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Editor's Column

With this issue of *Oral Tradition* we offer our readership a highly diverse group of articles that treat traditions from around the world and from ancient times to the present. Moreover, the contributors take a rich variety of approaches to their subjects, reflecting the mix of disciplines that make up the composite field of studies in oral tradition.

Our first paper, the Albert Lord and Milman Parry Lecture on Oral Tradition for 2009, describes and analyzes the living Sardinian tradition of *mutetu longu*, a competitive performance-poetry in which three to five contestants vie with one another over a topic they are assigned just before the event begins. This article puts to rest a number of presuppositions about the performers, language, and structure of oral poetry, and will have substantial resonance in other areas. For one thing, its author, Paulu Zedda, is an oral poet himself, but also a professor of ethnomusicology at the Università di Cagliari and an orthodontist. Of special value is his demonstration of the remarkably complex language and structure of this improvisatory oral poetry, which is composed extemporaneously and thus cannot be thought through and memorized beforehand. For those who would deny the oral or oral-derived status of certain ancient and medieval poetry on the basis of their sheer complexity, the example of *mutetu longu* stands as an indisputable and non-hypothetical counter-argument. An eCompanion with multiple examples and media fills out Zedda's seminal contribution.

From Sardinia we travel next to the Former Yugoslavia and the South Slavic oral epic, birthplace of the Parry-Lord theory, for a demonstration of how certain ordinary-seeming phrases draw attention to focal characters or events. David Elmer discusses the idiomatic function of such "presentation formulas" as keys to understanding narrative techniques, appending an eCompanion with photos of *guslari* from this tradition. Valentina Pagliai's comparative examination of verbal dueling significantly broadens our conception of the types and functions of this widespread oral traditional activity, illustrating that verbal dueling must be understood as a dialogic form of verbal skillfulness across a diverse range of social contexts, involving a broad spectrum of performers and audiences.

From the firsthand experience of her own fieldwork in the area, Venla Sykäri then considers Cretan *mantinádes*, short oral poems in rhyming couplets, as a multidimensional phenomenon (performative, referential, and textual). Interestingly, this oral traditional poetry has migrated into modern media and even into digital incarnation within text messages. An eCompanion includes several photos of recent as well as earlier *mantináda* events, and an mp3 offers an audio performance from the year 2000. John Eastlake's discussion of *The Islandman* by Tomás Ó Criomhthain, the first autobiography published by a member of the Irish-speaking community on Great Blasket Island, looks at both sides of that orally sourced text. From a perspective that will have ramifications for works from other locales, Eastlake points out that textual authorship and oral community are not incompatible but interactive.

Based on decades of fieldwork among the Themne of Sierra Leone, Amadu Wurie Khan next explores what he calls "social aesthetics" in the composition and reception of oral

stories. Among the topics addressed are variation in performance, the role of multimedia, and audience interaction as part of the storytelling event. Echoing articles in a previous issue of *Oral Tradition* [link to issue] devoted to Basque *bertsolaritza*, Asier Barandiaran chronicles what happens to this living, improvisatory contest poetry when it migrates to a non-native social context in the United States. He focuses on four so-called "American *bertsolaris*" and includes an eCompanion with photographs and videos of performances featuring oral traditional singers in the new setting.

The issue closes with three additional articles documenting further variety in international oral traditions. Sam Tsang investigates how an awareness of orality studies can inform the understanding of Paul's New Testament writings, simulating the envisioned role of the original audience. In a very different venue, Bruno Alonso, Marta Morgade, and David Poveda examine several Spanish storytellers' views about the audiences they are addressing, with emphasis on the effect of the formal educational system. Finally, Ross Bender's article treats the transition from orality to literacy as illustrated by the performative nature of edicts from eighth-century Japan.

On the horizon are two special issues of *Oral Tradition*, one entitled "Sound Effects" and dedicated to the long oral-aural history of verbal art in English; and the other a collection treating the role and importance of oral traditions for core texts in Judaism, Islam, and Christianity.

As always, we invite all of our readers to become contributors by sending us their best thinking on the world's oral traditions. We do all we can to review submissions within 90 days, garnering opinions from both a specialist and a generalist before coming to a decision. In addition, since the journal appears online and free of charge, we can promise you a readership of more than 30,000 in 189 countries and territories. We very much hope you will join the discussion.

John Miles Foley
Editor, *Oral Tradition*
http://journal.oraltradition.org

Oral Tradition, 24/1 (2009): 3-40

The Southern Sardinian Tradition of the *Mutetu Longu*: A Functional Analysis

Paulu Zedda

Paulu Zedda in a public performance. Photo by Robertu Corona. All photos used by permission.

Saludi e gratzias. First of all I would like to thank the University of Missouri and John Foley for giving me the opportunity to contribute to the knowledge of oral tradition, and for permitting me to present the poetic art of my homeland under the distinguished name of two scholars who are considered, by most of the world, to be the founders of the modern conception of oral poetry. The studies carried out by Milman Parry and Albert Lord redefined the criteria and principles underlying the creation and transmission of oral poetry in a pre-literary age.

Progress into the understanding of its internal workings has enabled us to dispel doubts regarding the origin of several ancient texts that have survived in written form (Foley 2002), and to understand not only what, but also "how," they mean. It is mostly thanks to the Center for Studies in Oral Tradition (http://www.oraltradition.org/) and the journal *Oral Tradition* (http://journal.oraltradition.org/) that this field of research has progressively increased in both quantity and quality, gaining respectability on a par with the most prestigious scientific disciplines. A renewed interest has drawn attention and uncovered new ways of conducting research into the unlimited range of oral poetry, which goes far beyond the range of epic poetry where Parry and Lord initially focused their attention. This new awareness, further increased by Walter Ong and John Foley, has not only given us a wider perspective on all the various forms of verbal art, but also a more profound comprehension of the principles that govern our society and its languages.

I shall consider in this paper the kind of oral poetry that was called *cantus amoebaeus*[1] by the Romans, based upon a poetic joust between two or more poets who improvise their verse in search of public approval. This is, and has been, a widespread genre in various separate cultures, and it has to be considered a unique chapter within the entirety of the oral poetic tradition. Some of the styles adopted in this specific form of oral poetry are so common and recurrent that they seem to derive more from an innate need in people than from their cultural education, and they can be considered universal to this genre.[2] Different traditions are, however, distinguished by many other characteristics that define their extremely lively, varied, and versatile nature.

Rather than merely referring to my experience as a faculty member at the University of Cagliari, the main aim of my work is to recount the firsthand experiences of a *cantadori* (performer of improvised sung poetry), such as I am, and to describe the oral tradition of the *mutetu longu*, this Sardinian poetic form to which I belong. My observations, my considerations, the explanations and evaluations I offer, notwithstanding the textual references, spring mainly from my hands-on experience gained while performing, and moreover from contact I have had with improvisers belonging to other extemporaneous traditions.[3]

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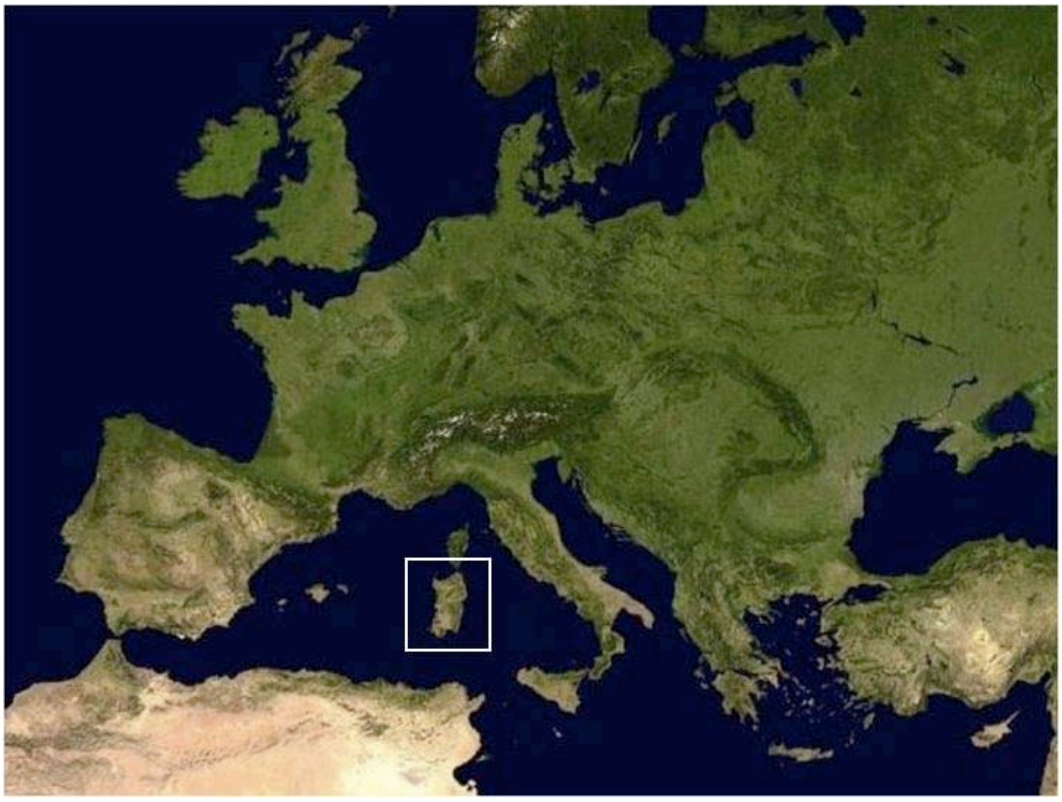
[1] An example can be found in Virgil, first and third bucolics.

[2] Its characteristics appear at different levels: the morphological pattern is used, with monostrophic compositions whose length is between four and ten lines, governed by rules regarding metrics and rhyme; on the dialogical level the poets, while strictly observing the set amount of time they are allowed, must all employ the same strophic structure; often, set themes are chanted about that have been requested by the public or by a committee, and competitiveness plays a primary role; the themes are executed in the form of a debate, almost never in the form of a simple dialogue; these traditions are usually more deeply rooted in rural areas where there is an agricultural and pastoral-based economy and where the population has a low level of school education; in situations of diglossia the older linguistic form is preferred; this poetry is relatively conservative, maintaining the use of archaic metrical and linguistic formulas; more often than not, in spite of its widespread popularity, it receives little attention from educational bodies and the media (institutions, schools, press, radio, and television) (see Díaz Pimienta 1998:112-51); as regards delivery, the poets' disputes are always chanted or sung and sometimes accompanied by music, frequently played on string instruments.

[3] I have had the pleasure of meeting poets belonging to numerous traditions of extemporaneous poetry: the Berber Amazigh tradition of Morocco, the z*ajal* of Lebanon, the *quintilla* of the *trobadores* of Murcia, the *regueifa* of Malaga, the *repentismo* of Minorca and the Balearic Islands, the *punto canario* of the Canary Islands, some of the various *décima* song forms found throughout Latin America, in particular in Mexico (Velasquez 2004), Puerto Rico,

This study is divided into two sections: the first basically describes the Sardinian *mutetu longu*, with particular attention to the structure of the strophic forms; the second reflects, drawing also on external comparisons, upon some of the aspects that strongly characterize it. In addition, this latter section discusses the way this complex phenomenon works and how it achieves its inner balance. I shall also evaluate the functional reasons behind the particular metrical structure (which reaches high levels of formal complexity and redundancy), the relevance of memory in the elaboration of the poetic text, and the flow of time and its perception.

Part I: The *Mutetu Longu*



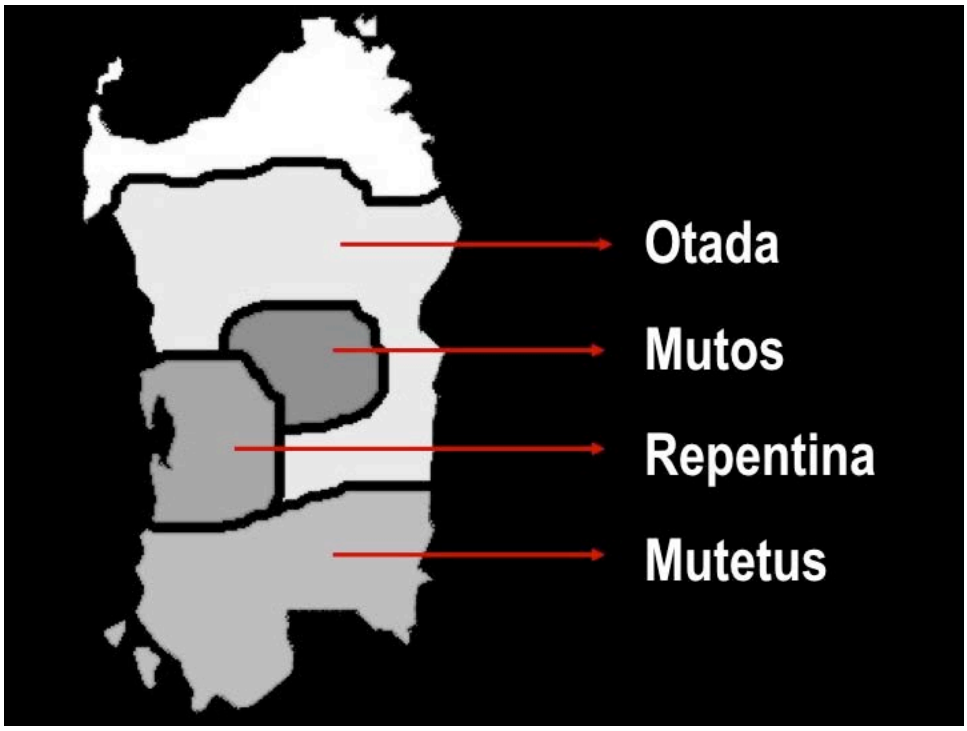
Map of southern Europe delineating Sardinia. Elaborated by the author.

