric simile, for example, involves the explicit comparison of one set of characteristics to another.⁶⁵ This may seem at first to have no relation to motif transference, but there are instructive parallels. In the simile correspondence is established between certain key elements, but many aspects remain dissimilar. In motif transference, correspondence also occurs (though is not signaled explicitly) through the correspondence of certain key elements, or a key “pivot,” with most aspects of the respective situations remaining dissimilar. The primary/secondary status of motifs in motif transference also has its parallel in similes, where the primary situation of known phenomena, often of the natural world or of civilian human

⁶⁴ Cf. Lohmann 1970:209-12, 284, where the sophistication of Homeric “mirroring” is attributed to literate composition, though with an oral background.

⁶⁵ Austin 1975:115-18; Lowenstam 1993:4-7.

existence, is used as a model of orientation for less readily comprehended phenomena.

Other relevant phenomena are internal digressions within the Homeric poems that have often been seen to mirror themes of the main narrative. Mythological paradigms in particular provide an interesting comparison to motif transference. This is not just because the content of both phenomena involves traditional myth. Both also add metaphorical (that is, paradigmatic) significance to Homeric poetics.⁶⁶ Paradigms involve the use of known traditional tales by characters in the poems in order to make a point about a current situation.⁶⁷ As with motif transference, extra-Iliadic myth is brought into relation with the narrative within the poem (though explicitly). The whole process depends on recognition that the paradigm and the Homeric situation have certain key elements in common, despite much variation in particulars. There is also a discernible distinction between primary and secondary instances of motifs, as in motif transference, though the direction is inverted, since secondary motifs will be added to the manipulated extra-Iliadic myth so that it reflects the primary situation of the Iliadic narrative.

For example, many scholars have noticed that Phoenix's parable of Meleager in Book 9 of the *Iliad* resembles Achilles' situation.⁶⁸ If the parallel was only that two heroes withdraw from battle, that would be of little significance, for withdrawal from battle seems to be a typical motif.⁶⁹ But the withdrawal of Meleager is not very compatible with other aspects of his story that seem traditional, and Phoenix's account of it contains details that belong to the story of Achilles. It seems that Phoenix (and in a more

⁶⁶ On the similarity of mythological paradigms to other types of Homeric repetition and analogy, cf. Lohmann 1970:183-212; Austin 1975:124-26; Lowenstam 1993:3-4. Danek (1998:508) connects mythological paradigms to oral intertextuality. Alden 2000 examines mythological paradigms together with significant digressions in the narrative, labeling them all "para-narratives." See also Martin 2002 on the "intratextual" relevance of paradigms, espec. 52-54, and Dué 2002:5-8, 86-88 on "paradigmatic" connections between Briseis and other lamenting figures external to the *Iliad*.

⁶⁷ On mythological paradigms, cf. Willcock 1964, 1977; Lohmann 1970; Alden 2000.

⁶⁸ See espec. Kakridis 1949:11-42, 127-48; Willcock 1964:147-53; Rosner 1976; Morrison 1992:119-24; Hainsworth 1993:130-40; Alden 2000:179-290.

⁶⁹ Besides its association with Achilles and Meleager, the motif is mentioned briefly in the *Iliad* in connection with Paris (6.325-631) and Aeneas (13.459-61).

sophisticated manner, the narrator) has transformed a traditional story so that its circumstances reflect those of the *Iliad*. It is especially notable that the name of Meleager's wife, "Cleopatra," corresponds inversely to the name "Patroclus."⁷⁰ Phoenix's tale is designed to entice Achilles back onto the battlefield by outlining the negative consequences of the rejection of entreaties. On another level it probably foreshadows Achilles' later decision to rejoin the fighting, and perhaps even his death, as an audience with knowledge of the Meleager tale would recognize.⁷¹

There are certainly differences between the poetic techniques of mythological paradigms and motif transference. With paradigms, the correspondence is made explicit; with motif transference, it is implicit. The direction of movement from primary to secondary instances of motifs is different. The myths in paradigms tend to be from cycles different from the Trojan war, often featuring heroes of past generations, whereas the motif transference of neoanalysis involves later developments in the Trojan war story. Still, the similarities are striking. Both mythological paradigms and motif transference involve some manipulation of detail to enhance correspondence (with paradigms, manipulation of traditional narrative as it is retold so as to reflect the situation within the poem; with motif transference, manipulation of the poem's narrative to reflect traditional narrative). The use of mythological paradigms and motif transference are distinct yet comparable poetic phenomena.

The point is that motif transference is not some sort of idiosyncratic, unparalleled technique. It certainly is a subtle and sophisticated poetic device, and it can be considered a key component of the "metacyclic" nature of Homeric poetry. But it grew out of methods of comparison and "reflection" that were inherent in oral traditions and in everyday life itself. It did not come out of thin air; it is derived from observable phenomena in the poetic and known world. Motif transference is both traditional and distinctive, as is the "metacyclic" nature of Homeric poetry generally.

Recognition of the sophistication of motif transference does not lead to a conclusion that Homeric poetry is independent from its traditions. It suggests rather a dependence on the cyclic traditions of the Trojan war, to the extent that the poetic strategies of the *Iliad* assume that the audience will

⁷⁰ For bibliographical history on this issue, see Alden 2000:240 n. 152; the correspondence is now widely accepted.

⁷¹ Nagy (1979:105-6) well distinguishes between the "message" that Phoenix gives to Achilles and the "code" that the audience perceives (cf. Andersen 1987:4-7 on "argument" and "key").

bring to the poem a sensitive and alert knowledge of traditional myth. Motif transference can be understood as a type of intertextuality. The intertextuality is not between texts but between the Homeric poems and pre-Homeric oral traditions. These traditions cannot be identified or equated with particular poems, and it is not text that is transferred, in the sense of words and phrases, but rather notional motifs (consisting of narrative actions) that have traditionally been applied to specific heroes. Intertextuality so described may sound imprecise, but motif transference involves certain parameters that would not be recognized by a post-structuralist concept of intertextuality. As neoanalysts have established, the motifs are specific, being usually bound to the context of a heroic myth, and once transferred into Homeric poetry they are recognizably secondary. How recognizable is the key issue, however; whereas traditional neoanalysts have reserved discernment of motif transference to the scholar, it is more probable that the reflection would be recognized by a mythologically informed audience. In this case motif transference is more than coincidental, casual, or merely vestigial. It is significant allusion, at least in an oral, intertextually neoanalyst manner.⁷²

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⁷² I would like to dedicate this article to the memory of Steven Lowenstam, whom I never met, but who engaged in extensive e-mail correspondence with me about many of the issues addressed here, and much more, shortly before his untimely death. I am grateful to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for financial support, and to my research assistant Michal Dziog.

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Carneades' Quip: Orality, Philosophy, Wit, and the Poetics of Impromptu Quotation

M. D. Usher

In spite of a long and influential philosophical career, when Carneades of Cyrene (214-129 BC), head of the Academy in its skeptical phase, died at age eighty-five, he left behind no written works. There were, we are told, some letters extant in Diogenes Laertius' time addressed to Ariarathes, king of Cappadocia, but Carneades' philosophical opinions were conveyed orally and transmitted to posterity in written form only by his students (D.L. 4.65).¹ In this respect Carneades resembles not only Pythagoras and Socrates before him and Epictetus later, but also his Skeptic predecessors Pyrrho and Arcesilaus, whose refusal to commit their ideas to writing was a conscious protest against philosophical dogmatism.²

And yet, while not a writer, Carneades' devotion to the word was total and complete: he let his hair and fingernails grow weirdly long, Diogenes Laertius reports, because he was so engrossed in philosophical debate (*ἀσχολία τῇ περὶ τοῦς λόγους*; D.L. 4.62), and his skills as a dialectician, conversationalist, and orator were by all accounts astounding. Indeed, Carneades' mastery of forms of oral expression became the stuff of legend: his booming voice brought him humorously into conflict with the local gymnasiarch (D.L. 4.63). Professional orators, it is said, would cancel their own classes in order to attend his lectures (D.L. 4.62). He became

¹ Chief among whom was the Carthaginian Hasdrubal, Carneades' prolific successor, known by his adoptive Greek name, Clitomachus. None of Clitomachus' many works survive, though Cicero and Sextus Empiricus preserve a good deal of Carneades' thought. All extant fragments and testimonia with commentary may be found in Mette 1985:55-141; select passages with English translation and commentary in Long and Sedley 1987, vol. 1:438-88 and vol. 2:432-75.

² Cf. D.L. 4.32 (of Arcesilaus), with Long 1985:80, 94. Plato's injunction that the philosopher should consider writing nothing more than an amusement (*paidia*; cf. *Phaedrus* 274b-76d) was perhaps also a factor.

something of a celebrity in 155, when, as one of three philosopher-envoys the Athenians sent to Rome in order to appeal a large fine, Carneades gave a stunning pair of lectures before the Senate on successive days, one in defense of justice and one against. His rhetorical *tour de force* on that famous occasion not only fired the imaginations of a whole generation of young Roman intellectuals (much to the chagrin of Cato the Censor), but it somehow managed to succeed in reducing the fine as well.³

Another verbal art form at which Carneades seems to have been adept is the spontaneous quotation of poetry, and this paper explores aspects of orality, philosophy, and wit in the Hellenistic age using Carneades' quotations as a lens. Our specific topic is a short series of one-liners from Homer and Sophocles—a short cento, in fact⁴—that was exchanged between the philosopher and one of his pupils (an episode preserved in Diogenes Laertius' life of Carneades: D.L. 4.63-4). This passage, at one level so typical of the anecdotes one finds in Diogenes, has attracted practically no attention,⁵ yet it is a case study in miniature that provides an illuminating glimpse into the reception and reworking of oral and orally-derived poetry and myth in the Hellenistic age. Of particular interest are traces of the kind of associative thinking that characterizes oral poetic composition.⁶ But Carneades' cento also suggests that the aesthetics and communicative power of “traditional referentiality”—Foley's shorthand term for the way oral poetic structures (and thus the orally-derived texts that were read by ancient readers) convey meaning differently than literary ones—did not die out completely with the establishment of literacy, but were operative even in the

³ The other members of the delegation were Critolaus the Peripatetic and the Stoic Diogenes of Babylon. On the historical background, see Habicht 1997:264-69. On the cultural fallout of this diplomatic mission at Rome—a case of *Graecia capta* if ever there was one—see Astin 1978:169-81.

⁴ A cento (from a Greek word meaning “embroidery” or “pastiche”) is a poem or literary work consisting of material taken from other, pre-existing source texts. For an overview of the form, see Salanitro 1997.