Politically, Sardinia has belonged to Italy since 1861 and currently has 1,660,000 inhabitants.[4] Recent legislation meant that Sardinia was declared officially bilingual in 1997.[5]

Cuba, Argentina, Uruguay, Chile, Venezuela (Díaz Pimienta 1998:59-108), the *spritu pront* of Malta, the *chjama e rispondi* of Corsica, the *puisiari* of Sicily, and the *ottava rima* of Tuscany, Lazio, and Abruzzo. I know personally some of the improviser poets who perform within the four traditional genres to be found in Sardinia: the *otada* Logudorese (Pillonca 2003), the *mutu* of central Sardinia (Casula 2003) and the *repentina* of northern Campidano (Lutzu 2007), as well as the *mutetu*, common to southern Sardinia, which is the type of poetry I perform (Zedda 2005).

[4] Data from the National Census of 2007.

Italian and Sardinian are the two official languages.[6] A recent survey, carried out by the Sardinian Regional Council, shows that 68% of the population speaks a local language fluently (Lupinu 2007).



Thematic map of Sardinia indicating the territories of main diffusion in reference to the four traditional systems. Elaborated by the author.

When I use the term *mutetu longu* I shall be speaking about an oral poetry tradition in the Sardinian language, widely performed in southern Sardinia (Campidano), and specifically in an area bounded by the provinces of Cagliari, Sulcis, and central Campidano. The term nominally refers to the main stanza that the poets use during their competitions, but in a wider sense it will be used to name the compositional genre on the whole and its traditional use.

The performance of these *mutetus*, the so-called *cantada,* is a sung poetic duel held among several improvisers. These poets, called *cantadoris*, or literally "singers," challenge each other on stage before an audience in bouts of actual poetic jousting. A harmonic accompaniment to the poet's singing is created by a polyphonic chorus of two male voices (*basciu e contra*), who use a singular technique to intone a guttural humming sound.[7] This Sardinian throat singing was

[5] Regional Law no. 26 of 15 October 1997, on the "promotion and appreciation of the Sardinian language and culture."

[6] Sardinian belongs to the Neo-Latin or Romance family of languages and, because of certain features within it, is held to be among the most conservative and similar to the root language (Blasco Ferrer 1984). The first written documents in Sardinian date back to 1070. Sardinian is divided into two main variants: Logudorese, spoken from the center to the north of the island; and Campidanese, which is spoken in the center to the southern part of the island (Blasco Ferrer 2002).

[7] A short description is given in Bravi and Lutzu 2005.

recognized by UNESCO in 2006, receiving the title of "Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity."

History

The term *mutetu*[8] refers to a compositional piece that includes a wide variety of strophic forms adopted both in public poetic competitions and in working songs, lullabies, dirges, traditional unimprovised songs, and some literary poetry (Masala 1993, Susini 1993).[9] The *mutetu longu* is one of these (Cirese 1988:260, 303). To date, a great deal of research has been carried out and published aimed at establishing the origin and historical evolution of the *mutetu* genre. It ranges from analyzing some similarities in the device of inverting the strophic order, which is also to be found in compositions of Provençal origin (Maninchedda 1996), to the use of hyperbaton, in some ways similar to that found in a number of *coplas* in the Hispanic tradition (Wagner 1907; Cirese 1961). However, since the *mutetu* can neither be dated nor given a precise place of origin, historical and philological analysis seems to suggest that it is most likely an original Sardinian form (Ferraro 1898, Zedda 2008).

Historical records regarding forms of improvised poetry in Sardinia are sadly as poor as similar records in other literary societies (Spano 1999, Tola 2006). The first text to mention an extemporaneous tradition in Sardinia dates back to the seventeenth century (Bullegas 2004), while transcriptions of *mutetus* do not appear until the second half of the 1700s (Madau 1787), even if the practice seems to be much older than the documents (Zedda 2008). The Sardinian love for poetic duels was even described in accounts by numerous travel writers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Valéry 1996, Smith 1998, Fuos 2000), and by Sardinian scholars (Angius 1837, Spano 1838). Their curiosity about "a land that was largely unknown even to Italians, where customs from bygone days still retained their original beauty" (Vuillier 1893) pushed them to describe in meticulous detail their social traditions and language. These accounts make constant references to the Sardinian passion for the improvised poetry of their bards, who were never absent from social meetings and get-togethers, particularly in rural areas, and whose most important performances were at the numerous crowded religious festivals that took place throughout the summer season (Angius 1837).

During the first half of the 1800s the initial transcriptions of *mutetu longu* begin to appear, accompanied by references to the names of the *cantadoris* (Piras 1999), and in the latter part of the same century we occasionally see the text of whole poetry competitions being written down, naming not only the improvisational poets but also the precise date and location.

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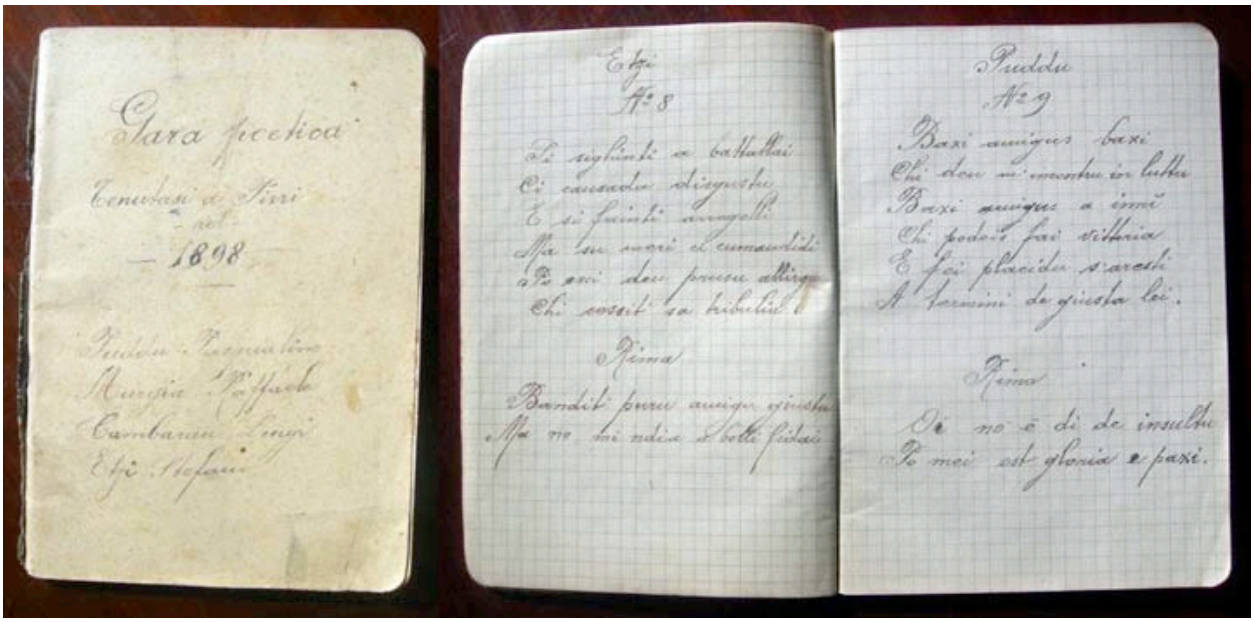
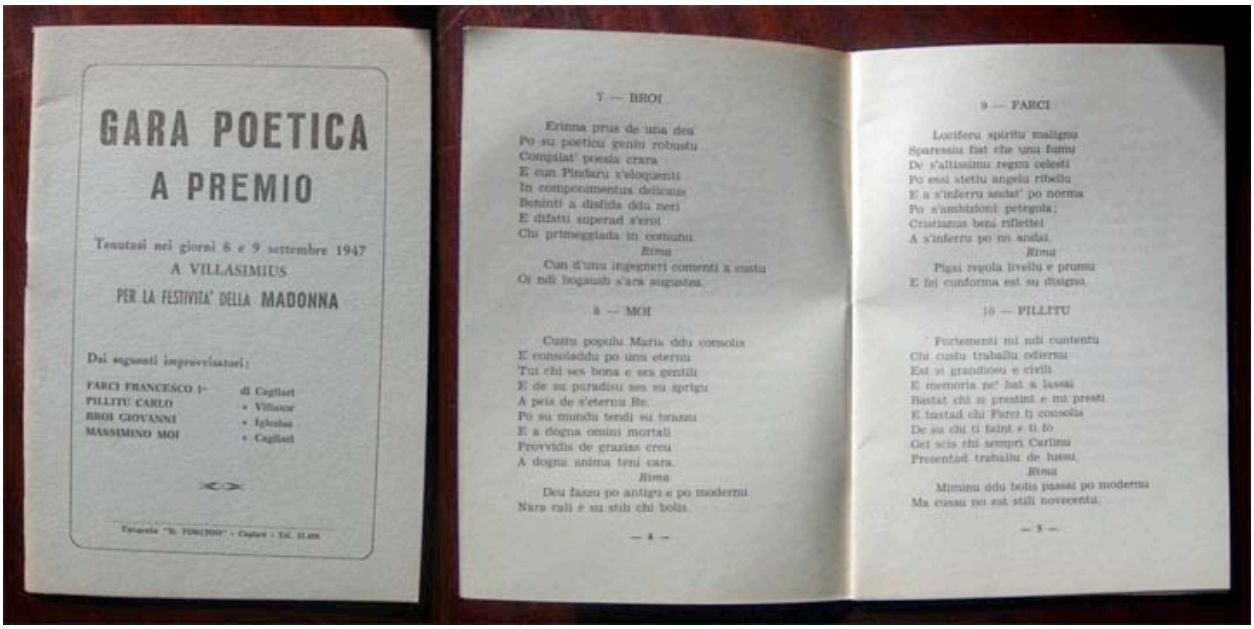
[8] *Mutetu* in the Campidanese variant of Sardinian corresponds to the word *mutu* in the Lugudorese variant. Not all scholars agree that the two terms have the same meaning. Cirese (1961) and Wagner (1907) prefer to separate the two forms depending on their metrical structure and on the area of the island in which they are found.

[9] Cirese (1961) composed an extensive treatise on the study of oral poetry in Sardinia, paying particular attention to the structural schemes and the forms of the *mutetus*. He classified 17 variants that could be found all over Sardinia.



The front and inside pages of a booklet with the manual transcription of a *cantada* dated 1898. From the private collection of Paulu Zedda.

From the early 1900s such transcriptions are printed in *libureddus*, "booklets," and sold to enthusiasts (Pillai 1985).



Front and inside pages of a printed booklet reporting the transcription of a *cantada* held in 1947. From the private collection of Paulu Zedda.

The production of these printed transcriptions remained high all through the 1900s, declining slightly with the advent of tape recorders. More than 700 detailed booklets still exist that bear witness to the extemporaneous output of the last 150 years.

The audience of a *cantada*. In the front row are some devotees with their tape recorders. Photo by Antoni Dessì.

The mid-1950s saw the popular introduction of reel-to-reel tape recorders, and enthusiasts of poetic competitions began to document performances by making analog recordings. Steadily, this practice became more and more common and was standard procedure by the 1970s, as industrial production made cassette recorders widely available. The Municipal Music School of Sinnai is currently compiling an archive containing over 2500 *cantadas* recorded on audiotape.

The Singers

Five *cantadoris* in 1926. From the private collection of Paulu Zedda.

The number of practicing professional poets is at present about 30 and their status can be clearly defined. They take part in the top-level *cantadas,* poetic duels, which are primarily held during the summer season, according to a schedule that is repeated year after year with few variations. Usually, they do not depend entirely on their poetic work for their livelihood; however, they do receive a significant fee (currently between 300 and 500 Euros for each performance).

Learning to be a poetic improviser takes place in an informal setting in the course of meetings held by enthusiasts and usually lasts several years. While learning their trade, the prospective improvisers are overseen by one or more top *cantadoris* who act as their teachers. There is no precise program to be adhered to, but rather the aspiring poet learns at his own pace and as his skill allows, by following experts' advice and profiting from corrections by others as well as through an exchange of opinions between practicing enthusiasts and listeners. Acceptance as a poet is earned by way of performing live in front of a public audience and an elder, a well-known *cantadori* who has the title of *cantadori mannu* ("great singer"). It is he who has the final say as to whether the aspiring poet will be elevated to the status of *cantadori*.

Festivals and Audience

The audience of a *cantada*. *Basciu e contra*, the two-man chorus, is visible on the right. Photo by Antoni Dessì.

Improvised poetry competitions occur mainly during religious festivals, which traditionally are held from late spring through early autumn. They are organized by a committee that collects the necessary funds by going around the village, door to door, accepting donations

from devotees. Festivities last four or five days and include religious rites, such as masses, processions, and meditations dedicated to the patron saint of the festival, as well as various non-religious events such as concerts by pop bands, dancing, folk theater, and plays. The *cantada* normally takes place on either the first or the last day dedicated to non-religious events.

Three devotees with their tape recorders in hand. Photo by Antoni Dessì.

Some booklets arranged on a chair for sale during a performance. Photo by Antoni Dessì.

The average audience attending a *cantada* in the Campidanese tradition varies from one to two hundred people. An audience of fewer than eighty to a hundred is considered a disappointing turnout, whereas only a few of the major festivals manage to attract several hundred spectators. Nowadays, those who attend performances tend to be middle-aged or older, in general over forty or fifty.[10]

In common with the performers, most of them share a measure of poetic competence, and often they themselves are improvisers. Some enthusiasts attend a great number of competitions, often traveling many miles to see a *cantada,* making sure of a front row seat and carrying a tape machine to record the performance.

Many of them have compiled personal archives containing up to several hundred cassettes (Lutzu 2004), as well as booklets with transcriptions of the poetic duels (Bravi 2008:133-85).

[10] The reason why the audience is largely made up of older people lies partly in the fact that fewer young people speak Sardinian and partly in the fact that appreciation of the extemporaneous genre requires a higher degree of meditation, calmness, and attention. For these reasons it is better suited to a more mature, experienced audience.