⁵ Salanitro (1997:2328), following Stemplinger (1912:194), makes passing reference, but offers no analysis.

⁶ The point of departure here is Jousse's 1925 study of the mnemotechnics of an oral style, which demonstrated how and why oral habits of composition persist in literate traditions. Recent work on the cognitive psychology of memory by Baddeley (1990) and applied specifically to oral arts forms by Rubin (1995) and others (e.g., Minchin 2001) has corroborated Jousse's findings.

most learned circles of the Hellenistic period (a stereotypically “bookish” age that saw the proliferation of libraries and the editing of classical texts on an unprecedented scale) and could be invoked, as we shall see, to score humorous and rather sophisticated philosophical points.⁷

Before we proceed to an analysis of this passage, it bears saying something at the outset about the relationship of Carneades’ rhetoric (including his use of quotation) to his philosophy. It is now generally agreed among modern scholars of ancient philosophy that Carneades’ use of antilogy and argument throughout his career was no mere sophistical display of arguing both sides of an issue or of making the weaker argument the stronger, but was philosophically motivated:⁸ to persuade someone of the truth and simultaneous untruth of two opposing sides of any argument only served to underscore the problems inherent in a person’s ability to accurately interpret the “impressions,” or *phantasiai*, that present themselves to the senses and buttressed the Skeptics’ belief that, in view of those problems, human beings should suspend ultimate judgment on all matters of truth.⁹ Seen in this light, Carneades’ displays of verbal prowess are closer to Socratic interrogation (*elenchus*) than to epideictic oratory.¹⁰ His virtuosity, in other words, was aimed primarily at debunking unsupportable opinions and dispelling illusions.

And yet, like the speeches and verbal give-and-take between Socrates and his interlocutors in Plato’s dialogues, Carneades’ dialectic is no less playful because it happened to have this serious philosophical end in view. As Huizinga noted long ago (1955:151), one looks in vain for any “clear and

⁷ For “traditional referentiality” see Foley 1991:38-60.

⁸ That this is now the *opinio communis* is indicated well enough by Striker’s article (2001) on Carneades in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. See, too, Long 1985:80, 94. Yet it must be said that Carneades’ rhetoric is still sometimes misunderstood as sophism by modern commentators, e.g., Gruen 1984:342 (“The Athenian’s speeches were showpieces, a dazzling display of rhetorical virtuosity, seductive and disarming”), who follow ancient sources that were hostile to Academic skepticism (sources and discussion in Mette 1985; see also Garbarino 1973, vol. 1, testimonia 80-82; vol. 2, 365-70).

⁹ For a succinct account of the Skeptics’ position on this issue and Carneades’ contribution, see the discussion and helpful diagram in Long and Sedley 1987, vol. 1:455-60; for this position as a reaction to Stoic teachings on the matter: *ibid.*, 249-53. For a lucid orientation to the philosophy of ancient (as distinct from modern) Skepticism, see Striker 2001.

¹⁰ A point intimated by Brennan (1923:17-18), and well put by Wilkerson (1988:136-42).

conscious demarcation between play and knowledge” in philosophy. Huizinga’s stimulating (and to my mind convincing) discussion of the origins of philosophy in contests of wit and riddle-solving should remind us that ancient philosophy, for all its syllogisms, categories, and abstractions, remained in practice very close to the world of orality: “Leaving aside the question of how far the word ‘problem’ itself (πρόβλημα)—literally ‘what is thrown before you’—points to the *challenge* as the origin of philosophic judgement,” Huizinga writes (115),

[W]e can say with certainty that the philosopher, from the earliest times to the late Sophists and Rhetors, always appeared as a typical champion. He challenged his rivals, he attacked them with vehement criticism and extolled his own opinions as the only true ones with all the boyish cocksureness of archaic man. In style and form . . . philosophy [is] polemical and agonistic.

Implicit in Huizinga’s formulation is that philosophy is also—at least in its penchant for controversy, disputation and debate—highly oral. Such antagonism, even flyting,¹¹ among Hellenistic philosophers is, of course, a familiar “psychodynamic” of orality (to use Ong’s term; 1982:43-45), and another reminder that philosophy after Plato had not completely severed itself from its oral past, contrary to what is sometimes said.¹² Carneades’ quip, to which at last we now turn, is a case in point.

A certain Mentor of Bithynia, the anecdote informs us, an aspiring docent in the Academy,¹³ was found to have made sexual advances toward Carneades’ mistress. This situation soon came to Carneades’ attention, and when Mentor ventured to the Academy one day as usual to hear Carneades lecture, Carneades interrupted his lesson and rebuked Mentor publicly with a

¹¹ A representative example of this is the name-calling by Epicurus at D.L. 10.8, to say nothing of the vitriolic *ad hominem* attacks of Diogenes the Cynic (cf. D.L. 6.24-26, directed at Plato).

¹² Take, for example, Havelock (1986:116), who says with respect to the death of the oralist Socrates that “by the time it was Plato’s turn to leave, in the middle of the fourth century, the Greek Muse had left the whole world of oral discourse and oral ‘knowing’ behind her. She had truly learnt to write, and to write in prose—and even to write in philosophical prose.”

¹³ That Mentor is not just a fictitious straw man in this episode, but a real philosopher (from Nicaea) with connections to the Academy, is confirmed by his appearance in Philodemus’ *Index Academicorum* (Mette 1985:T 3b). See Capelle 1932.

concatenation of two lines from the *Odyssey* and a third from Sophocles' *Antigone*. The source (D.L. by way of Favorinus) specifically says that Carneades did this spontaneously, or “off-the-cuff” in the midst of speaking—μεταξὺ λέγων (see Liddell 1996: s.v. μεταξὺ I.2.a)—a key detail in ascertaining the degree of “residual orality” or “recomposition-in-performance” at work in this encounter.¹⁴ Here is the relevant passage, followed by a working translation:¹⁵

οὗτός [= Carneades] ποτε Μέντορος τοῦ Βιθυνοῦ μαθητοῦ ὄντος
καὶ παρ' αὐτὸν ἐλθόντος εἰς τὴν διατριβήν, ὡς ἐπίερα αὐτοῦ
τὴν παλλακὴν ὁ Μέντωρ . . . μεταξὺ λέγων παρώδησεν εἰς
αὐτόν

πωλεῖταιί τις δεῦρο γέρον ἄλιος νημερτής, (= *Od.* 4.384)

Μέντορι εἰδόμενος ἡμὲν δέμας ἡδὲ καὶ αὐδὴν.

(= *Od.* 2.268=401)

τοῦτον σχολῆς τῆσδ' ἐκκεκηρῦχθαι λέγω

(≈ *Soph., Ant.* 203)

καὶ ὃς [i.e., Mentor] ἀναστάς ἔφη

οἱ μὲν ἐκήρυσσον, τοὶ δ' ἠγείροντο μάλ' ὦκα.

(= *Il.* 2.52=444)

One time, when Mentor of Bithynia, Carneades' pupil, came to hear him lecture, Carneades composed a parody against him in the midst of speaking, since Mentor was trying to seduce his mistress:

Here comes an old man from the sea, unerring,

Having assumed the form of Mentor in speech and appearance.

This man I declare has been banished from this school!

Whereupon Mentor stood up and said:

[The heralds] made the pronouncement, and [the army] gathered

tout de suite.

The processes of verbal selection and combination in this spontaneous linguistic performance are intimately connected to the context in which these lines appear in their respective source texts. Each verse, in other words, like a link in hypertext, opens up a window onto a much larger set of semiotic and aesthetic parameters to activate meaning.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ong's and Nagy's terms, respectively: see Ong 1982:57; Nagy 1996:15 and throughout.

¹⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all translations in this paper are my own.

¹⁶ “Selection” and “combination” are, of course, Saussurean terms; on the concept of thematic “activation” in an oral tradition, see Bakker 1993.

The first line Carneades uses is spoken by Eidothea to Menelaus during the hero's sojourn in Egypt, where the "unerring old man from the sea" is the shape-shifter Proteus, Eidothea's father. The second line, *Od.* 2.268 (repeated at 2.401), describes Athena taking on the form of Mentor, the philosopher's namesake, at Ithaca. The slight grammatical accommodation of the participle in that line (from feminine to masculine) to make it work in this new context is itself an established technique of Homeric poetics—a habit of composition that is not only pervasive in Homer proper, but found in Homeric centos as well, which I have argued elsewhere are a "regeneration" of Homeric verse that utilizes many of the same (oral) techniques that produced the original poems.¹⁷ Carneades' Mentor, it is implied by the use of the word *eidomenos* ("having assumed the form"), is only a phantom of the "real" Mentor of Homer, the loyal guest-friend of Odysseus that Athena impersonates, who was entrusted by Odysseus with watching over his house and his wife while he was away at Troy (*Od.* 2.225-27). Rather, his pupil Mentor is chameleon-like and elusive, more like the shape-shifting Proteus, who, in an interesting parallel, was himself entrusted with a similar responsibility—the task of hospitably—and chastely—detaining Helen in Egypt, while the phantom (*eidolon*) of Helen was taken by Paris to Troy.¹⁸ Whether or not there was ever a tradition that Proteus himself violated trust by trying to keep Helen as his own wife our extant sources do not say, though in Euripides' *Helen* the whole plot revolves around Proteus' son, Theoclymenus, trying to do this very thing.¹⁹ But what is truly remarkable here is how in the space of only two spontaneously quoted lines from Homer, Carneades is situating Mentor and his alleged treatment of the mistress in a whole nexus of mythological

¹⁷ Discussion and examples—Homeric and centonic—in Usher 1998:35-56. The change of gender renders Carneades' version of the line mildly unmetrical, though to count the resulting short syllable in the participle as long, coming as it does at the caesura, is not without precedent in Homer (cf. *Il.* 1.19 and elsewhere).

¹⁸ On the Proteus legend, see O'Nolan 1960; on the development of this post-Homeric aspect of the Helen myth, see Austin 1994.

¹⁹ Euripides' Proteus, who is dead and buried at the opening of the play, is portrayed as having been completely honorable in his intentions regarding Helen. But given the degree of invention in Euripides' treatment of the myth, one wonders what lost material like Aeschylus' satyr play, *Proteus*, might have contained. (As it is, too little survives to even guess; see Mette 1963:76-77.) From the scholiast on *Od.* 4.228 (= Hellenic frag. 153 Jacoby 2005) we learn that the Egyptian king Thon once tried to rape Helen.

examples of trust and its violation, especially trust pertaining to the guardianship of women (Penelope on Ithaca, Helen in Egypt).²⁰

There are other, more subtle nuances in these first two lines of quotation as well. The verb *pōleomai*, for example, means properly “to come and go habitually,” suggesting that Mentor, in coming to the Academy as usual as if nothing were going on behind Carneades’ back, is particularly brazen and shameless. The adjective *halios* predicated of Homer’s Proteus, means, of course, “of, or pertaining to, the sea.” If that is the thought here, perhaps Carneades means simply to suggest Mentor’s provenance, coming as he does from across the sea. (Bithynia is in Anatolian Phrygia, across the Aegean from Attica.) More likely, however, especially given the fondness for puns, double entendres, and semantic abuse (catachresis) in parodies and in centos,²¹ is the possibility that the common, secondary meaning of *halios*—“worthless,” “empty,” “idle”—is in play here, which is also fully Homeric, albeit used mostly of things, not persons. The meaning of the adjective *nēmertês*, “not missing the mark,” “true,” “infallible,” “unerring” (formed from the negative *nê* plus the verb *hamartanô*), is also somewhat fluid in this new context. If predicated of Mentor in a straightforward way, it is of course wickedly sarcastic, especially when paired with *halios* (with the meaning “worthless/idle”). But one is tempted to take it in this context not as appositional, but as a hendiadys of sorts with *halios*; thus *halios nēmertês* = “truly worthless.” This nuance could, in fact, have been made explicit in spoken delivery with a very slight inflection of the voice by pronouncing the word *nēmertes*—the neuter form used adverbially, as it often is (though not in this *sedes*) in Homer.²² Alternately *halios* could well have been pronounced as an adverb, with a similarly slight change—*haliôs*—without upsetting the meter. While admittedly speculative, these possibilities in performance are not completely out of the question, given the blatant parody involved here in the first place. Be that as it may, the irony in calling Mentor *nēmertes* and then proceeding with the idea that he is only a semblance of himself (*eidomenos*, etc.) is surely not accidental, coming as it does from a Skeptic like Carneades for whom appearances were problematical to begin

²⁰ What is more, this Mentor, like the Proteus of Homer (it is also implied), is not likely to give away his secret knowledge without a struggle (cf. *Od.* 4.415-20; 450-59).

²¹ See Usher 1998:46-50.

²² The adverbial form always appears as the penultimate word in the line, and usually with the verb *ennepô*; e.g., *Od.* 3.101—καί μοι νημερτές ἐνίσπες—and throughout.

with. But there is even more philosophical significance here than meets the eye, or ear.

From Sextus Empiricus we happen to know that Carneades used the story of Helen's *eidôlon* as an illustration in his arguments against the Stoics.²³ In particular, the Helen exemplum was invoked to undercut the Stoic position that a "cognitive impression" (*phantasia katalêptikê*)—or "a [mental] impression capable of grasping (its object)" as Long and Sedley more correctly translate the phrase (vol. 1:250)—can be a sufficient and reliable criterion of truth: "When Menelaus returned from Troy and saw the true Helen there in the house of Proteus," Carneades is said to have argued,

having left her phantom on board his ship (over which the war had been fought for ten years), Menelaus took in an impression that was formed and stamped by an existing object and in accordance with that object,²⁴ yet did not give his assent to it. Consequently his cognitive impression was a criterion so long as it had no impediment. But the cognitive impressions that he had on this occasion *did* have impediments because Menelaus simultaneously saw that he had left Helen under guard on his ship and it was not unconvincing to him that this Helen he had found on Pharos with Proteus was not the real one, but an illusion, as it were, or a ghost. Thus, a cognitive impression is not a criterion of truth without qualification, but only when it has no impediment.²⁵

²³ From *Adv. Math.* 7.253-60; Greek text (but no English translation of this portion) in Long and Sedley 1987:vol. 2:250.

²⁴ "Existing object" here is R. G. Bury's translation of the Greek *huparchon*; on this difficult term and the concepts it may represent in Carneades' thought, see Hankinson 1997:168, n. 17.

²⁵ καὶ ὅτε ἀπὸ Τροίας Μενέλαος ἀνακομισθεὶς ἑώρα τὴν ἀληθῆ Ἑλένην παρὰ τῷ Πρωτεῖ, [καὶ] καταλιπὼν ἐπὶ τῆς νέως τὸ ἐκείνης εἶδωλον, περὶ οὗ δεκαετῆς συνέστη πόλεμος, ἀπὸ ὑπάρχοντος μὲν καὶ κατ' αὐτὸ τὸ ὑπάρχον καὶ ἐναπομαγαγμένην καὶ ἐναπεςφραγισμένην ἐλάμβανε φαντασίαν, οὐκ εἶκε δὲ αὐτῇ, ὥσθ' ἡ μὲν καταληπτικὴ φαντασία κριτήριόν ἐστι μηδὲν ἔχουσα ἔνστημα, αὐταὶ δὲ καταληπτικαὶ μὲν ἦσαν, εἶχον δὲ ἐνστάσεις . . . ὅ τε Μενέλαος συνεώρα ὅτι ἀπολέλοιπεν ἐν τῇ νηὶ φυλαττομένην τὴν Ἑλένην, καὶ οὐκ ἀπίθανον μὲν ἐστὶν Ἑλένην μὴ εἶναι τὴν ἐπὶ τῆς Φάρου εὑρεθείσαν, φάντασμα δέ τι καὶ δαιμόνιον. ἐνθὲνδε οὐχ ἀπλῶς κριτήριον γίνεται τῆς ἀληθείας ἡ καταληπτικὴ φαντασία, ἀλλ' ὅταν μηδὲν ἔνστημα ἔχη. Emphasis added in the translation.

The Helen example appears again in Sextus' summary of Carneades' thought to explain the related notion of an "undiverted impression" (*aperispastos phantasia*), one that is "convincing" (*pithanê*—a Stoic term) by virtue of the percipient having no simultaneous impression that casts it into doubt.²⁶ For Carneades, undiverted impressions were better than diverted ones, but ultimately he argued (against the Stoics) that "there is not, in any unqualified sense, any criterion of truth—not reason, not sensation, not impression . . . not any other existing thing. For all of these alike deceive us."²⁷ In Carneades' view, the best that could be said about mental and sensory impressions as a basis for judgments was that they could be more or less "persuasive," or "convincing," and his reworking and refinement of the Stoic notion of a *pithanê phantasia* became the lynch-pin (and by-word) of Carneades' whole epistemology.²⁸

Once the quotation is considered with such an epistemology in view, the words *demās* and *audê* ("body/mien" and "voice") in *Od.* 2.268 take on further significance. Compare, for example, Carneades' enumeration of physical attributes like these as being a part of a complex set of sensory stimuli that a person must negotiate in interpreting an impression. Taking Socrates as his example, Carneades says:

Someone who takes in an impression of a man necessarily also gets an impression of things to do with the man and with the extraneous circumstances—things to do with him like his color, size, shape, motion, conversation, dress, footwear . . . and everything else. So whenever none of these impressions diverts us by appearing false, but all with one accord appear true, our belief is all the greater.²⁹

²⁶ *Adv. Math.* 7.176-84; translation from Long and Sedley 1987:vol. 1:452, text in vol. 2:447-48. On Carneades' notion of an undiverted impression, cf. *ibid.*:vol. 1:458: "Undivertedness . . . indicates the contribution of coherence and mutual corroboration to the strength of the judgements people make."

²⁷ Sextus Emp., *Adv. Math.* 7.159: οὐδέν ἐστι ἀπλῶς ἀληθείας κριτήριον, οὐ λόγος, οὐ αἴσθησις, οὐ φαντασία, οὐκ ἄλλο τι τῶν ὄντων. πάντα γὰρ ταῦτα συλλήβδην διαψεύδεται ἡμᾶς (text: Long and Sedley 1987:vol. 2:452; translation: vol. 1: 460).

²⁸ Cf. Long and Sedley 1987:vol. 1:459-60.

²⁹ Sextus Emp., *Adv. Math.* 7.176.3-10: ὁ ἀνθρώπου σπῶν φαντασίαν ἐξ ἀνάγκης καὶ τῶν περὶ αὐτὸν <ὡς> χροᾶς μεγέθους σχήματος κινήσεως λαλιᾶς ἐσθῆτος ὑποδέσεως . . . τῶν ἄλλων πάντων. ὅταν οὖν μηδεμία τούτων τῶν φαντασιῶν περιέλκη ἡμᾶς τῷ φαίνεσθαι ψευδῆς, ἀλλὰ πᾶσαι συμφώνως

Also relevant here are the Stoic Chrysippus' views on *audê* as a sensory stimulus (which he differentiated from *phônê* and *dialektos*). As Clay observes in her analysis of this formula line from the *Odyssey*, Chrysippus' philosophical views were "manifestly an interpretation of Homeric usage,"³⁰ so Carneades may be poking some fun there as well since so much of Carneades' thought is a reaction to Stoic ideas. This is, after all, the man who said—with a parody of the classic statement of the Stoic school's debt to its greatest sage—"Were it not for Chrysippus, I would not exist" (D.L. 4.62).³¹

Given the philosophical positions sketched above, we now see that Carneades is using the Homer quotations to declare Mentor to be—tongue, no doubt, in cheek, but with some resentment perhaps as well—a diverted impression: as an accused philanderer, Mentor seems other than what he was previously thought to have been by the percipient (Carneades). More to the point, we also see why the *Odyssey* quotations came to Carneades' mind in composing his impromptu indictment. These lines arose spontaneously (*metaxu legôn*) because the contexts in which they occur in Homer are thematically related to a philosophical illustration that was already in Carneades' repertoire—namely Menelaus' disbelief in seeing the real Helen and the whole cluster of themes associated with that episode. As is well known from the study of "composition by theme" in Homer and other oral-traditional poetry, familiar contexts bring to mind appropriately familiar words and phrases (that is, formulas).³² Carneades' realization of these lines from the *Odyssey* involves similar mental processes. To put it another way, based on his competence as a reader and auditor of Homer, Carneades is readily able to recall (and adapt) Homeric lines to suit his purpose.³³

φαίνονται ἀληθεῖς, μᾶλλον πιστεύομεν (text: Long and Sedley 1987:vol. 2:447; translation: vol. 1: 452).

³⁰ Clay 1974:131-32, citing *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* II, 144.

³¹ εἰ μὴ γὰρ ἦν Χρύσιππος, οὐκ ἄν ἦν ἐγώ, parodying the Stoic boast εἰ μὴ γὰρ ἦν Χρύσιππος, οὐκ ἄν ἦν στοά ("Were it not for Chrysippus, the Stoa would not exist"; D.L. 7.183).