The Performance

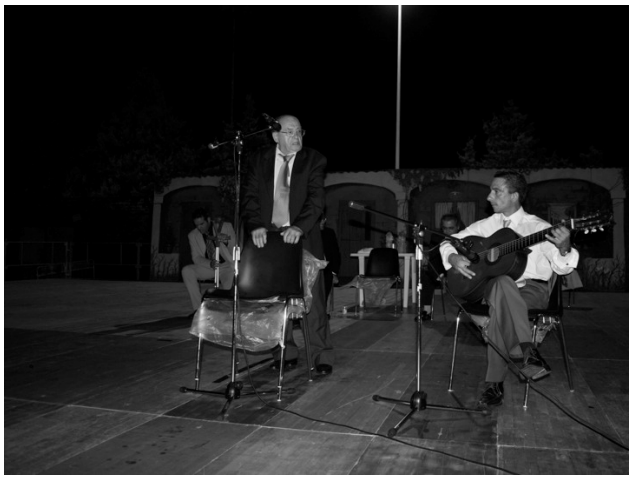
The *cantadas* circuit (improvised poetry competitions) can be divided into three different levels: the performances of amateur enthusiasts, those of second-tier poets (the *versadoris*), and those of the highest-level professional poets (the *cantadoris*).

The amateur contests are usually informal affairs, often held around a table laden with food during celebratory occasions such as weddings or birthday parties, events to mark the end of the hunting season or a football tournament, or quite simply during social get-togethers among friends. On these occasions the poets are accompanied by a guitar.

The contests among second-tier poets are held publicly, in more or less the same way as the professional ones. They do not, however, make use of the complex structure found in the *mutetu longu*, but rather their poetic duel consists of a series of *versus*, or verses of a few lines at a time, accompanied by a guitar. These improvisers sometimes earn a fee that is, however, less than that earned by the top-tier poets.

Four improvisers normally take part in a top-tier competition, or more rarely three or five. Strangely, a direct challenge between only two poets, which is the norm in most ongoing Romance traditions of contest poetry, is not allowed in Campidanese improvisation. The poetic performance mainly takes place in a town or village square in the open air. The poets are each seated on a chair facing the audience.

A group of friends sing verses accompanied by a guitar at a familiar get-together. Photo by Paolo Pilleri.



Pepuciu Loni, accompanied by a guitarist, improvises his *versu* on the stage. Photo by Robertu Corona.

Paulu Zedda, Robertu Zuncheddu, Marcu Melis, and Sarbadori Marras wait for the beginning of the *cantada*. Photo by Robertu Corona.

Basciu e contra, Giuanni Cogoni and Austinu Valdes. Photo by Robertu Corona.

A set table is placed on the stage between the chairs and the microphone. Photo by Robertu Corona.

On the singers' left sits the two-man chorus, the *basciu* and the *contra*. In front of the poets' chairs there is nearly always a table laden with traditional sweets and soft drinks, wine, and water, courtesy of the committee.

A chair is set at the front of the stage behind the microphone. Manueli Saba stands behind it, resting his hands on the back of it as he performs. Photo by Robertu Corona.

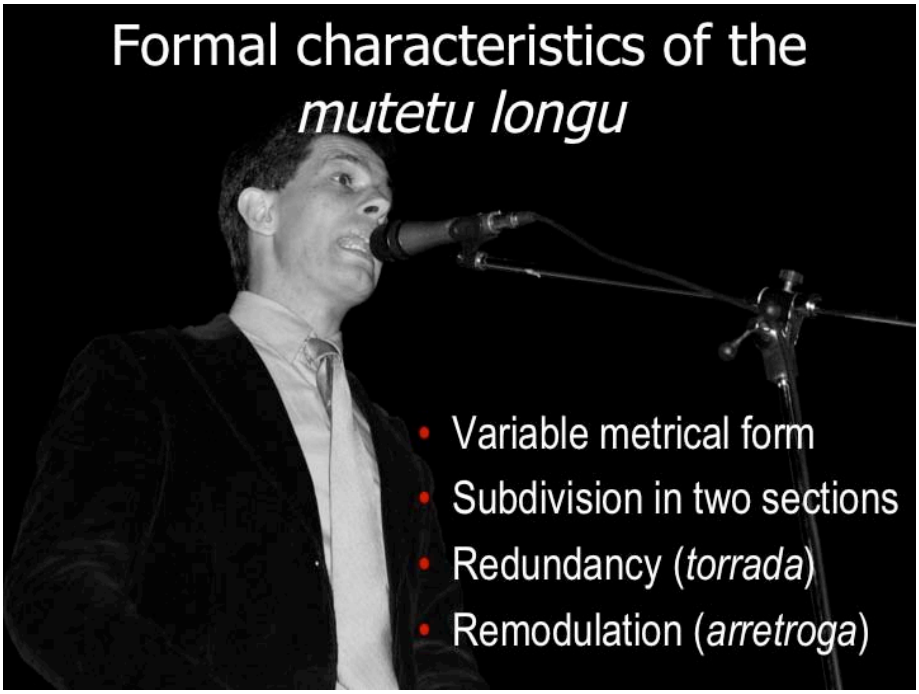
At the front of the stage and behind the microphone there is a chair. The poets stand behind it, resting their hands on its back, as they perform.

The group of poets and their chorus come on stage five or ten minutes before the start of the performance. During this time they decide on the positions they will take and who will begin the duel; the poet who is to assume the role of choosing the topic begins to mentally sketch his

first *mutetu*. Just before they start the evening, one of the poets comes forward to the microphone and announces to the audience the names of the poets, the order in which they will perform, and the names of the accompanying chorus singers and guitarist. He will also remember to mention the saint to whom the festival is dedicated and to thank the organizing committee. He finishes off by "tuning" with the chorus, in order to find a pitch that is suitable to both them and the poets. This phase is carried out with a certain formality in words and actions, giving it a ritualistic air.

The whole performance takes about three to three and one-half hours and is divided into two parts. The first and main part, lasting two and one-half to three hours, sees the poets facing each other in their challenge, singing *mutetus longus* while being accompanied by their guttural-sounding chorus. In the second part, lasting thirty to fifty minutes, they duel while singing in *versus*, accompanied by a guitar.

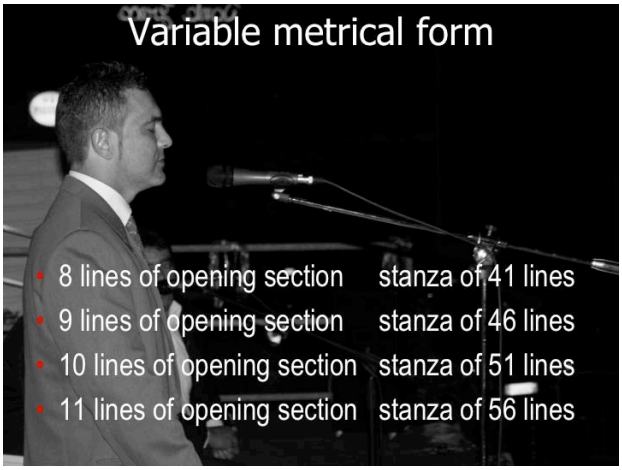
Metrics



Robertu Zuncheddu. Photo by Robertu Corona.

Metrical analysis of the *mutetu longu* is one of the most interesting and, at the same time, most demanding aspects of this work because it reveals an unusual complexity in verbal organization, evident at various levels. With reference to the structure of lines, the rhythm is governed by a stress-timed pattern and lines are linked together by a series of rhymes.

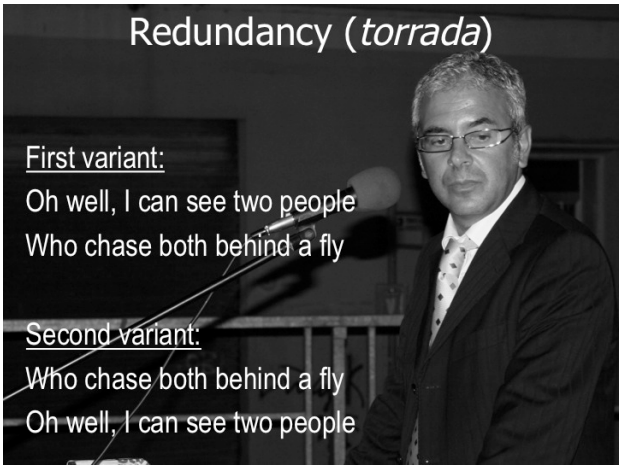
A description of the metrical scheme is complicated by several factors, such as the presence of a logical division between the two sections that make up the *mutetu,* the recurrent use of internal rhymes, and the reshuffling of verse- and word-order. Nevertheless, these aspects must be taken into consideration because they directly influence the organization of the poetic content and shape the poet's communication with his audience. Here, in more detail, are some formal characteristics of the *mutetu longu:*



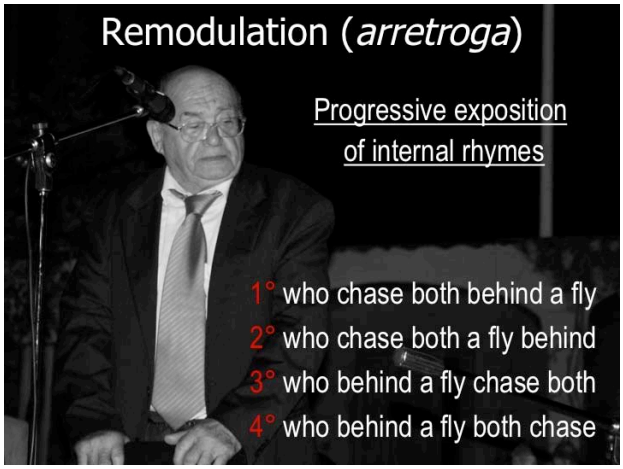
Sabadori Marras. Photo by Robertu Corona.

Eliseu Vargiu. Photo by Robertu Corona.

1) The metrical form is variable. In constructing the verses it is necessary to adhere to a pattern that defines the development and balance between the two sections of the stanza, but a precise number of lines is not defined.
2) The structure is divided into two dissimilar sections called the *sterrina,* which will hereafter be referred to as the "opening section," and the *cubertantza,* which will hereafter be referred to as the "couplet." It is therefore made up of two poetic sections, unified in one stanza but logically and semantically separate and distinct.



Antoni Pani. Photo by Robertu Corona.

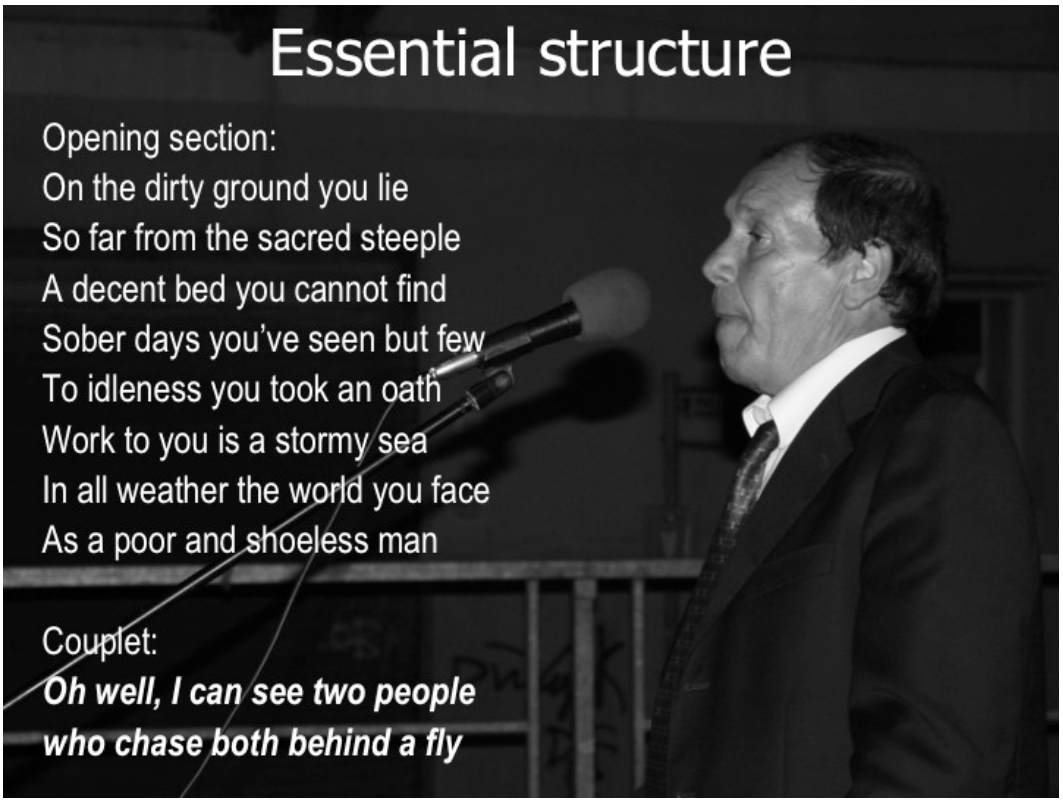


Pepuciu Loni. Photo by Robertu Corona.

3) It is highly recurrent. Its development hinges on the repetition of groups of verses represented in a new order (*torrada*). By using this mechanism, a group of three verses whose endings contain different rhymes—for example, an "abc" scheme—is repeated three times, changing the order so as to place a different rhyme at the end of the line each time. For instance, the same group of lines will first be delivered with the order abc, then acb, and lastly cba.
4) Some verses are rearranged by altering the internal rhymes (*arretroga*). By doing so, a verse such as "*a tempus miu in fainas mannas*" will then appear as "*a tempus miu in mannas fainas*" by inverting the last two words; then as "*in mannas fainas a tempus miu*"

by placing the third word in the final position; and lastly as "*in mannas fainas a miu tempus*," where we see the second word becoming the last. This structural device that makes use of what one might call a mathematical calculation lends a particular sound effect.[11]

The *mutetu longu*, as mentioned above, is created by means of a pattern or technique of expansion through which lines are reshaped. In order to better understand the formal architecture, we shall begin with the definition of a structure that we can call "essential" and in which each line appears only once.