³² The classic discussion of "composition by theme" is by Lord (1951 and 1960:68-98); on the related phenomenon of the type-scene, see Arend 1933 and the overview of type-scene scholarship in Edwards 1992.

That the rebuke of Mentor was understood in antiquity to have had the philosophical dimension I am suggesting it had here is clear from a brief report about this episode in Numenius of Apamea's fragmentary history of the Academy.³⁴ Numenius was an admirer of Carneades' talents as a dialectician and orator, but was not himself sympathetic with Carneades' thought,³⁵ and so, looking back at this episode over two centuries later, he saw in it a humorous indictment of Carneades' radical skepticism:³⁶

Mentor was a close acquaintance of Carneades at first, but by no means did he become his successor. For while he was still alive, Carneades discovered Mentor having sex with his mistress and experienced no mere "persuasive impression" (*pithanês phantasias*), nor, so to speak, did he fail to take in a "cognitive impression" (*mê kateilêphôs*)³⁷ of the matter, but fully believing his own eyes, took in what he saw (*katalabôn*)³⁸ and disbarred Mentor from the school. And so Mentor left and began to rival Carneades in cleverness and rhetorical skill, refuting (*elengchôn*) the "incomprehensibility" (*akatalêpsian*) of his discourses.³⁹

³³ On the use of "competence" and "generation" (Chomskyan terms) of the reception and reproduction of oral poetry by literate persons, see Usher 1998:10. That philosophers could be fluent in such composition is noted briefly by Stemplinger (1912:278), who attributes this fluency to the rhetorical training they would have received in school. On the influence of declamation on cento composition, see Usher 1998:28-31.

³⁴ This is the only other reference to the Mentor affair. It is preserved in Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* (= frag. 27 des Places 1973:78, who provides text, notes, and French translation).

³⁵ In fact, the purpose of his account of the Academy is to show how far Academics had fallen from Plato; see Dillon 1996:365-66.

³⁶ Numenius subjects Carneades' predecessor, Lacydes, and the Skeptic doctrine of "suspension of belief" (*epochê*) to similar ridicule with a story about Lacydes' predictable reaction to slaves caught red-handed stealing from his storeroom (frag. 26 des Places 1973; cf. D.L. 4.59).

³⁷ As des Places notes, "le verbe καταλαμβάνειν," here and throughout Numenius' account, "fait penser à la καταληπτική φαντασία" (1973:77 n. 7).

³⁸ Or, with a play on the word, literally "caught Mentor in the act."

³⁹ Καρνεάδου δὲ γίνεται γνώριμος Μέντωρ μὲν πρῶτον, οὐ μὴν διάδοχος · ἀλλ' ἔτι ζῶν Καρνεάδης ἐπὶ παλλακῇ μοιχὸν εὐρών, οὐχ ὑπὸ

Just how skillful and clever Mentor was in his rebuke on this particular occasion we shall see presently. (We know nothing else about him or his subsequent career.) For the moment, however, it remains to consider the third line in Carneades' rebuff. It too exhibits the same kinds of thematic correspondence and habits of impromptu composition that we have seen at work in the *Odyssey* quotations.

The line, from Sophocles' *Antigone* (verse 203), is spoken by Creon about Polyneices, who by Creon's decree has been forbidden burial at Thebes. Carneades' reworking of Sophocles' line involves at least one substitution of a word and a change of case—from "city" to "school" and from the dative case to the genitive: "I herewith declare this man banished *from this school*" (τοῦτον σχολῆς τῆσδ' ἐκκεκηρῦχθαι λέγω). Like grammatical accommodation (seen here and above in the *Odyssey* quotation about Mentor), the substitution of individual words and phrases (here *scholês têsδ'* for Sophocles' *polei têid'*) in "template" phrases or "structural formulas"—a hallmark of oral poetics—is typical of cento composition and parody as well.⁴⁰ Carneades' change from "city" to "school" was of course necessary in this new context and intentional, but his use of λέγω, also at odds with the received text of Sophocles, is a more complicated and interesting affair. It is instructive to follow this trail for a moment, since it traverses important territory concerning the relationship of texts to oral traditions that is relevant to Carneades' performance here. A conspectus of Carneades' version of the line juxtaposed with the reading of the manuscripts and the various other readings that have been proposed by modern editors will give an indication of the nature of the problem:

1. τοῦτον σχολῆς τῆσδ' ἐκκεκηρῦχθαι λέγω = Carneades
2. τοῦτον πόλει τῆδ' ἐκκεκηρῦχθαι τάφῳ = codices

"πιθανῆς φαντασίας" οὐδ' ὡς μὴ κατειληφώς, ὡς δὲ μάλιστα πιστεύων τῇ ὄψει καὶ καταλαβὼν παρητήσατο τῆς διατριβῆς. ὁ δὲ [i.e., Mentor] ἀποστάς ἀντεσοφίστευε καὶ ἀντίτεχνος ἦν ἐλέγχων αὐτοῦ τὴν ἐν τοῖς λόγοις ἀκαταληψίαν (frag. 27 des Places 1973).

⁴⁰ See Usher 1998:38-44. On the formula as a mental template, see Nagler 1967; on "structural formulas," Russo 1976. With Carneades' substitution here, compare Nero's parodic reworking (in the context of the great fire at Rome) of an unattributed line from Greek tragedy—ἐμοῦ θανόντος γαῖα μειχθήτω πυρί ("When I am dead, let the world be confounded in fire")—the participle of which Nero was in the habit of changing in quotation to *zōntos* ("[nay] when I am *alive!*"; Suet., *Nero* 38.1).

3. τοῦτον πόλει τῆδ' ἐκκεκηρῦχθαι λέγω = Nauck, appealing to this passage in D.L.⁴¹

4. τοῦτον πόλει τῆδ' ἐκκεκήρυκται τάφω = Jebb/Lloyd-Jones-Wilson, following Musgrave⁴²

Nauck, we see, accepted Carneades' *legô*; Jebb and recently Lloyd-Jones and Wilson do not. Jebb, in fact, says baldly: "The line of Carneades . . . is no argument for λέγω in the text of Sophocles" (1900:48). And yet he says on the same page of his commentary that the MSS' unanimous reading of the infinitive *ekkekêruchthai*, which is used also in the Carneades quotation, "can only be explained by supplying λέγω or the like." And yet Jebb's solution, which is followed by Lloyd-Jones and Wilson in the *OCT*, was to change the infinitive *ekkekêruchthai* to an indicative, *ekkekêruktai*, rather than to adopt Carneades' *legô*.⁴³ Jebb speculated that "the MS error may have arisen from a reminiscence of ἐκκεκηρῦχθαι in [line] 27," where it occurs cheek-by-jowl (though Jebb does not say so in his remarks) with the word *taphôî*:

ἀστοῖσί φασιν ἐκκεκηρῦχθαι τὸ μή / τάφω καλύψαι . . . (*Ant.* 27-28)

The word *taphôî* was obviously no good to Carneades, so if that were the original reading at line 203, he would have had to change it. On the other hand, to inform Jebb's own argument with an awareness of the dynamics of oral poetics, one might just as well posit that the contamination in Sophocles—if that is indeed what it is—comes from a different, not strictly textual, source.

Note, for example, how both the indicative and infinitive forms of *ekkêrussô* here are virtually homophonous in pronunciation (*ekkekêruchthai* vs. *ekkekêruktai*). Only the order of the consonants ("rough" chi + theta versus "smooth" kappa + tau) and the accent are different (circumflex on the penult vs. acute on the antepenult), and these features would barely be noticed, and could in fact be masked, de-emphasized or even confused, in

⁴¹ Nauck 1867 *ad loc.*

⁴² Lloyd-Jones and Wilson 1990 *ad loc.*

⁴³ On the principle, no doubt, of *lectio difficilior*, according to which the "more difficult" reading is most likely the correct, original reading intended by the author (that is, less apt to have been changed by a copyist).

spoken delivery.⁴⁴ Consider, too, that the larger context of Creon's speech in the *Antigone* deals with friendship, loyalty, and cohesion in the community. I would argue that these themes, also evoked by the quotations from the *Odyssey*, rather than the desire to impersonate a tyrannical Creon, are what called line 203 to Carneades' mind. Mentor, after all, like Polyneices, is being accused of violating personal trust, and, by extension, in Carneades' view, the trust of his community—the Academy—as well. As it happens, in one of two telling expressions of this theme earlier in Creon's speech Sophocles uses the verb *legô* in the same metrical position as in Carneades' quotation, whereas with the infinitive in line 27, thought by Jebb to be the source of the "MS error" at line 203, he does not.⁴⁵ Given two sources of contamination, I find it more likely that it would come from the closer of the two—and, what is more, it is not so much an "error" as a fact of cognition to repeat similar words and phrases in similar contexts. As Miller notes in his sensible discussion of repetition in oral and orally-derived traditions (1982:45): "Use of a motif, formula, or unusual word restores it to active memory and any subsequent elaboration is apt to contain one or more recurrences of it." None of this of course proves that Sophocles wrote *legô* in his script of the *Antigone*, but it does suggest that Carneades found himself contextually enmeshed in his source text and that his spontaneous realization of *Antigone* 203 was affected by such factors. Carneades' adaptation of Sophocles' line, in other words, bears all the marks of a recomposition-in-performance, one that responds thematically and compositionally to the narrative situation he found himself in with Mentor.

Mentor's reported response—οἱ μὲν ἐκέρυσσον, τοὶ δ' ἠγείροντο μάλ' ὦκα (*Il.* 2.52=444)—is equally spontaneous and brilliant. Mentor picks up on the key-word *kêrussô* in the quotation from Sophocles and runs with it. Here, too, the poetics of quotation resemble Homeric poetics proper, where key-words often function as "triggers" in composition.⁴⁶ Of the two

⁴⁴ Homophonic substitution is a characteristic feature of the cento. See Usher 1998:49-51.

⁴⁵ Compare *Ant.* 182-83 (ὅστις ἀντὶ τῆς αὐτοῦ πάτρας / φίλον νομίζει, τοῦτον οὐδαμοῦ λέγω) and 186-7 (οὐτ' ἄν φίλον ποτ' ἄνδρα δυσμενῆ χθονος / θείμην ἐμαυτῶ).

⁴⁶ See Clark 1997:53-62; for semantic and lexical triggers in the cento form, see Usher 1998:106-11. See also Jousse 1925:203-25. On the psychology of this phenomenon, see Rubin 1995:161-67, 304-5 (using the term "cues").

related contexts in which Mentor's quotation occurs, surely the first is felt most strongly here, *Il.* 2.52, where Agamemnon, having just woken up from a dream that instructed him to rally the troops for battle, proceeds instead to test them, offering them immediate passage home, to see where their true loyalties lie. The thematic connection between Carneades' assertions and Mentor's response becomes readily apparent: the tyrant Creon tests public and personal loyalty in the *Antigone* and it backfires on him, leading to the deaths of both Antigone and his son, Haemon. The tyrannical Agamemnon does the same in the *Iliad*, and it too ends in (momentary) disaster when the troops decide to take him up on his offer to go home. Mentor, in effect, has turned Carneades' *Antigone* quotation against him by indirectly equating the Scholarch—by quotation—with the *Iliad*'s Agamemnon in a context where Agamemnon closely resembles Creon. The semantic link in this thematic chain is the key-word *kêrussô*. Given the context of this line in the *Iliad*, Mentor may also be making a philosophical parry of his own, suggesting that Carneades, like Agamemnon, “is dreaming,” or laboring under a false impression, if he truly thinks him guilty as charged. The dream in the *Iliad* was, after all, a deceptive one, taking on the form and likeness of Nestor (with phraseology reminiscent of Carneades' *Od.* 2.268⁴⁷). Carneades has misread the situation, it is implied, and, like Agamemnon (and Creon), he may come to regret it. Perhaps there is something to be said, too, for the word used to describe Mentor's attempt on the nameless mistress, *epeira*, a common euphemism for sexual seduction,⁴⁸ which also happens to be the theme word of Agamemnon's “testing” of the troops, the episode being known since Hellenistic times as the *diapeira* after its occurrence as a theme word in that portion of Book 2 (cf. *peirêsomai* in 2.73).

Whether Mentor was guilty in the end or not, we shall never know, but the confrontation between him and Carneades provides us with a fascinating glimpse into how the spontaneous quotation of poetry could be an effective medium of invective, philosophy, and wit. The orality of the exchange is evident not only in the agonistic context of a live, public performance, but also in the way these poetic lines are used, adapted, and concatenated. The proposition that one will find oral residue in more literate phases of culture is not in itself controversial or surprising.⁴⁹ The majority of

⁴⁷ *μάλιστα δὲ Νέστορι δίω / εἰδός τε μέγεθος τε φύην τ' ἄγχιστα ἐώκειν* (*Il.* 2.57-58).

⁴⁸ See Henderson 1975:158.

⁴⁹ Cf. Ong 1982:157: a “manuscript culture . . . [is] always marginally oral.”

ancient Greek and Roman readers were, after all, reared on the recitation of oral and orally-derived poetry. But the persistence of oral modes of expression and thought among philosophers is revealing. We are reminded again of Huizinga's account of ancient philosophy as a form of play—a leftover from a more fully oral past. As it happens, Numenius inadvertently corroborates this observation for us in his history of the Academy, for he casts the vicissitudes of the School with an extended metaphor as an intra- and extramural battle of epic proportions. He even composes a cento of his own using formulaic descriptions of battle from Homer to drive the point home.⁵⁰ That the conflicts and controversies in Hellenistic philosophy were also sometimes self-consciously a contest between orality and literacy may be seen in Numenius' remarkable contrast of Carneades with his chief rival, Antipater of Tarsus, head of the Stoic school. Ironically—or perhaps intentionally—this characterization immediately precedes his account of Carneades' fully oral and spontaneous contest with Mentor: “Every opinion of Carneades was victorious and never any other,” Numenius writes,

since those with whom he was at war were less powerful as speakers. Antipater, for instance, who was his contemporary, was intending to write something in rivalry; in fact, however, of the arguments which Carneades kept pouring forth day after day, he never made it public, neither in the Schools, nor in the public walks, nor even spoke or uttered a sound, or, it is said, did anyone ever hear from him a single syllable: but he kept threatening written replies, and hiding in a corner wrote books which he bequeathed to posterity, that are powerless now, and were more powerless then against a man like Carneades, who showed himself eminently great, and was so considered by the men of that time.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Frag. 25 des Places 1973, consisting of *Iliad* 4.447-49, 13.131, 4.472, and 4.450-51.

⁵¹ Trans. by Gifford 1903:795. Πᾶσα γοῦν διάνοια ἐνίκα καὶ οὐδεμία ἡστιοῦν ἄλλων, ἐπεὶ καὶ οἷς προσεπολέμει ἦσαν εἰπεῖν ἀδυνατώτεροι. Ἀντίπατρος γοῦν ὁ κατ' αὐτὸν γενόμενος ἔμελλε μὲν καὶ ἀγωνιᾶν τι γράφειν, πρὸς δ' οὖν τοὺς ἀπὸ Καρνειάδου καθ' ἡμέραν ἀποφερομένους λόγους οὔποτ' ἐδημοσίευσεν, οὐκ ἐν ταῖς διατριβαῖς, οὐκ ἐν τοῖς περιπάτοις οὐδὲν εἶπεν οὐδ' ἐφθέγγετο οὐδ' ἤκουσέ τις αὐτοῦ, φασίν, οὐδὲ γρῦ. ἀντιγραφὰς δ' ἐπανετείνετο καὶ γωνίαν λαβὼν βιβλία κατέλιπε γράψας τοῖς ὕστερον, οὔτε νῦν δυνάμενα καὶ τότε ἦν ἀδυνατώτερα πρὸς οὕτως ἄνδρα ὑπέρμεγαν φανέντα καὶ καταδόξαντα εἶναι τοῖς τότε ἀνθρώποις τὸν Καρνεάδην.

One would be hard pressed to find a starker contrast between the relative merits of orality and literacy and their attendant tensions among philosophers in the Hellenistic age. As Carneades' verbal exchange with Mentor throws into high relief, this contrast is—as Carneades himself might have agreed—the ultimate antilogy.⁵²

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⁵² It is a great pleasure to thank Gisela Striker for her helpful comments and corrections to an earlier draft of this paper. I would also like to thank my colleague Robert Rodgers and *Oral Tradition's* anonymous referees for welcome suggestions for improvement.

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Calliope, a Muse Apart: Some Remarks on the Tradition of Memory as a Vehicle of Oral Justice

Penelope Skarsouli

The relation of the Muses in ancient Greece, especially during the archaic and the beginning of the classical period with which this paper is concerned, to the notion of memory is apparent first by their very name: the word *mousa* can be related to the verb *mimnêskô* (“remind,” “bring, put in mind”).¹ Around the seventh century B.C.E., in his poem entitled *Theogony*, Hesiod commemorates the birth of the Muses and identifies them as the daughters of the goddess *Mnemosyne* and Zeus (lines 53-65). Indeed, Memory is well known as the mother of the Muses. According to a passage in Plutarch, the Muses were also called *Mneiai* (Memories) in some places.² And Pausanias tells us that the Muses were three in number and had the names of *Meletê* (Practice), *Mnêmê* (Memory) and *Aoidê* (Song).³ Each one, in other words, bore the name of an essential aspect of poetical function. As rhythmical song, the Muse is inseparable from poetic Memory and is necessary for the poet’s inspiration as well as for his oral composition. From the perspective of our present argument, it is significant that Memory and the Muses are also closely connected with the notion of persuasion.⁴

¹ On this etymology and its meaning, see Assaël 2000:40 ff. For the Muses in general, see Queyrel 1992.

² Plutarch, *Moralia*, 743D: “Actually all the Muses are said to be called *Mneiai* (Memories) in some places, as is the case of Chios” (italics mine; trans. by Sandbach 1961).

³ Pausanias 9.29. 2-3. See also Detienne 1967:10-15.

⁴ Cf. Plutarch, *Moralia*, 745D: “Necessity is a thing devoid of art; it is Persuasion (*Peithô*) that is ‘musical’ and dear to the Muses” (trans. by Sandbach 1961).

The Proem of Hesiod's *Theogony*

Hesiod begins his *Theogony* with a “Hymn to the Nine Muses”; in lines 77-79, he gives the list of their names. We may note again a passage from Plutarch who around 100 C.E. mentions the Hesiodic Muses in a way that will help introduce the section of the *Theogony's* proem under discussion here.⁵ Herodes, a teacher of rhetoric, mentions there the muse Calliope in particular and her special relation, in Hesiod, to the kings. He is referring to lines 80-103 of the Hesiodic proem, which concern the power of the Muses to intervene in human affairs; more precisely, Hesiod mentions the gifts of the Muses to men, rulers and poets. He enumerates the Muses and finally sets Calliope apart:

Καλλιόπη θ' ἢ δὲ προφερεστάτη ἐστὶν ἀπασέων.
 ἢ γὰρ καὶ βασιλευσὶν ἅμ' αἰδοίοισιν ὀπηδεῖ 80
 ὄν τινα τιμήσωσι Διὸς κούραι μέγαλοιο
 γεινόμενόν τε ἴδωσι διοτρεφένων βασιλῆων,
 τῷ μὲν ἐπὶ γλώσση γλυκερὴν χεῖουσιν ἐέρσην,
 τοῦ δ' ἔπε' ἐκ στόματος ῥεῖ μείλιχα· οἱ δὲ τε λαοὶ
 πάντες ἐς αὐτὸν ὀρώσι διακρίνοντα θέμιστας 85
 ἰθείησι δίκησιν· ὃ δ' ἀσφαλῶς ἀγορεύων
 αἰψὰ κε καὶ μέγα νείκος ἐπισταμένως κατέπαυσεν·
 τοῦνεκα γὰρ βασιλῆες ἐχέφρονες, οὔνεκα λαοῖς
 βλαπτομένοις ἀγορήφι μετὰτροπα ἔργα τελεῦσι 90
 ῥηιδίως, μαλακοῖσι παραιφάμενοι ἐπέεσσιν.
 ἐρχόμενον δ' ἄν' ἀγῶνα θεὸν ὡς ἰλάσκονται
 αἰδοὶ μελιχίῃ, μετὰ δὲ πρέπει ἀγρομένοισιν·
 τοιῆ Μουσάων ἱερὴ δόσις ἀνθρώποισιν.