Manueli Saba. Photo by Robertu Corona.

This essential structure is composed of an "opening section" made up of a variable number of lines, generally ranging from eight to ten,[12] and a couplet.

[11] *Torrada* and *arretroga* are poetic devices that are deeply rooted usages in the Sardinian poetic tradition and are found in a great deal of poetry in both the Campidanese and Lugudorese areas (Pillonca 1984:9-14, Lutzu 2007, Bua 1997, Zedda 2006).

[12] *Mutetus* with more than ten verses in the opening section are rarely constructed.

Essential structure (with the couplet in italics)

Opening section:
Ses istraciau e sucidu[13]
Bivendi a sa spensierada
No arreposas in nisciunu logu
Sempiri brillu de a mengianu
Una giorronada in su sartu
Sciu ca no fais prus
Fatzat soli o siat proendi
No portas butinus in peis

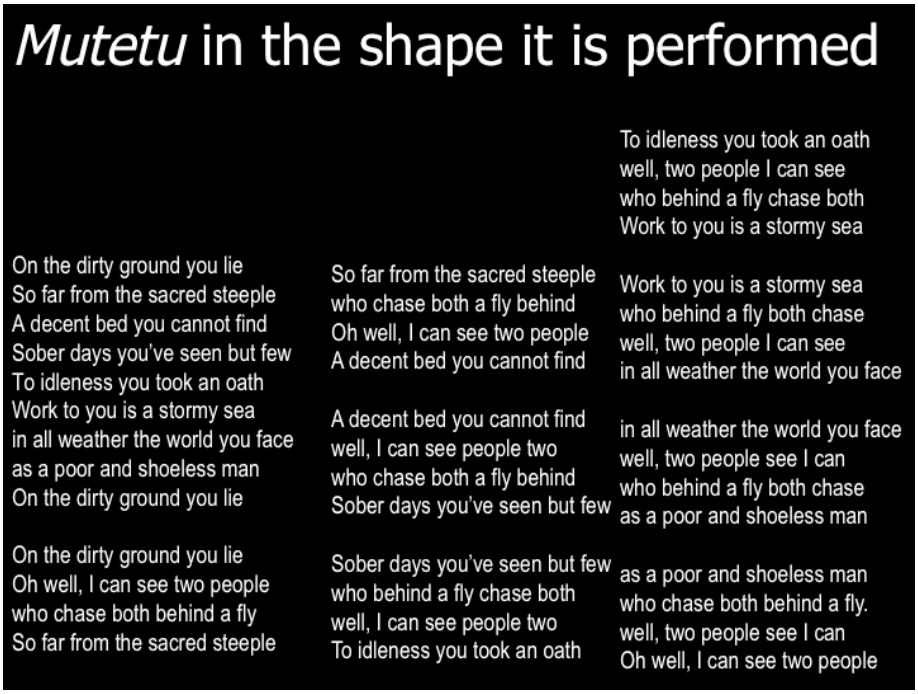
Couplet:
Seis in duus a manu pigada
Andendi in fatu a un ogu lucidu

Opening section:
On the dirty ground you lie
So far from the sacred steeple
A decent bed you cannot find
Sober days you've seen but few
To idleness you took an oath
Work to you is a stormy sea
In all weather the world you face
As a poor and shoeless man

Couplet:
Oh well, I can see two people
Who chase both behind a fly

(Metrical scheme of the essential structure*:* opening section*:* abcdefgh; couplet: *ba*)

During the performance, nevertheless, a *mutetu* is rendered in a broader and more complex way. It is developed using five times plus one the number of lines employed in the essential structure, with a number of movements that corresponds to the number of lines in the opening section plus one. A *mutetu* with an opening section of eight lines is performed in nine movements and 41 lines.



[13] *Mutetu* sung by Efis Loni at a *cantada* held in Quartu S. Eleni for the festival of S. Eleni, on the 13th of September, 1920. Printed by Tipografia Il Torchio, Cagliari.

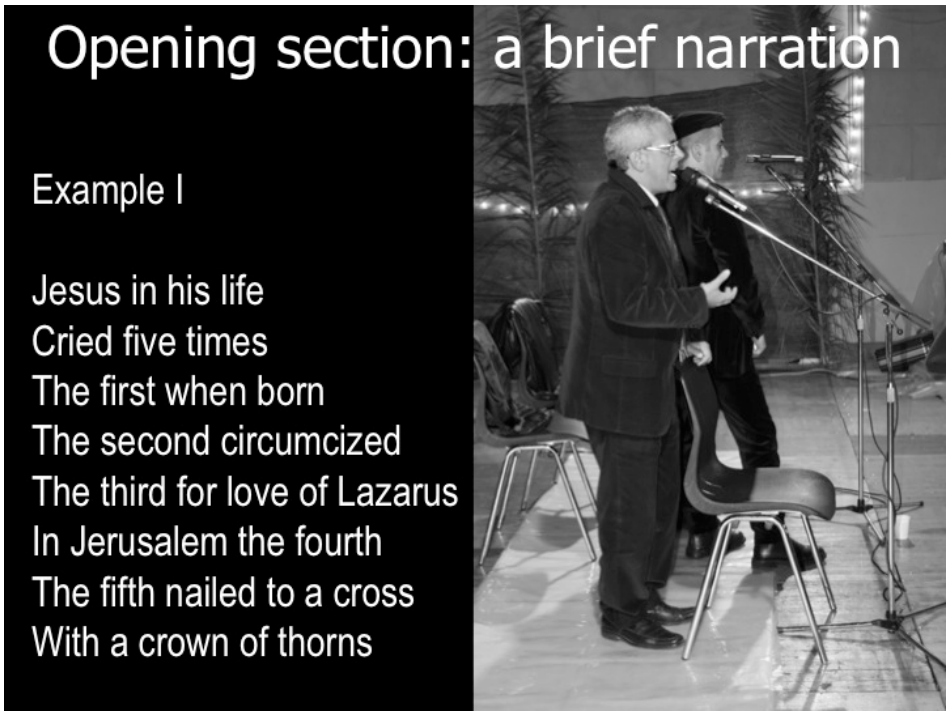
Here the same *mutetu* in the shape it is performed:

Opening section:	Opening section:
Ses istraciau e sucidu	On the dirty ground you lie
Bivendi a sa spensierada	So far from the sacred steeple
No arreposas in nisciunu logu	A decent bed you cannot find
Sempiri brillu de a mengianu	Sober days you've seen but few
Una giorronada in su sartu	To idleness you took an oath
Sciu ca no fais prusu	Work to you is a stormy sea
Fatzat soli o siat proendi	In all weather the world you face
No portas butinus in peis	As a poor and shoeless man
Quatrains:	Quatrains:
Ses istraciau e sucidu	On the dirty ground you **lie**
Seis in duus a manu pigada	*Oh well, I can see two **people***
Andendi in fatu a unu ogu lucidu	*Who chase both behind a **fly***
Bivendi a sa spensierada	So far from the sacred **steeple**
Bivendi a sa spensierada	So far from the sacred **steeple**
Andendi in fatu a unu lucidu ogu	*Who chase both a fly **behind***
Seis in duus a manu pigada	*Oh well, I can see two **people***
No arreposas in nisciunu logu	A decent bed you cannot **find**
No arreposas in nisciunu logu	A decent bed you cannot **find**
Seis in duus a pigada manu	*Well, I can see people **two***
Andendi in fatu a unu lucidu ogu	*Who chase both a fly **behind***
Sempiri brillu de a mengianu	Sober days you've seen but **few**
Sempiri brillu de a mengianu	Sober days you've seen but **few**
A un ogu lucidu andendi in fatu	*Who behind a fly chase **both***
Seis in duus a pigada manu	*Well, I can see people **two***
Una giorronada in su sartu	To idleness you took an **oath**
Una giorronada in su sartu	To idleness you took an **oath**
A manu piada seis in duus	*Well, two people I can **see***
A un ogu lucidu andendi in fatu	*Who behind a fly chase **both***
Sciu ca no fais prus	Work to you is a stormy **sea**
Sciu ca no fais prus	Work to you is a stormy **sea**
In fatu a un ogu lucidu andendi	*Who behind a fly both **chase***
A manu pigada seis in duus	*Well, two people I can **see***
Fatzat soli o siat proendi	In all weather the world you **face**

Fatzat soli o siat proendi	In all weather the world you **face**
In duus a manu pigada seis	*Well, two people see I **can***
In fatu a un ogu lucidu andendi	*Who behind a fly both **chase***
No portas butinus in peis	As a poor and shoeless **man**
No portas butinus in peis	As a poor and shoeless **man**
Andendi in fatu a un ogu lucidu	*Who chase both behind a fly*
In duus a manu pigada seis	*Well, two people see I **can***
Seis in duus a manu pigada	Oh well, I can see two people

(Metrical scheme: opening section: abcdefgha; quatrains: abab, bcbc, cdcd, dede, efef, fgfg, ghgh, hahb).[14]

Opening Section and Couplet



Antoni Pani. Photo bv Robertu Corona.

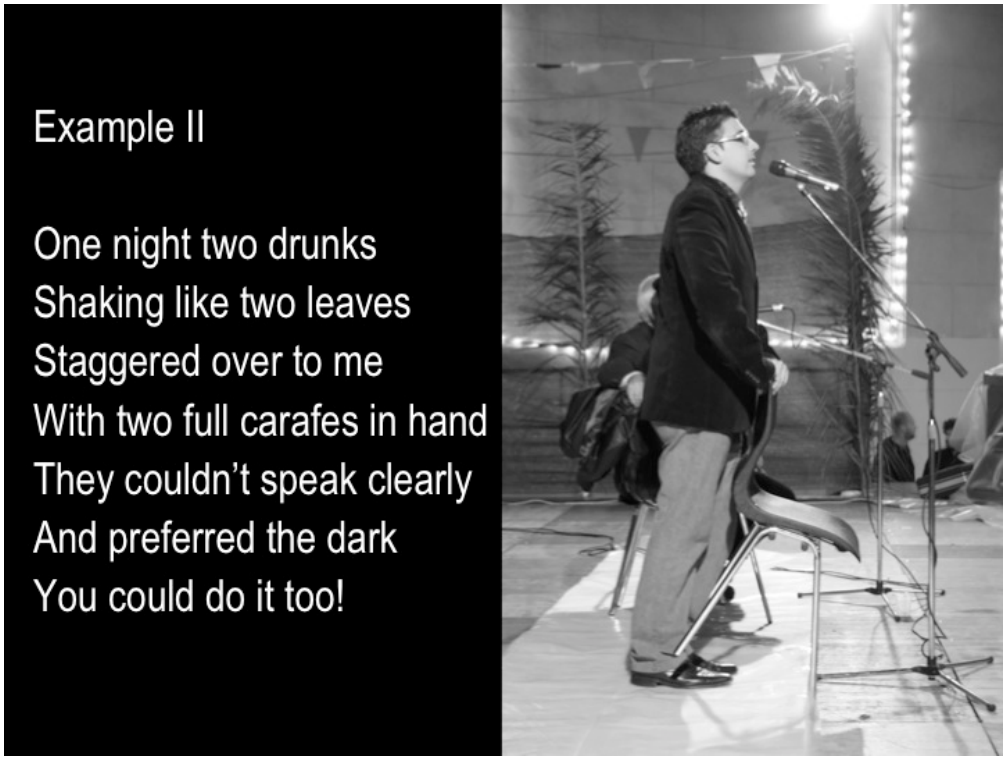
The opening section and the couplet, the two parts that make up the *mutetu*, have different communicative objectives and expressive styles. The opening section, in the form of a brief narration, initiates the com-position. Each poet is free to choose the subject matter in this part, since there is no obligation to compose according to the topic upon which the competition is based. The argument is often distant both in time and place from the here and now of performance. Although the competition rules allow for complete freedom in the choice of subject matter and the expressive form of the opening sections, there is a tendency to adopt certain traditional themes. Sometimes they are descriptions referring to historical events or inspired by religion or mythology. Such topics require a certain degree of elegance in delivery and in the choice of words as well as factual accuracy and truthfulness.

[14] The final quatrain is an exception as it contains only one line from the opening section.

Here is an example:

In sa vida Gesus[15]	Jesus in his life
Cincu bortas at prantu	Cried five times:
Sa primu candu est nasciu	The first when born,
Sa segunda circoncisu	The second circumcized,
Sa tertza a Lazzaru po amori	The third for love of Lazarus,
In Gerusalem sa cuarta	In Jerusalem the fourth,
Sa cuinta incravau in gruxi	The fifth nailed to a cross
De spina portendi corona	With a crown of thorns.

Another recurring theme is the creation of fictional scenes from everyday life that have a moral, sometimes allegorical slant to them. They need not have any bearing on reality, but only an internal coherence and a logical sequence to the narrative:



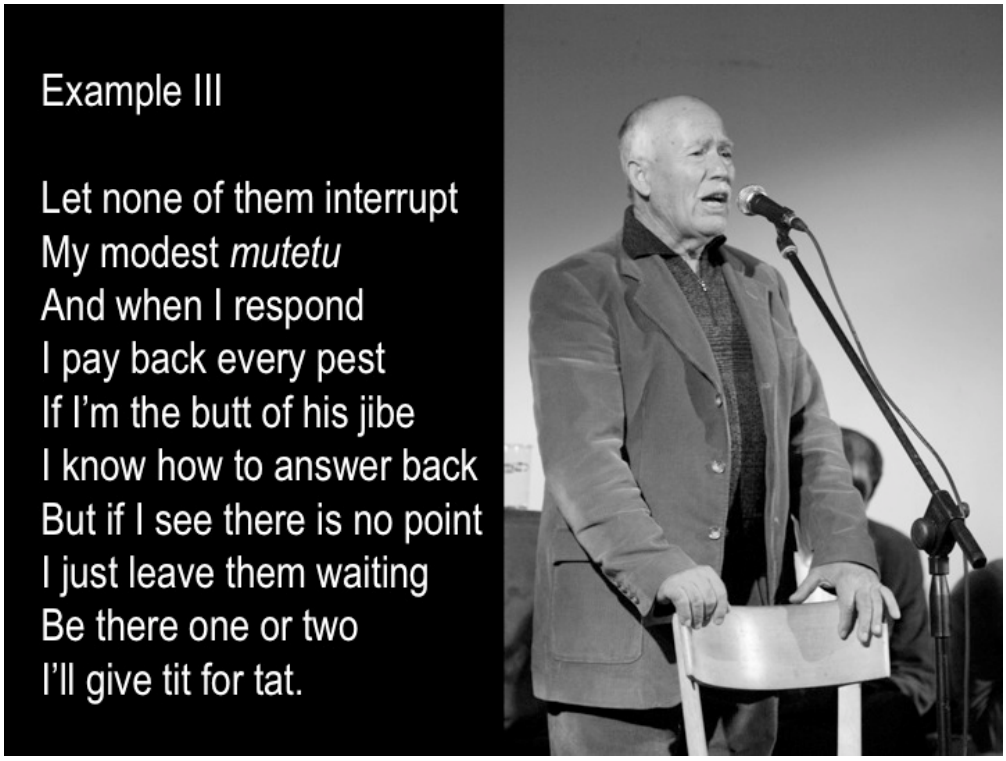
Pierpaulu Falqui. Photo by Robertu Corona.

Una noti duus impriagus[16]	One night two drunks
Tremendi che sutilis cannas	Shaking like two leaves
Mi ndi sunt benius acanta	Staggered over to me
Prenas cun duas carrafinas,	With two full carafes in hand.
No intzartànt beni is fueddus	They couldn't speak clearly
E ddis praxiat su scuriu,	And preferred the dark;
Chistionendi pariant ingresus	They were speaking like Arabs,
E bai e pigandi esemprus!	What could I understand?

[15] A *mutetu* by Sarbadoricu Serra, orally transmitted and documented by several sources (Anedda 1975; Zedda 2008:64)

[16] *Mutetu* sung by Chichinu Loddi at a *cantada* held in Deximuputzu for the festival of S. Giusepi, August 18th, 1965, recorded on audiotape; private archive of Paulu Zedda.

Another fairly common type is composed of statements directed at the other competing poets or the audience. In this kind of opening section the poet expresses a general point of view that does not include the forming of metaphorical content required by the central subject matter:



Omeru Atza. Photo by Marco Lutzu.

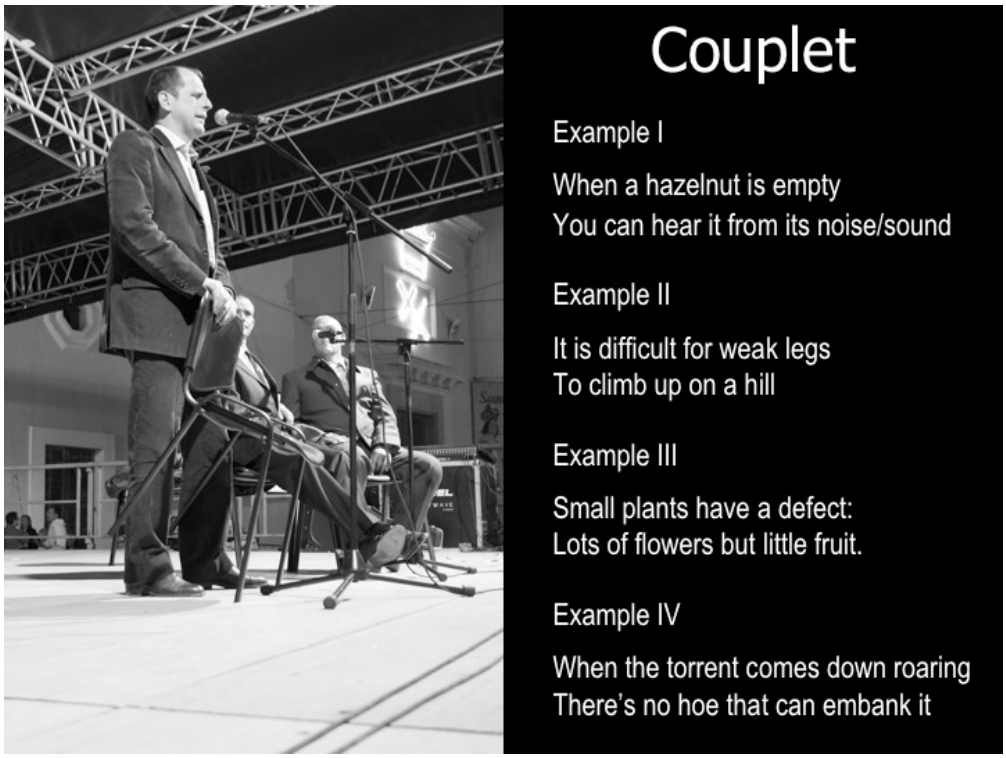
Nemus de issus interrompit[17]	None of them interrupt
Su miu modestu mutetu	My modest *mutetu*,
E candu sa resposta dò	And when I respond
Sciu pagai donnia importunu,	I pay back every pest.
Si tengu parti contraria	If I'm the butt of his jibe,
Fortza e consillu ddi presti	I know how to answer back.
E chi biu ca lompit a nudda	But if I see there is no point
De sceda ddu lassu giaunu.	I just leave them waiting.
Siat unu o mancai ddus	Be there one or two
A su giustu torru su giustu.	I'll give tit for tat.

Each of these different ways of developing an opening section has to be interpreted according to criteria that differ from one topic pattern to another. Opening sections should be received according to the method described by Richard Bauman (quoted in Foley 1995:7-11): "Interpret what I say in a special sense; do not take it to mean what the words alone, taken literally, would convey."

The couplet, on the other hand, draws upon dialectic skills. This is the section in which the duel between poets really happens and the subject matter always recalls the main theme of the *cantada*. All the couplets of a performance, therefore, follow and discuss only one theme

[17] *Mutetu* sung by Miminu Moi at a *cantada* held in Assemini for the festival of S. Luxia, on the 24th of April, 1954. Manual transcription, private archive of Paulu Zedda.

(Bravi 2008:289-90). Moreover, they are often expressed in a mysterious way, hidden under metaphors or allegories so as not to be easily interpreted (Zedda 2007). Because of their reduced length and the concise and evocative formal style, they are in a away similar to aphorisms or, more often, to proverbs. They hide sententious and morally oriented content behind a visible and poetic image.



Paulu Zedda. Photo by Robertu Corona.

Here are some examples:

…	…
Est connota a su sonu[18]	You can tell it by its sound
Sa nuxedda sbuida.	When a hazelnut is empty.
…	…
Cussu de andai a punta a susu[19]	To climb up on a hill
No est cosa poi is cambas moddis.	It's difficult for weak legs.
…	…
Est difetu de is prantas piticas:[20]	Small plants have a defect:
Frori meda, ma pagu frutu.	Lots of flowers but little fruit.

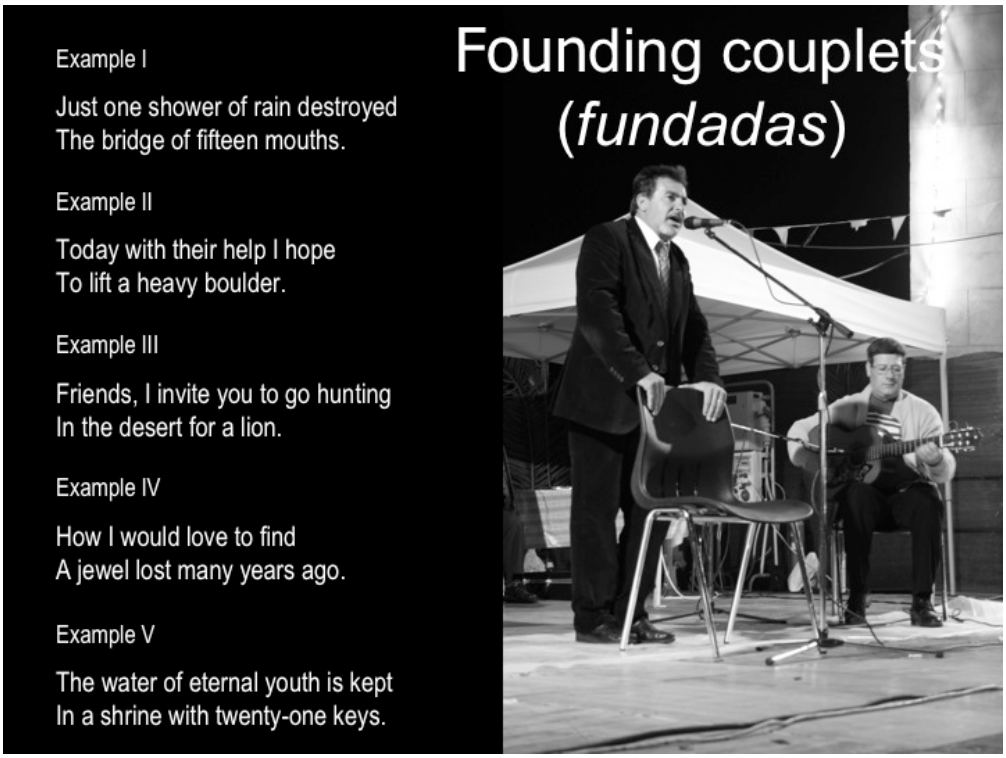
[18] Pinneddu Piras, 1890, single *mutetu* (Piras 1999).

[19] *Mutetu* sung by Efis Loni at a *cantada* held in Quartu S. Eleni for the festival of S. Efis, August 30th, 1931. Printed by Tipografia Il Torchio, Cagliari.

[20] *Mutetu* sung by Cicitu Farci at a *cantada* held in Quartu S. Eleni for the festival of S. Efis, August 30th, 1931. Printed by Tipografia Il Torchio, Cagliari.

…	…
Candu s'arriu calat a sonu[21]	When the torrent comes down roaring
No nc'est marra chi du scansit.	There is no hoe that can embank it.

A strong distinguishing trait of the couplet is its obscure, enigmatic character: the search for its exact meaning is one of the elements that generate most interest in the poetic performance. In front of the stage the listeners discuss, at length, the possible interpretations of the words and the meaning that the poets hide behind their verse.



Pascuali Sanna accompanied on guitar by Antoneddu Pau. Photo by Robertu Corona.

The first couplet plays a particularly important role in the performance because it establishes the symbolic and metaphorical theme that will be maintained for the duration of the competition. Thus the way in which the theme is introduced and developed in the Campidanese tradition differs significantly from any other method known among the traditions in the Romance languages. The topic is given to the poet who opens the performance. As his role suggests, he is known as the *fundadori*, the founder, and the first couplet is called the *fundada*, the foundation. He presents his theme in such a way that often neither the audience nor the other poets understand immediately what the underlying meaning may be. However, the poetic figure that he proposes is accepted and developed by the other poets, so that all the couplets of the poetic duel adhere to a unique theme, which becomes a kind of extended metaphor (Bravi 2008).

[21] *Mutetu* sung by Arrafieli Serra at a *cantada* held in Sinnia, June 1931, at a private event. Printed by Tipografia Editrice Artigiana, Cagliari.

Here are some examples of foundations:

Una acua solu at distrutu[22]	Just one shower of rain destroyed
Su ponti de cuindixi bucas.	The bridge of fifteen mouths.
Oi speru cun s'agiudu insoru[23]	Today with their help I hope
Sullevai unu grandu massu.	To lift a heavy boulder.
Amigus s'inbitu a cassa[24]	Friends, I invite you to go hunting
A su desertu po unu leoni.	In the desert for a lion.
Cantu emu a bolli incontrai[25]	How I would love to find
Una prenda di annus ismarria.	A jewel lost many years ago.
S'acua de s'eterna gioventudi s'inserrat[26]	The water of eternal youth is kept
In unu sacrariu de bintuna crai.	In a shrine with twenty-one keys.

In the course of the competition the improvisers progressively try to unveil, through their verse, the underlying meaning of their words, while at the same time they challenge each other in a linguistic contest in which the competitive side is highlighted. As the competition goes on, the images in the couplets that refer to the central theme of the contest alternate with the brief narrative lines taken from the opening sections, in a continuous series of Pindaric flights, taking the listener back and forth between the concrete central theme of the performance and the unpredictable, often ethereal narrative of the opening sections (Mossa 2004).

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[22] Pascali Puddu; the founder's couplet delivered during a *cantada* held in Pirri for the festival of S. Sidori, June, 1902. Printed by Tipografia Legatoria Sarda in 1905. The couplet refers to the fall of the city hall committee ("a bridge with fifteen mouths") after the elections ("just one shower of rain").

[23] Sung by Efis Loni during a *cantada* held in Munserrau, August 9th, 1923, for the festival of S. Lorentzu. Printed by Tipografia Il Torchio, Cagliari. The theme refers to the competition itself.

[24] Sung by Francischinu Lai at a *cantada* held in Quartu S. Eleni for the feast of S. Eleni, September 14th, 1923. Printed by Graphical, Caligiari. The topic couplet refers to the poetic duel being held, and the figure of the lion is an allusion to the surname of one of the competing poets, Efis Loni.

[25] Sung by Arrafieli Serra at a *cantada* held in Sinnia, July 16th, 1927, for the festival of S. Barbara. Printed by Tipografia Editrice Artigiana, Cagliari. *Prenda* (jewel) is a metaphor for freedom. This public performance was interrupted by the secretary of the fascist party, as indicated in a note printed at the end of the booklet.