...and *Calliope*, who is the chiefest of them all, for she attends on *worshipful princes*: whomsoever of heaven-nourished princes the daughters of great Zeus honour, and behold him at his birth, they pour sweet dew upon his tongue, and from his lips flow gracious words. All the people look towards him while *he settles causes with true judgements*: and he, speaking surely, would soon make wise and even of a great quarrel; for therefore are there princes wise in heart, because when the people are

⁵ Plutarch, *Moralia*, 743C: “After this we made libations to the Muses and, having sung a paean to their Leader, joined Erato in singing to the lyre Hesiod’s verses about the birth of the Muses. When the song was over, Herodes the teacher of rhetoric spoke up. “You hear,” said he, “you who try to drag *Calliope* away from us rhetoricians, how Hesiod says that she is to be found in the company of *kings*...” (italics mine; trans. by Sandbach 1961).

being misguided in their assembly, they set right the matter again with ease, *persuading them with gentle words*. And when he passes through a gathering, they greet him as a god with gentle reverence, and he is conspicuous amongst the assembled: such is the holy gift of the Muses to men.⁶

Calliope is the most outstanding of the group because through her the transition is made from the Muses to the revered princes. This introduction of kings in the proem and their dependence on Calliope has seemed irrelevant and quite strange to some commentators.⁷ Normally, the Muses are the goddesses of poetry, whereas princes or kings depend on Zeus; but, at the same time, Hesiod demonstrates the relationship between poet and king, whom he clearly thinks of as parallel beneficiaries of Calliope's favor.⁸ Only Calliope can bestow the Muses' gift on the kings and link poetry to the royal art of persuasion. Her name literally means "beauty of voice,"⁹ which confers the power of persuasion on both the poetic performance and the royal functions: she bestows on both the gift of an efficient utterance. Moreover, it has been suggested that this parallel is Hesiod's innovation, and in fact the *Theogony* is the only extant poem in which the Muses are said to aid rulers as well as poets (Thalman 1984:140, espec. n. 18).

It is important to my argument that the king is visualized in the proem of the *Theogony* as he pronounces his judgment. To settle their quarrel the two parties would come before the king and state their case; the king must then settle the dispute by pronouncing a legally binding decision (*themis*). Because the Muses inspire him, he can decide the case with straight judgments. He is a *worshipful* king¹⁰ because thanks to the gift of eloquence he is able to make good judgments (*diakrinonta themistas*, 85) and reach

⁶ Italics mine; trans. by Evelyn-White 1982.

⁷ See, for example, West's reaction (1966:182), "Why are the kings introduced at all? They are not usually regarded by the Greeks as being dependent upon the Muses, except for the celebration of their renown." Cf. Blößner 2005:27ff.

⁸ Cf. the analysis of this parallelism by Laks (1996).

⁹ Cf. Liddell 1996: s.v. *Kalliopê, hê*, (*kalê+ops*), "the beautiful-voiced" (also *Kalliopeia*). Her name takes us back to line 68 of the proem: *agallomenai opi kalêi* ("delighting in their sweet voice"). Cf. also Alcman, 27.1-2 (in Page 1962): "Come, *Muse Calliope*, daughter of Zeus, begin the lovely verses (*arch' eratôn epeôn*)." In general for Calliope, see Harriott 1969:16 ff.

¹⁰ *aidoios basileus*, l. 80. The king who has a claim to regard and reverence. Cf. Neitzel 1977:38 ff.

good, just, that is to say straight decisions (*itheîêisi dikêisin*, 86) in front of all the people in the agora, the speaking-place. The *themistes* are the “precepts of *themis*” and serve as points of reference to the magistrates. We may assume the existence of a repertory or a traditional stock of *themistes*, oral and memorized (Rudhardt 1999:30). The king as ruler has access to these *themistes* as well as to the scepter; he pronounces laws on behalf of Zeus. The description of Agamemnon in *Iliad* 9.97-99 provides an example:

Most glorious son of Atreus, Agamemnon *king of men*,
in you I shall end, from you I shall begin, because
you are lord of many peoples, and *Zeus* has given you
the scepter and the precedents, so that you might take counsel for them.¹¹

As mentioned above, Hesiod underlines the fact that the king must *persuade* the antagonists to accept his decisions. In other words, the king settles disputes, yet he does not deliver an authoritative judgment; he must try to justify his decision and for this justification he needs the help of the Muses. Hence the link between efficient speech and straight judgment. In particular, Calliope pours “sweet dew” on his tongue so that his words may flow sweetly and permit him to be a good arbitrator and bring a great quarrel (*mega neikos*, 87) to an end. Her very name provides Hesiod with a transition to the notion of persuasive speech, since it is in his voice that the king’s capacity of gentle persuasion resides. We must note that the justice Hesiod is trying to expound is closely related to the voice—spoken aloud, pronounced, declared or else listened to, heard and remembered; it is something performed. According to Havelock (1978:216), “the procedure of which *dikê* is a symbol is conducted by oral exchange” as practiced in a preliterate society. The king’s judgment is pronounced orally and thus his position before the people is one of a speaker before an audience.¹²

¹¹ Italics mine; trans. by Thalmann 1984:141.

¹² The etymology of Calliope’s name lies not only in voice, but in face or appearance as well; indeed, *ops* signifies not only “voice” but also “the eye, face” (see Liddell 1996, *s.v.*). So, we could say that Calliope is also the Muse “with the beautiful face” and in extension “with the beautiful appearance,” “with the appearance that delights.” Lines 84-85 of the *Theogony* underscore the importance of the visual here: οἱ δέ τε λαοὶ / πάντες ἐς αὐτὸν ὀρώσι διακρίνοντα θέμιστας (“all the people *look towards him* while he settles causes”). The “optical” elements have a real importance in the frame of the relation between speaker and audience; cf. *Odyssey* 8.170-71, a passage that is often studied as a parallel to *Theogony* 79-93, despite Calliope’s absence there: ἀλλὰ θεὸς μορφήν ἔπεισι στέφει, οἱ δέ τ’ ἐς αὐτὸν / τερπόμενοι λεύσσουσιν· (“but the god sets *a crown of beauty* upon his words, and men *look upon with delight*”).

Some critics go so far as to interpret Calliope's patronage as the king's dependence on the poet for the versification of his laws and decrees, but what is of interest for this discussion is rather the essence of persuasive speech, the essence of Calliope's beautiful voice implying the powers of poetic speech, that is to say the particular qualities of rhythmical song, of metrical speech. Havelock has even argued that legal speech "must be metrical and formulaic; otherwise the utterance would not be the voice of the Muse."¹³ From this point of view, when the king's utterance is compared to a running river (line 84), we recognize the automatism of the performance. Oral composition is based on instantaneous creation by means of formulas and fixed patterns. This could be the meaning of the adverbs "soon" (*aipsa*), "quickly" (*tacheôs*), "easily" (*rhêidiôs*) in the text (lines 86, 90, 102, 103 cited below) with both the king's and the poet's performance. Furthermore, these performances share the same positive results: as the king finds a solution for the external manifestations of social conflict, so the poet calms the internal symptoms of personal pain. They have the same ability to divert man's mind from care (cf. *metatropa* in line 89 and *paretrape* in line 103 below). As the former restores justice, so the latter restores serenity.¹⁴ When the poet sings, the listener forgets his cares.

. . . ὁ δ' ἄλβιος, ὃν τινα Μοῦσαι
 φίλωνται· γλυκερὴ οἱ ἀπὸ στόματος ῥέει αὐδὴ.
 εἰ γάρ τις καὶ πένθος ἔχων νεοκηδέϊ θυμῷ
 ἄζηται κραδίην ἀκαχήμενος, αὐτὰρ ἀοιδὸς
 Μουσάων θεράπων κλέεα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων 100
 ὑμνήσῃ μάκαράς τε θεούς, οἳ Ὀλυμπον ἔχουσιν,
 αἰψ' ὃ γε δυσφροσυνέων ἐπιλήθεται οὐδέ τι κηδέων
 μέμνηται· ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεάων.

Happy is he whom the Muses love: *sweet flows speech from his mouth.*
 For though a man has sorrow and grief in his newly-troubled soul and
 lives in dread because his heart is distressed, yet, when a singer, the
 servant of the Muses, chants the glorious deeds of men of old and the

For a discussion of the similarities between these two passages, see Martin 1984 and Neitzel 1977.

¹³ Havelock 1963:109. See also p. 111: "Only Calliope carries the name that identifies the verbal shapes which poetry commands. She is pre-eminently the symbol of its operational command of the formulas. She therefore is reserved for the princely function."

¹⁴ Cf. Pucci 1977:29 ff.

blessed gods who inhabit Olympus, at once he *forgets* his heaviness and *remembers* not his sorrows at all; but the gifts of the goddesses soon turn him away from these.¹⁵

The combination of Memory (*Mnêmê*) and Forgetting (*Lêthê*) is remarkable here: whoever hears the Muses, the daughters of Mnemosyne, no longer remembers his own ills. This particular dimension of remembering, from the standpoint of forgetting, stands in a particular relation to the speech of the king and oral justice. For example, Nereus, the old man of the sea, is praised later on in the poem as follows (*Theogony*, 233-36; trans. by Evelyn-White 1982):

And Sea begat Nereus, the eldest of his children, *who is true* (*alêthea*) and lies not: and men call him the Old Man because he is trusty and gentle and *does not forget the laws of righteousness* (*oude themistôn lêthetai*), but thinks just and kindly thoughts.

The adjective “gentle” or “kind” (*êpios*) traditionally modifies a king and recalls the gracious words of the ideal ruler. It characterizes Nereus, who does not forget the *themistes*. His truthfulness, like that of the poem’s king, is directly related to the administration of justice (Walcot 1963:15). Indeed, the force of persuasion that distinguishes the oratorical function of the prince consists, as well, of a faultless speaking ability. In Hesiod’s poem we read that the king speaks “surely” (*asphaleôs*), that is to say unerringly; the idea of truth (*alêtheia* < *a+lêthê*) is often associated with that of “certainty.” This *alêtheia* contrasts with erroneous thoughts that lead to injustice, because the ability to speak the truth unerringly implies, according to Hesiod, knowledge of what is just and proper.

Herein lies another dimension of the ruler’s dependence on the Muses: the persuasive force of his speech is based on their knowledge of truth. In fact, thanks to the Muses the ruler *does not forget* what is just and proper. Memory is an essential faculty for him.¹⁶

Furthermore, in some Greek cities the judicial officials were called *mnêmones*, “rememberers,” or *hieromnêmones*, “sacred rememberers.”

¹⁵ *Theogony*’s poem, lines 96-103 (trans. by Evelyn-White 1982).

¹⁶ Cf. Roth 1976:334: “Judges are those whose duty it is to remember these rules, to choose the right rule to apply in each case, and to hand down the collection of rules to the next generation.” See also the commentary by West (1966:183-84) on *Theogony* 85-86.