[26] Paulu Zedda, founder of the performance held in Sinnia, at a *cantada* held in Sinnia for the festival of S. Barbara, June 18th, 2004. Recorded on audiotape, private archive of Paulu Zedda. The central theme is history (the water of eternal youth) enclosed within the alphabet (the 21 keys).

Part II: Memory, Structure, Dynamics

Paulu Zedda. Photo by Robertu Corona.

Memory (Long-term and Work-memory)

While creating oral poetry, composers must adhere to complex rules. These involve syntax, morphology, grammar, correct versification, placing of stresses, and rhymes. With such compositional logic in mind we must evaluate the importance of memory.

According to Greek mythology, the muses, who embody poetry and inspire its creation process, are the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory. The oldest version indicates that there were three muses: *Aoidê* (the Voice), *Meletê* (the Practice), and *Mnêmê* (the Memory, once more).[27]

The debate over the Homeric question and oral epic poetry in general has allowed us to recognize those elements, such as formulaic language and recurrent patterns, that explain the genesis, evolution, and transmission of an oral poem (Lord 1960). The use of coherent and reproduced metrical schemes also works as a mnemonic device aimed at supporting the memorization of a poetic text (Havelock 1963). The ancient Greeks (and civilizations living in a

[27] Pausanius, IX, 29, 2.

state of primary orality) used metrically ordered poetic structure as a means of perpetuating works that were held to be important.

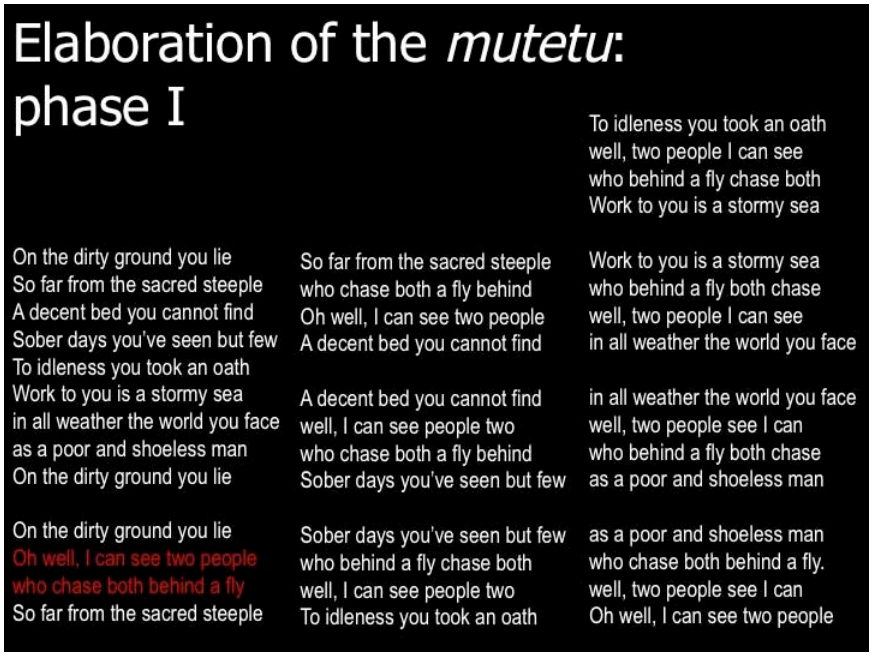
More recent research into other ongoing epic traditions has highlighted the amazing mnemonic ability of poets who are often able to (re)compose tens or sometimes hundreds of thousands of lines (Foley 2005). All such research underlines the key role of memory for the very survival of oral poetry. In closer focus, when scholars write about memory they are mostly referring to long-term memory, the kind of memory that allows the retention of an extended work for months or years.

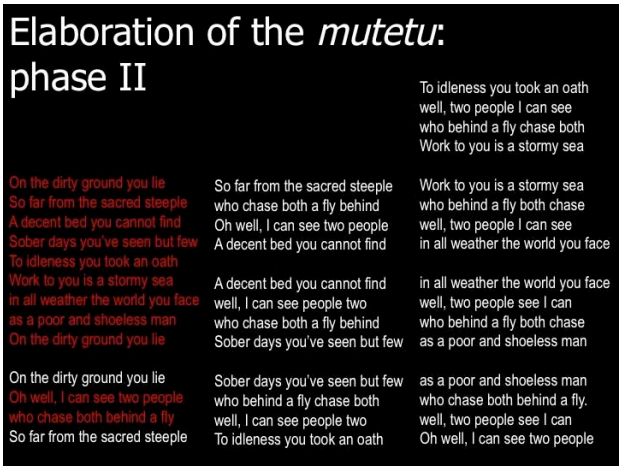
If one were to ask a habitual listener of Campidanese poetry what the "gift of nature" is (according to a popular belief), or what is believed to be the most significant innate characteristic of an improvised poet, he would answer "*s'arretentiva*," a term we can translate as memory. Yet in improvised poetry circles there are two words that are used for memory: "*su sciri*," or "knowing," a designation used to mean long-term memory, which allows the poet to draw his texts and text-patterns from a "mental library"; and *s'arretentiva, "*retentiveness," used to refer to the ability to hold complex texts in the memory while formulating them. This latter type of memory therefore functions as the poet's "work-memory," required to construct his improvised text.

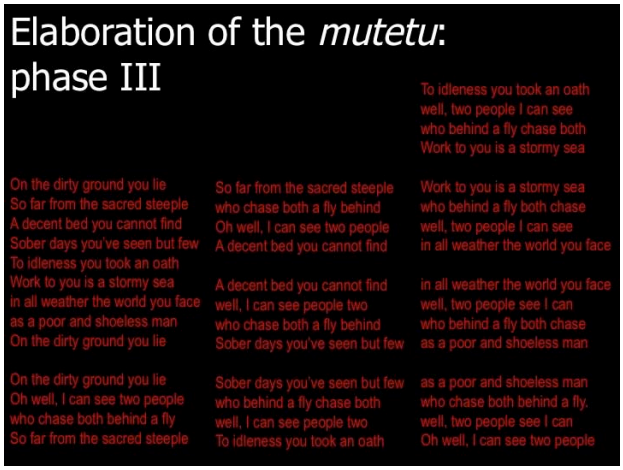
Although these two mnemonic functions are in some way connected, they are also diverse and independent. A poetry lover may have an excellent long-term memory, be able to recite thousands of lines by heart, and yet be unable to compose a *mutetu longu* because the verses he is composing are forgotten as he tries to reorder them. Conversely, a young person with little experience and a limited "mental library" might improvise a *mutetu* with relative ease due to his having a good work-memory. We could perhaps draw a comparison with the working of a computer: the long-term memory functions like the ROM, whereas the work-memory works like the RAM. As far as extemporaneous poetry is concerned, the second type is more important than the first, and when we are dealing with complex forms such as that required in the *mutetu* it is absolutely essential.

In order to understand the relevance of the work-memory, I shall focus on another detail. An improviser does not lay out his verse in his "mental notebook" in the same order that a speaker does, nor in the same way that a literary poet writes down or types his verse.

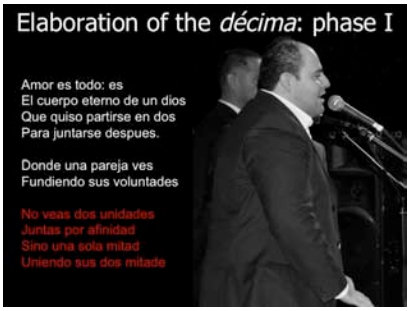
A Campidanese *cantadori* begins the composition of his *mutetu* with the section he will sing last, the couplet, and

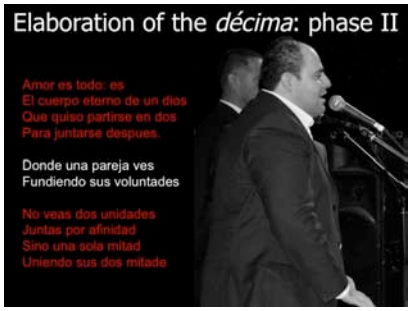






only after he has accomplished this initial step will he begin to work out the first part, the opening section, here also often starting from a central line or from the last line rather than from the first. A *cantimpanca* from Tuscany composes his eight-line stanzas beginning with the fourth or sixth line. A Cuban *repentista* composes his *décima* (ten-line stanza) beginning with the second *redondilla* and then moves on to the first one and lastly to the *bisagra* (Díaz Pimienta 1998:425-34; Della Valle and Mitrani 2006).





Marcu Melis. Photo by Robertu Corona.

A Basque *bertsolari* begins to formulate his *bertso* starting from the last line (J. Garzia et al. 2001:104-12). Whereas a writer composes his text in an anterograde fashion, an improviser tends to compose in a retrograde fashion.[28]

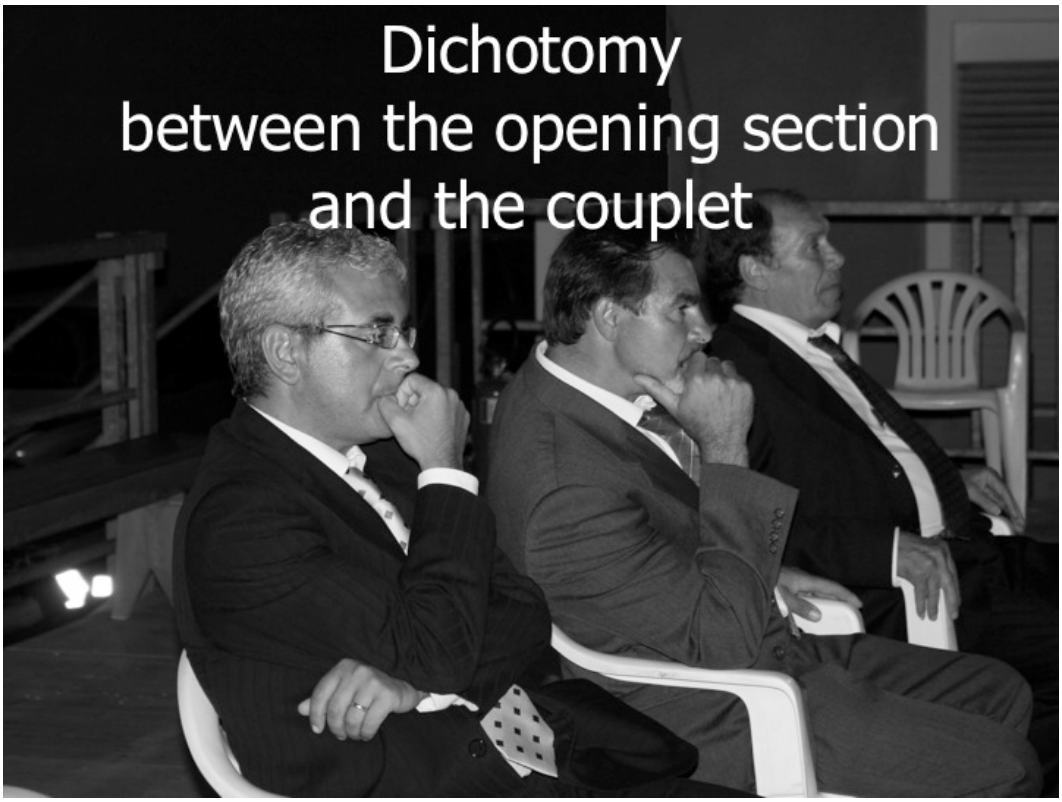
In order to improvise a good *mutetu* it is necessary to settle on some words or lines that will form the final part of the text and then store them in memory while the initial section is elaborated. This is certainly not the most natural way to arrange discourse. A speaker also needs to use his work-memory, for as he utters a sentence he simultaneously thinks of the following one. However, this only requires the retention of a few words for a few seconds. A writer works in more or less the same way, with the advantage of being able to verify at any time and in every detail all the words he has already written, thus avoiding repetition, syntactic errors, and incoherencies. He orders his discourse according to the requirements of a wider hierarchy of

[28] The reason for this kind of order in construction is found in the final result: in extemporaneous poetry, a stanza is much more effective if its conceptual nucleus comes at its end, and this most effective verse must be thought up first because only the first lines need not rhyme. Via this technique the stanza will build up to a climax, rather than losing its impetus as it proceeds.

words and ideas, putting down on paper (or in an electronic file) the contents of his work-memory. The improviser needs to hold a greater number of words in his mind than the speaker or the writer, and for much longer.

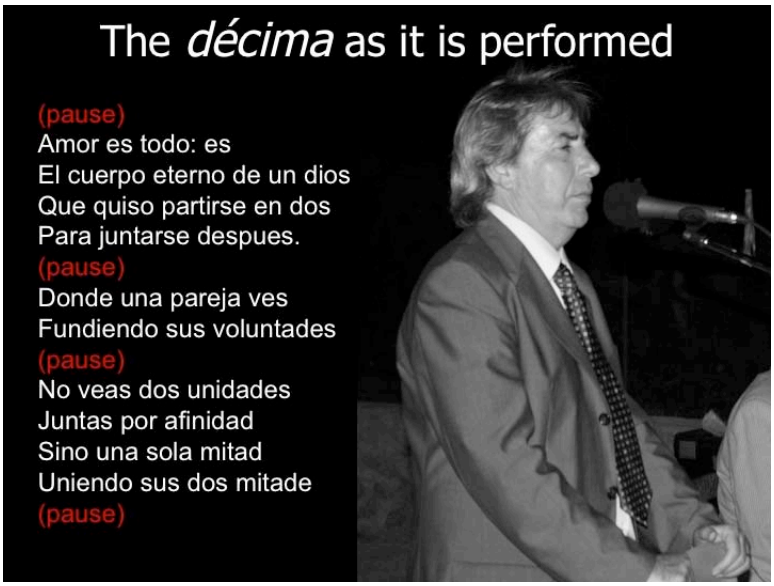
Moreover, the improviser's work-memory needs to be malleable. During the working-out phase of a *mutetu longu* he continuously modifies and perfects his stanzas in the minutes leading up to his performance. Consequently, he has to keep a virtual mnemonic notebook open in his mind, where some verses are altered and others are substituted for or eliminated, and be able to forget the rough compositions he has discarded until he arrives at his final draft. It is evident that one must possess a highly efficient work-memory in order to compose a linear, coherent, and effective stanza.

Dichotomy (between the opening section and the couplet)



Antoni Pani, Pascuali Sanna, and Manueli Saba. Photo by Robertu Corona.

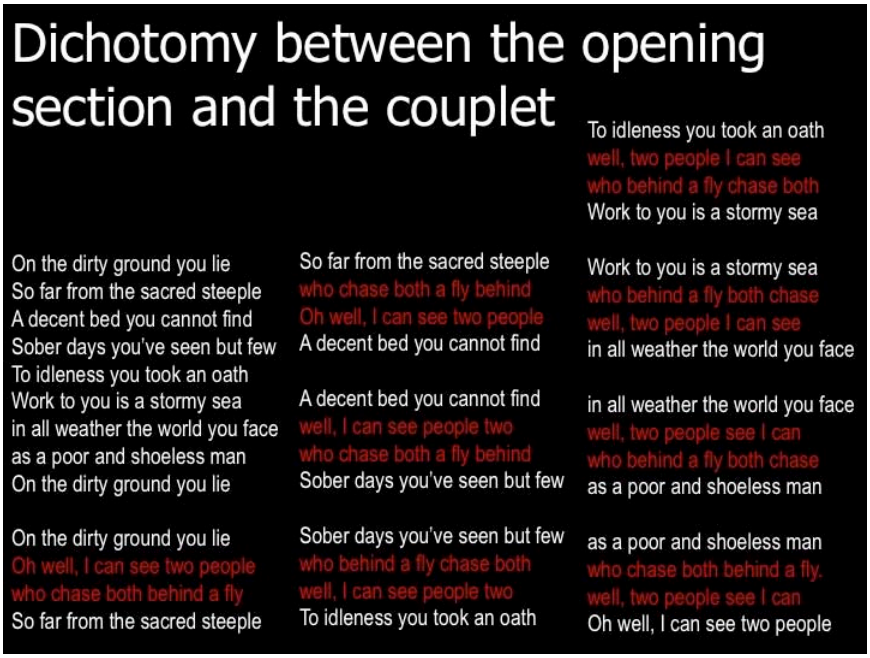
A further element that we must consider carefully is the order in which the various messages found in the *mutetu* are positioned within the stanza. Normally, the performance of a sung poetic text flows in such a way that pauses, rhythm, and intonation mark its continuity in much the same way as if they were punctuation marks.



Antoneddu Orrù. Photo by Robertu Corona.

In the *décima cubana,* for example, composed of ten octosyllabic lines in all, the *repentista* sings the first group of four lines called the *prima redondilla*. He then pauses for a few seconds before singing a further two lines, the *bisagra.* After another few seconds he sings the second group of four lines (*segunda redondilla*). Performing the *décima* in this way helps underline its syntactical structure: the *prima redondilla* contains the first thematic thread; the *bisagra* acts as a bridge; the *segunda redondilla* represents a second stronger conceptual nucleus that concludes the *décima*. Longer intervals separate one *décima* from another, while other shorter pauses separate the three subsections that make up the whole *décima.* The pauses, in other words, highlight the semantic discontinuity of the poetic performance, just as punctuation does (commas the short pauses, full stops the longer ones), and make it easier to comprehend. We find a similar situation with the octet sung by the *cantimpanca* of Tuscany. The stanza composed of eight hendecasyllabic lines is sung almost without stopping, although there are some barely perceived pauses that divide it into subsections (Bravi 2008). Once again, the pauses correspond directly to the degree of continuity between the verses.

In the *mutetu longu* the ideas are, in a sense, collocated less naturally. The *cantadori* starts his poem with the opening section, interrupts his singing for a few seconds, then sings his eight quatrains, separating them from each other with equal pauses. In this case, however, the criteria applied regarding the use of pauses in the understanding of the *décima cubana* or the Tuscan octet are no longer valid. The opening section of a *mutetu* is preceded and followed by a pause that underlines its semantic continuity, and so far everything seems normal. In the eight quatrains that follow, however, interpreting the pauses after each one in this sense is erroneous and misleading.



In every quatrain the first line is taken from the opening section, the second and third are the couplet, and the fourth, once again, is taken from the opening section. These four lines held together between two brief pauses have in reality no semantic continuity and thus are logically incoherent. Indeed, the first and last lines are fragments of a subsection that has already been heard. Only the second and third line of the quatrain make up a semantically coherent couplet that expresses a complete thought.

Furthermore, the couplet is heard in its original form only in the first quatrain because in successive ones it is reshaped: the two lines are inverted and the words within each line continually reshuffled into a new, different order every time the couplet is heard. The other competing poets and the audience must listen carefully to the central couplet of the first quatrain, for the content of these two lines is relevant to the central theme of the poetic duel. Therefore, in a strophic structure of 41 lines, only in the eleventh and twelfth lines, strictly speaking, do we hear the actual dueling dialogue between the poets. More precisely, all the quatrains contain a version of the central couplet, but, excluding the first, they have to be mentally reordered by the listeners in order to arrive at their correct and complete sense.

To date, no study has looked into the reasoning behind such an unusual arrangement. In my opinion a partial explanation could be found in its phonetic-musical component, which predominates over its semantic content. On the whole, this dimension would explain the reason for such a structure.

Oral language, especially in extemporaneous sung poetry, performs two functions simultaneously. The first is to communicate concepts through its semantic components. In doing so the poetic composition, although limited by the features that distinguish it from other communicative forms, functions nevertheless as a verbal language does by transmitting to the listener concepts and images coded in a series of words. The second communicative function is achieved exclusively through its sonorous qualities and, as such, is facilitated by mechanisms and requirements that are in some ways wholly "musical." The sound of each word, the sentence stress, the duration of each line, and the positioning of assonance and rhyme are all aspects of oral communication that work as features of a diverse and parallel register. Therefore, we must interpret the verbal message while bearing in mind both the phonetic-musical value of its sounds and the coded significance of its words.

With this in mind, we can see that these quatrains, seemingly incoherent from a purely semantic point of view, become perfectly coherent when judged only on the basis of this metrical and morphological language. Indeed, every line of the quatrain is of equal length and has the same metrical pattern. Invariably, it has a double alternating rhyme (abab type). If we look at all the quatrains, we can see that they maintain the same internal symmetry and each contains a similar rhyme scheme (abab, bcbc, cdcd, dede, and so on). In other words, a *mutetu* partially sacrifices continuity of statement, theme linearity, and logical coherence in order to constitute the highly symmetrical pattern, and in this it is "musically" perfectly balanced.

Recurrence

Cantada for the feast of Santu Bartzolu, in Sinnia. Photo by Robertu Corona.

The *mutetu* is a highly recurrent form. Every line of the opening section is repeated at least twice in the text, while the two lines of the couplet, as already stated, form the thematic nucleus of the poetic duel, appearing at least eight times. Let me enlarge upon this description. In reality, in the 41 lines that make up the *mutetu* there is no section that is simply repeated; as we have seen, its verses are continuously reordered according to a set pattern, and the word order of lines reshuffled to form new combinations. Such a strange and unusual mechanism has been observed by various scholars with open curiosity and, sometimes, with suspicion (Wagner 1907, R. Garzia 1917).

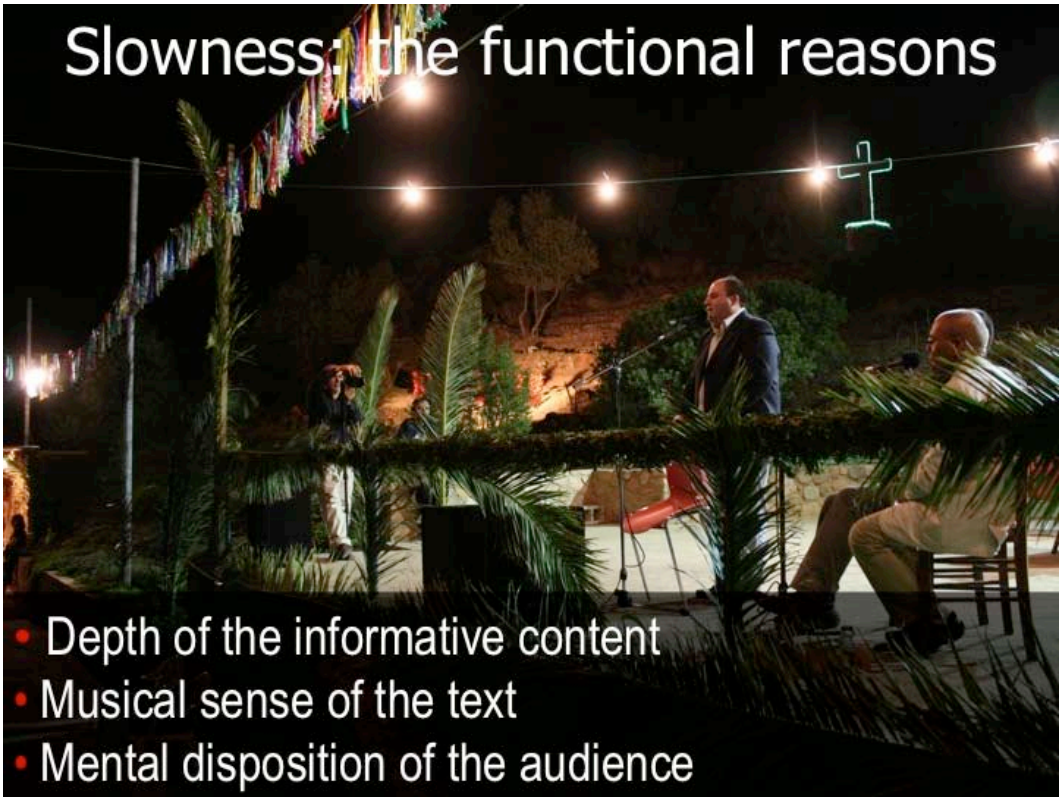
It has been suggested that such recurrence is a useful way of making sure the audience understands the message in the poetry (Cirese 1988:25), a very plausible explanation. The repetition of a concept would allow those who had not heard well the first time to check their understanding. This is particularly true as regards the centuries in which the form of the *mutetu* evolved, during which there was no means of amplifying sound. Nevertheless, there exist numerous other equally old traditions of extemporaneous poetic dueling in which no repetition is expected and they work well regardless. Another possible explanation, championed by some enthusiasts, is that the time taken to perform the "superfluous" quatrains gives the next poet more minutes to compose his *mutetu*. This too is a plausible reason, but is not the only nor even a major solution: several top-tier improvisers have repeatedly tried to speed up the *mutetu* by singing only a few of the eight quatrains, but such innovation has been firmly censured by the audience. The quatrains play a vital role in the relationship between the poets and their audience. After the main theme has been wholly exposed, there are two or three minutes during which the *cantadoris* perform their remaining quatrains. The audience takes this time to discuss the value of the poetic content and its possible meaning.

A further interpretation might be suggested by considering poetic language as being musical as well as semantic, and by recognizing that its phonemic content may function independently from its verbal message. We are accustomed to seeing a poetic text operating simultaneously on two levels: the semantic and the musical. In a *mutetu*, however, the two components also work separately. The *mutetu* operates on a strictly verbal level only in certain parts of the stanza, whereas the musical element is present throughout the performance.

Even considering the purely repetitive aspect of the verbal content of a *mutetu*, the musical language, as compared to the verbal, can be more revealing. Recurrence is always present in a musical piece of any kind in any culture. There is always a chorus in pop music; in classical music the central theme is repeated many times; in jazz the lead melody occurs at the beginning and at the end; in traditional music the repetitions are even more frequent, and some songs are made up entirely of a series of repetitions. Therefore, although recurrence is sometimes awkward in the spoken language and surely unattractive in the written one, in music it is, on the contrary, pleasant and even aesthetically indispensable.

Poetic structure derives from certain needs of both the verbal language and the language of music. It must satisfy requirements of grammar and syntax necessary for speech. However, as in music, repetition and reworking of specific sections are common; the poetic text transmits ideas and reason, as speech and prose do, but like music it is far better at transmitting images, emotions, and sensations; we analyze the spoken language almost automatically with a critical eye. On the contrary, music is accepted more passively and induces imitation (we all know how often a tune we have not thought about for a long time will surface in our minds). Poetic language sits halfway between pure speech and the language of music. In this sense the developmental structure of quatrains may be seen as a coherent and natural device, existing in order to gratify the musical-metrical level of perception, and not only the strictly verbal level.

Slowness



Marcu Melis. Photo by Robertu Corona.

Another feature that characterizes the Campidanese tradition is slowness. Time, during the performance, seems to flow at a very different rate from the one we usually experience. The main section of *cantada* normally lasts not less than two and one-half hours, which is much more than other corresponding oral contest traditions I know. A single argument in a Cuban or Argentinian performance rarely goes on for as much as one hour, more often concluding in 30 or 40 minutes. It is more or less the same for a North Sardinian or Tuscan *ottava rima*. Currently, a single theme is developed by Basque *bertsolaris* in an even shorter length of time. In the South Sardinian *cantada*, a single argument lasts more than three times the longest of the other traditions considered. This difference in the duration of the argumentation as a whole corresponds to a parallel length in the time normally required to perform each stanza. In the previously cited traditions, the execution time varies between 30 and 70 seconds. The recital of a single *mutetu* lasts from four to six minutes, more than five times longer.[29] How can we explain such unusual slowness?