According to Aristotle,¹⁷ these officials recorded the decisions of the courts, and they may belong to a period when certain magistrates were charged with remembering previous decisions as a service for judges; in so far as writing did not yet exist, they were adjuncts or living “records” for the magistrates.¹⁸ Indeed, the institution of *mnêmôn* (from *Mnêmê*, *Mnêmosunê*) expresses the social function of memory. As Gernet notes (1981:235), “the *mnêmôn* is the person who protects the memory of the past with a view to affecting a decision in a court of law.” Under the heading *mnêmôn*, legend still remembers the “hero’s servant,” apparently a kind of clerk, of counselor, or a depository for divine advice whose memory is called on at the appropriate time (*ibid.*:235 and n. 54). In a text of Plutarch, we find an example of such a *mnêmôn*:

But as for Achilles, it is said that his mother Thetis staidly forbade him to kill Tenes, since Tenes was honored by Apollo; and she commissioned one of the servants to be on guard, and to remind (*hopôs prosechêi kai anamimnêiskêi*) Achilles lest he should unwittingly slay Tenes. But when Achilles was overrunning Tenedos and was pursuing Tenes’ sister, who was a beautiful maiden, Tenes met him and defended his sister; and she escaped, though Tenes was slain. When he had fallen, Achilles recognized him, and slew the servant because he had, although present, not reminded him (*hoti parôn ouk anemnêse*).¹⁹

The transposition of the *mnêmôn*’s function or role from counselor to a larger juridical sphere may in part be explained by his obligation to remember what must not be forgotten, as, for example, the divine commands of Thetis, cited above. Rulers—kings and judges—are those whose duty is to remember the precepts of justice and to choose the right rule to apply in each case. And we may suppose that remembering is facilitated if these precepts are in verse.²⁰ This could also be a way to explain the connection between

¹⁷ *Politics*, 1321b, 34-40.

¹⁸ See also Gagarin 1986:131.

¹⁹ Plutarch, *Moralia*, 297E-F (trans. by Babbitt 1972). Other *mnêmones* are Spensitheos in Crete and Panamyas, Kasbollis’ son, in Hallicarnassus. Cf. Svenbro 1988:67 and n. 45.

²⁰ According to Plutarch again, poetry reinforces memory, which is the biggest service that it offers to language. See *Moralia*, 407F: “Then, besides, there is nothing in poetry more serviceable to language than the ideas communicated, by being bound up and interwoven *with verse*, are *better remembered* and kept firmly in mind (*mallon*

justice and poetry, between justice and the Muses, and especially the beautiful voice of Calliope.

Solon's Elegy to the Muses

Another poet invokes the Muses when discussing justice: Solon, the Athenian lawgiver of the sixth century B.C.E. Tradition holds that he attempted to put his laws into epic verse, beginning them as follows: "First let us pray to King Zeus, son of Cronus, that he bestow good fortune and honour upon these ordinances (*thesmois toisde*)."²¹ Here again is a word that belongs to the family of *themis* (*themistes*): *thesmos*, "the ordinance," that Solon uses to introduce his own laws.

At the same time, Solon begins his most personal elegy with an invocation of the Muses, defining them by their Hesiodic parentage. He does not ask for poetic inspiration but calls upon them in their traditional capacity as the daughters of Memory. Moreover, he emphasizes their lineage in a particularly direct way, beginning his poem with the word and figure of *Mnêmosunê*:²²

Μνημοσύνης καὶ Ζηνὸς Ὀλυμπίου ἀγλαὰ τέκνα,
 Μοῦσαι Πιερίδες, κλυτὲ μοι εὐχωμένω·
 ὄλβον μοι πρὸς θεῶν μακάρων δότε καὶ πρὸς ἀπάντων
 ἀνθρώπων αἰεὶ δόξαν ἔχειν ἀγαθήν,
 εἶναι δὲ γλυκὺν ὦδε φίλοις, ἐχθροῖσι δὲ πικρόν, 5
 τοῖσι μὲν αἰδοῖον, τοῖσι δὲ δεινὸν ἰδεῖν.

Shining *children of Memory* and of Olympian Zeus,
Pierian Muses, hear me as I pray.
 Grant me prosperity at the hands of the blessed gods,
 and always a good reputation at the hands of men;

mnêmoneuesthai kai krateisthai). *Men in those days had to have a memory for many things (pollên edei mnêmên pareinai)*" (italics mine; trans. by Babbit 1969).

²¹ Solon, fr. 40 Gentili and Prato 1988. See Plutarch, *Life of Solon*, 3. 5.

²² See the exceptionally complete commentary on lines 1-2 by Mülke (2002:244-45).

and so to be sweet to friends and bitter to enemies,
an object of reverence to the former, but to the latter terrible to
 look upon.²³

Solon is asking for things not ordinarily considered to be gifts of the Muses.²⁴ He appeals to the Pierian goddesses not for the customary gift of poetic skill but for wealth and prosperity from the gods and for good reputation from men. For this reason, many scholars have found his opening address to the Muses puzzling, unexpected, and unrelated to the rest of the poem. Some have pointed out the formal character of the prayer;²⁵ others, such as Almeida, have been left dumbfounded (2003:107): “The prayer is difficult because there is no precedent heretofore in Greek literature for such a request to these particular divinities whose province is oversight of musical production.”

We could find an essential reason for Solon’s request to the Muses, however, by bearing in mind the particular conception of memory elaborated by Hesiod, within the framework of which memory is connected not only with poetry but also with justice. The Muses’ protection of oral justice is especially relevant in a poem composed by the reformer of Athens. Thus the elegy is not addressed to the Muses as goddesses of wisdom, as some have assumed (see Allen 1949:50), but rather as goddesses who favor the justice.

Other elements in this elegy recall Hesiod’s proem to the *Theogony*: the notion of sweetness (*glukun hôde philois*, 5; cf. *Theogony*: *glukerên cheiousin eersên*, 83),²⁶ the importance of *olbos* “prosperity” (line 3; cf. *Theogony*, 96: *ho d’ olbios, hon tina Mousai philôntai*), and the notion of respect (*toisi men aidioion*, 6; cf. *Theogony*, 80: *basileusin aidioioisin*). Solon desires a good name among men; as in Hesiod, the king, thanks to Calliope, who has the gift of eloquence and consequently the power of persuasion. In this way he earns the citizens’ respect as well as a good reputation. For Solon, who was both statesman and poet, this model would have had a special significance.

²³ Solon, poem 1, 1-6 Gentili and Prato 1988 (trans. by Anhalt 1993:12).

²⁴ For the presentation of this problem, see Anhalt 1993:11-12.

²⁵ See, for example, van Groningen 1958:96, with n. 1.

²⁶ Note here Solon’s poetic revision of the fundamental Greek principle of “helping friends and harming enemies” expressed especially with the adjectives *kalos* (to the friends) and *kakos* (to the enemies); see Blundell 1989:26 ff. Solon uses adjectives (*glukus* and *pikros*) specific to the language of poetry (cf., for example, Sappho, fr. 130 Voigt 1971: *glukupikron orpeton*) and poetry’s effect on its listeners and their emotions.

Pindar's *Olympian* 10

Pindar has composed this ode for the victory of the Locrian boy Agesidamos in an Olympic boxing contest in 476 B.C.E. As the poet moves to the first epode, he makes a reference to the muse Calliope, the only one in his work, in the framework of praising Epizephyrian Lokris, the home of Agesidamos. More precisely, Pindar extols the Lokrians' sense of justice in human affairs (line 13) and their appreciation of the Muse Calliope (line 14) and Ares, the god of war (line 15):

Νέμει γὰρ Ἀτρέκεια πόλιν
 Λοκρῶν Ζεφυρίων,
 μέλει τέ σφισι Καλλιόπα
 καὶ χάλκεος Ἄρης.

For the city of the Locrians of the West is the home of the
 Goddess of Strictness,
 And dear to them are the Muse Calliope and the brazen
 God of War.²⁷

The meanings of *atrekeia* (line 13) vary between “truth” and “justice.” More precisely, it means “truth” in the sense of “straightforwardness,” and in the goddess *Atrekeia*, “Strict Justice,” there may be an allusion to the strictness of Zaleukos, the Lokrian lawgiver, the first to make written laws around the seventh century B.C.E.²⁸ By using this word, Pindar emphasizes the respect of the Lokrians for precision and strictness, “in the present case, strictness in the administration of justice and honesty in commercial intercourse.”²⁹ Moreover, Demosthenes declares that in more than 200 years only one law has been changed in Epizephyrian Lokris, saying that the Lokrians are not bold to propose new laws, but obey the old ones punctually (*akribôs chrôntai*).³⁰ Their reputation for respect of law is fitting in the

²⁷ Trans. by Farnell 1930:57, altered concerning the translation of the word *Atrekeia*.

²⁸ See the commentary of Gildersleeve 1885:215. For Zaleukos and his law code, see von Fritz 1983 and Adcock 1927:100-01.

²⁹ Verdenius 1988:62. See also the city's description by Nassen (1975:225-26).

³⁰ Demosthenes, *Against Timocrates*, 140.

schema of justice as a *topos* in Pindar's praise of cities and rulers.³¹ And we know that their city, thanks to the goddess of strictness, is well ordered (*eunomos*).³²

Within this framework, the mention especially of the muse Calliope just after *Atrekeia* must have a special signification. Commentators, in general, interpret Calliope's mention as Pindar's praise for the Lokrians' artistic sensibility, as does Nassen (1975:226) who speaks of "the artistic sensitivity and refinement of a people who rival the Ionians in their tuneful harmony with the flute" and who will therefore be able to appreciate the song that Pindar has composed in their honor. With this meaning, Calliope represents the Muses in general,³³ and the people's care for her balances their care for Ares (Hubbard 1985:64 and n. 150). We may add that, in this case, Calliope does not represent simply appreciation of music belonging—like justice and warlike spirit—to a *topos* for the praise of cities. She is not the equivalent of all the Muses or the heroic Muse. She is chosen because of her voice, which is also beautiful given that she bestows the gift of eloquence and persuasion as in the Hesiodic passage, and for this reason she is necessary for the application of *eunomia* inside the community of Lokris and for the maintenance of *atrekeia*. Besides, exactitude is also a quality of speech. The Lokrians are not "inexperienced in good things (*mêd' apeiraton kalôn*; Pindar, *Olympian* 11.17)" because they have achieved a special harmony in artistic and political life.

Empedocles's fragment 131

From our point of view, it is significant that Empedocles, the Presocratic philosopher from the middle of the fifth century B.C.E., unlike Hesiod and Solon, chooses to invoke only one of the muses, Calliope,³⁴ as we can see in fragment 131 Diels and Kranz (1951) where he mentions her name:

³¹ See, for example, *Olympian* 2.6; 13.6-7.

³² Moreover, Plato uses the superlative form of *eunomos* when describing Lokris: *Timaeus*, 20a: *eunomôtatês poleôs*, "a most well-governed city."

³³ For example, see the commentary of Verdenius 1988:62.

³⁴ Few commentators have found this choice remarkable, but cf. Fakas 2001:60-61, espec. n. 178.

εἰ γὰρ ἐφημερίων ἔνεκέν τινος, ἄμβροτε Μοῦσα,
 ἡμετέρας μελέτας <ἄδε τοι> διὰ φροντίδος ἐλθεῖν,
 εὐχομένῳ νῦν αὖτε παρίστασο, Καλλιόπεια,
 ἄμφι θεῶν μακάρων ἀγαθὸν λόγον ἐμφαίνοντι.

If for the sake of any one of mortal men, immortal Muse, (it pleased you) that our cares came to your attention, now once more, *Kalliopeia*, answer a prayer, and stand by as a worthy account of the blessed gods is being unfolded.³⁵

It is significant that Hippolytus, who transmits the fragment in the late second and early third centuries C.E., understands Empedocle's Muse to be an allegory for the *dikaios logos*, "the just reason," a principle that he describes as being between the antagonists Love and Strife. According to Hippolytus, "Empedocles, addressing this same just reason, which collaborates with love, as a Muse, also calls on her to collaborate with him" with the verses of the fragment above.³⁶ Empedocles' address to the muse of the beautiful voice takes the form of a prayer (*euchomenôî nun aute paristaso*, 3), as in Solon's elegy (*klute moi euchômenôî*, 2); and as in this elegy, Empedocles evokes her traditional capacity as the daughter of Memory in another fragment. Indeed, in fragment 3 Diels and Kranz (1951), she is called *polumnêstê*, that is to say "much-remembering," "mindful."³⁷ In this way, the main qualities of her persuasion-oriented speech are again apparent: the poet prays that his words may *flow* from his mouth (*ocheteusate pégên*, 2). Here the stream of words is described not as "sweet" (in Hesiod: *epi glôssêi glukerên cheiousin eersên*, 83) but as "pure" (in Empedocles: *katharên pégên*, 2) usually reserved for language of ritual.³⁸ We note also the word *mania*, "madness," in the beginning of fragment 3,

³⁵ Trans. by Wright 1995:159.

³⁶ Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 7.31.3-4. See also the commentary on Hippolytus' passage in Bollack (2003:91), who speaks about the "Muse conciliatrice" whose "dons de parole" are invoked in the text.

³⁷ I find this meaning preferable to the meaning of the epithet in Homer (for example, *Odyssey* 4.770; 14.64): "much-wooed." The text of Empedocles is as follows (fr. 3.1-5 Diels and Kranz 1951 [= 2 Wright 1995]), "But turn from my tongue, o gods, the madness of these men, and *from hallowed lips let a pure stream flow*. And I entreat you, virgin Muse, white-armed, of long memory, send of that *which is right and fitting of mortals to hear*, driving the well-reined chariot from the place of reverence" (trans. by Wright 1995:157).

³⁸ See the commentary by Wright (1995:158).

which Empedocles uses to describe the transgression of boundaries of *themis*, of what is fitting and right. Empedocles prays against *mania*'s power and for that which is right for mortals to *hear* (line 4), reminiscent of the just speech invoked by Hesiod, a speech before an audience.

This speech expresses the best decision between opposing claims, that is, a decision is taken impartially, based on the truth. Within this framework, Empedocles also, in another fragment, declares his belief that truth is in his words. At the same time, it is significant that he relates truth to the notion of persuasion, which means more precisely the effort on the part of the listeners to understand and to be convinced (*pistis*, “confidence”):³⁹

My friends, I know that there is *truth* in the words which I shall speak (*alêtheiê para muthois hous egô eksereô*), but indeed it comes hard for men, and *the onrush of conviction* (*pistios hormê*) to the mind is unwelcome.⁴⁰

Moreover, in fragment 146 Diels and Kranz (1951), Empedocles explores the relationship between the political leaders and the prophets and, more significantly from our standpoint, the poets (trans. by Wright 1995:291): “And at the end they come among men on earth as prophets, *minstrels* (*humnopoloi*), physicians, and *leaders* (*promoi anthrôpoisin*), and from these arise as gods, highest in honor.” Empedocles himself played an important political role;⁴¹ he was neither statesman nor judge, but we know that, when signs of tyranny became clear in Acragas, he *persuaded* the citizens of Acragas to put an end to their seditions and to practice political equality:

Νεάνθης δ' ὁ Κυζικηνὸς ὁ καὶ περὶ τῶν Πυθαγορικῶν εἰπῶν
φησι Μέτωνος τελευτήσαντος τυραννίδος ἀρχὴν ὑποφύεσθαι·
εἶτα τὸν Ἐμπεδοκλέα πείσαι τοὺς Ἀκραγαντίνους παύσθαι μὲν
τῶν στάσεων,⁴² ἰσότητα δὲ πολιτικὴν ἀσκεῖν.

³⁹ The speech of Empedocles' muse, that is to say Calliope, is significantly described as *pistômata* (from the same root as *pistis*), “assurances,” which justify such confidence once (fr. 4. 2 Diels and Kranz 1951: *hêmeterês pistômata Mousês*). See Verdenius 1948:11.

⁴⁰ Fr. 114 Diels and Kranz 1951 (=103 Wright 1995); trans. by Wright 1995:267.

⁴¹ On Empedocles' political life, see Bidez 1894:125 ff.

⁴² Cf. *Theogony*: καὶ μέγα νείκος ἐπισταμένως κατέπαυσεν, 87.

Neathes of Cyzicus, who tells about the Pythagoreans, relates that, after the death of Meton, the germs of a tyranny began to show themselves, that then it was Empedocles who *persuaded* the Agrigentines to *put an end to their factions* and cultivate equality in politics.⁴³

This is exactly the same role that Solon had been called on to play in Athens when there were signs of general uprising. Diogenes Laertius reports an incident, which shows that Empedocles was actively democratic and provides an example of his rhetorical performance in relation to justice. The philosopher had prosecuted two state officials for having introduced “tyrannical” manners in relation to their guests. The latter had been kept waiting, and when the wine was finally brought in they were ordered either to drink it or to have it poured over their heads: “For the time being Empedocles was reduced to silence; the next day he impeached both of them, the host and the master of the revels, and secured their condemnation and execution (εἰσαγαγὼν εἰς δικαστήριον ἀπέκτεινε καταδικάσας ἀμφοτέρους). This, then, was the beginning of his political career.”⁴⁴

Calliope recalls, once again, this specific relationship between persuasion and justice. Moreover, the role of this muse in Hesiod’s proem (lines 80-103) finds a particular extension in Empedocles’ philosophy: as the great quarrel is brought to an end by the speech of the king-judge (καὶ μέγα νεῖκος ἐπισταμένως κατέπαυσεν, 87), so in the philosopher’s fragments, the action of Strife, whose name is *Neikos*,⁴⁵ is soothed by the force of Love (*Philia*).⁴⁶ Another echo of Calliope’s function in a cosmological framework is the passage of Plato’s *Phaedrus* (259d), where she is especially connected to the Muse Urania (*Ourania* < *ouranos*, “the sky”) by Socrates:

τῇ δὲ πρεσβυτάτῃ Καλλιόπῃ καὶ τῇ μετ’ αὐτὴν Οὐρανίᾳ, τοὺς ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ διάγοντάς τε καὶ τιμῶντας τὴν ἐκείνων μουσικὴν ἀγγέλουσιν, αἱ δὴ μάλιστα τῶν Μουσῶν περὶ τε οὐρανὸν καὶ λόγους οὔσαι θεῖους τε καὶ ἀνθρωπίνους **ἰᾶσι καλλίστην φωνήν.**

⁴³ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 8.77 (trans. by Hicks 1958).

⁴⁴ Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 8.64 (trans. by Hicks 1958).

⁴⁵ See, for example, fr. 17. 19; 35. 3; 36 Diels and Kranz 1951.

⁴⁶ See the introduction by Wright (1995, espec. 30 ff.).

[...] And to *Calliope*, the eldest of the Muses, and to *Urania* who is next to her, they make report of those who pass their lives in philosophy and who worship these Muses who are most concerned with heaven and with thought divine and human and *whose voice is the most beautiful*.⁴⁷

In conclusion, we return to another passage in Hesiod's *Theogony* (lines 901-03), which conveniently sums up our argument:

Δεύτερον ἠγάγετο λιπαρὴν θέμιν, ἣ τέκεν "Ὠρᾶς
Εὐνομίην τε Δίκην τε καὶ Εἰρήνην τεθαλυῖαν,
αἷ ἔργ' ὠρεύουσι καταθνητοῖσι βροτοῖσι.

Next he (Zeus) married bright *Themis* who bore the *Horae* (Hours), and *Eunomia*, *Dikē* (Justice), and blooming *Eirênê* (Peace), who mind the works of mortal men.

Here, it is stated that Zeus's second wife, after Mnemosyne, is *Themis* and that from their union were born the Hours, *Eunomia*, Justice, and Peace; *Eunomia*, the "Lawfulness," represents communal life regulated by good laws and customs.⁴⁸ Justice and Peace are inherent qualities of this goddess.

The examples of oral justice that we have examined exemplify a special kind of speech capable of expounding right choices and of persuading conflicting parties to make a peaceful settlement of their claims. As long as this type of justice is preserved intact, discord and strife, quarrels and seditions are unknown, thus giving a precise meaning to the "beauty" offered by *Calliope*, the Muse of "the beautiful voice."⁴⁹

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⁴⁷ Trans. by Fowler 1960, modified slightly.

⁴⁸ Cf. Pindar, *Olympian* 9.15-16, who speaks about *Themis* and her glorious daughter, the Savior *Eunomia*: ἄν Θέμις θυγάτηρ τέ οἱ σώτειρα λέλογχεν/μεγαλόδοξος Εὐνομία.

⁴⁹ This article is developed from a paper I delivered at the international conference on "Orality and Literacy: Memory" at Rice University in October 2003. I am very grateful to Jesper Svenbro and Jean-Claude Picot for their attentive reading of my text and their comments.

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