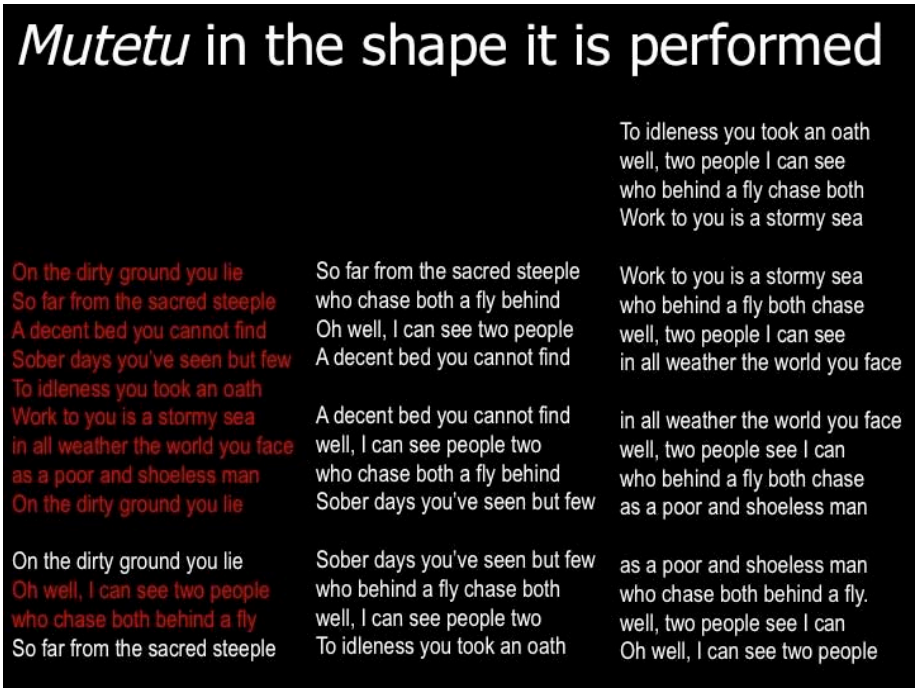
Several factors, in my opinion, influence and support this functional organization. First of all, we must consider the depth of the informative content. A *mutetu*, and to be more precise, its

[29] And although a Campidanese *cantadori* sings a number of lines between 41 and 51, the semantic nucleus is nevertheless contained in 10-12 lines, in comparison to the ten of a Cuban *repentista*, the eight of a *cantimpanca* of *ottava rima*, and the 4-10 of a *bertsolari*.

couplet, hides an obscure and barely intelligible message. The audience repeats it, discusses it, and tries to analyze each possible interpretation of it. When a performance is in its first phase and the lack of clues prevents any correct comprehension, a diligent listener must retain all the poets' couplets in a precise and coherent order, so as to interpret the whole meaning of the *cantada*. In a sense, the performance develops like a mysterious narration, like a detective story, in which a series of details must be analyzed with the aim of reconstructing the hidden sense of events.

After the delivery of the couplet there follows a certain number of quatrains that, as already mentioned, do not transmit any further textual message. During this period of time the content of the couplet, which has passed from the poet to the audience, is perceived, digested, and retained. In these few minutes the couplet reproduces itself, passing from the creator to the audience, and undergoing in this new passage a new elaboration, a further analysis, and a multiple memorization. It must be evaluated not just as part of an extended text, but as a landmark inside an articulated and often obscure and mysterious argument. The image conjured up by the couplet, in spite of its brevity, remains in the air.

Once again, I wish to take note of the musical sense of the text. Five minutes is a very long time to dwell on a text of just ten or twelve lines.

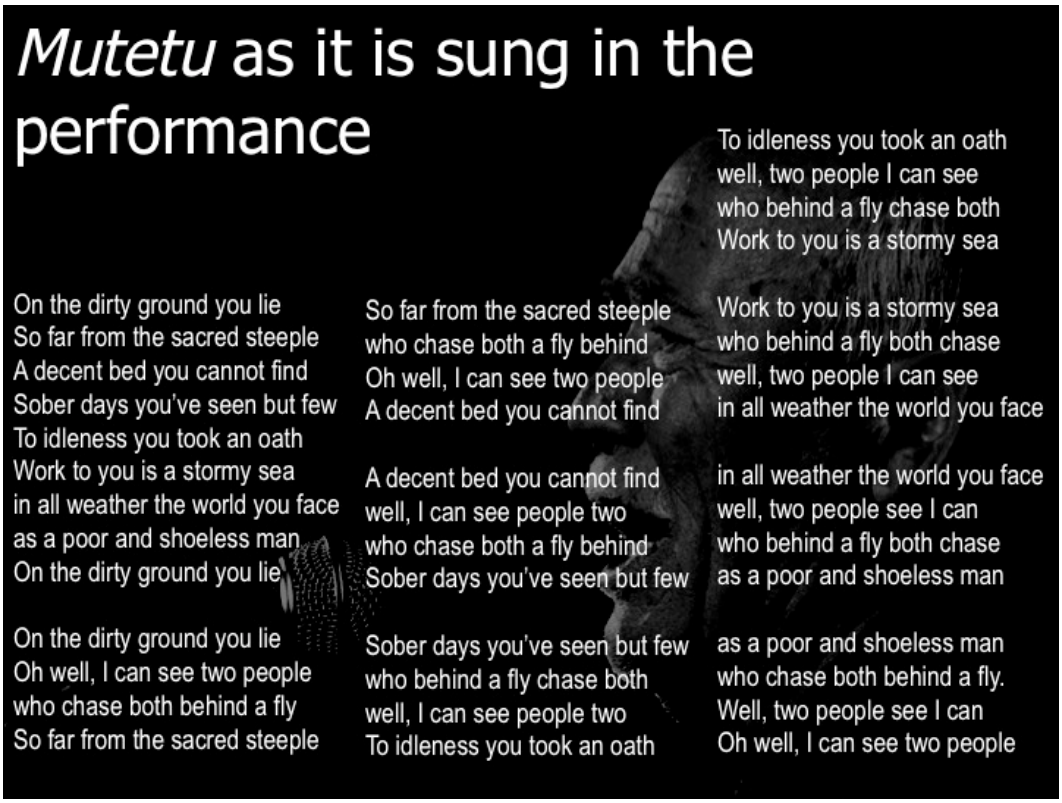


It has to be remembered that the information flow ends with the first quatrain, after just one and one-half minutes. The following three and one-half minutes contain only remodulations of lines that have been exposed before. Nevertheless, the metrical-musical language of the *mutetu* keeps working even when the informative verbal language has ceased.

Consider an analogy. Opera is composed of a succession of textual and musical sections, and other sections that are only musical. In the *mutetu* performance, in a sense, something similar happens. In the opening section and in the first quatrain both the textual and the sound components work together. From the second quatrain on, words lose their symbolizing function and maintain just their purely musical expression. This amounts to a poetic interlude in which only the phonic effect of stresses and rhymes can be heard, and no longer the coded meaning of words. Informative discontinuity of the verbal component is compensated for by the coherent continuity of its metrical expression.

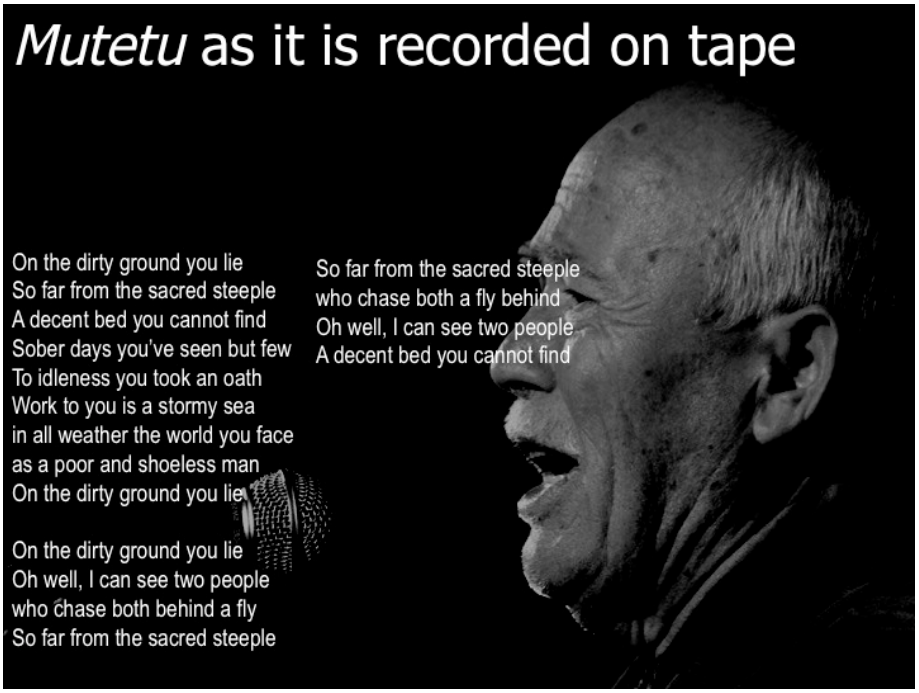
Further understanding may be arrived at by considering the mental disposition of the audience. Such a steady, repetitive flow in the performance works properly when listeners are tuned to a particular perceptual register, a sort of poetic trance or hypnosis. In order to attain this state of mind several factors play a relevant role. Singing is one of these; no improvised poetic contest could be held without it (Mossa 2004). A performance where poets challenge each other by reciting instead of singing their stanzas is not even imaginable and would appear unbearable.

Metrical organization of a text, as seen before, works as a sort of additional musical language that strengthens the impact of chanting. Other conditions help bring about this poetic trance. I will subsume all these under the comprehensive term of the "performing dimension"—the contact between poets and audience, with continuous exchanges of visual and aural messages; the ritualistic liturgy of the *cantada*, the position of the stage, the repetition of the same words and the same actions, the positioning of the performers, and so on; the union of the audience, the feeling of companionship and contact among its members, and the consciousness of being present at the exact moment of the birth of an artistic creation. When all these



Omeru Atza. Photo by Marco Lutzu.

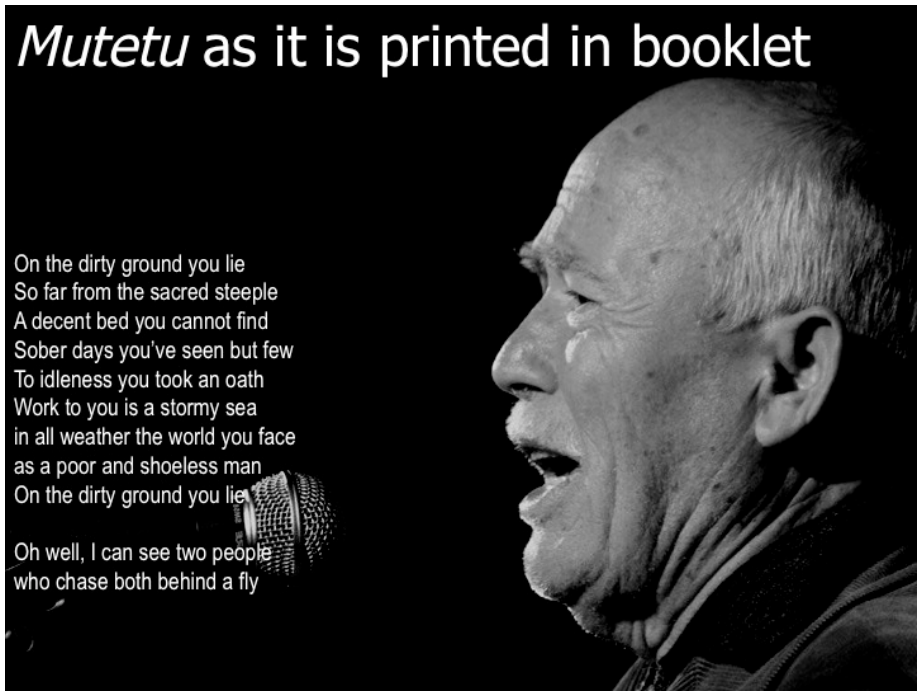
conditions are present at the same moment, listeners perceive the flowing of time pleasantly; they do not feel it as slow because rhythm and redundancy function perfectly to support the event. However, if any of these conditions is lacking, the developmental scheme becomes inadequate and the performance length has to be reduced in order to adjust to this new condition.



Omeru Atza. Photo by Marco Lutzu.

Devotees often document *cantadas* with their tape recorders. However, they do not record whole *mutetus*, but only the opening section and the first two quatrains, leaving out the other six to eight. In the audiotape—which is finally a text—music is present, but it lacks the "performative dimension" of the live event and the length of the poem is reduced to approximately one-half.

At times *cantadas*, as already discussed, are transcribed and printed in booklets. In this kind of text, in which only the printed word is present, both the musical and performing dimensions are absent. The length of the text undergoes a further reduction, with just the eight lines plus two appearing in the printed format, excluding all the redundancies.



Omeru Atza. Photo by Marco Lutzu.

The same *mutetu* in a live performance has a length of 41 lines, in a tape-recorded reproduction 17 lines, and in a printed booklet 10 lines. These three examples emphasize the role of mental disposition in the morphology of a

Campidanese improvised poetry performance. The flow of time does not have an absolute dimension, but rather varies depending on the mental attitude of the audience and consequently their relative perception of the *mutetu*. The perfect length for a tape recording is, at the same time, too short for a live performance and too long for a printed transcription.

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Presentation Formulas in South Slavic Epic Song

David F. Elmer

Ever since the pathfinding fieldwork of Milman Parry and Albert Lord, South Slavic oral epic song has supplied one of the principal *points de repère* for scholars interested in the study of oral, especially epic, traditions.[1] Parry traveled to the Balkans in the 1930s in search of a "living laboratory" in which to test his ideas about the oral and traditional nature of the Homeric *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. He found among the Slavic-speaking inhabitants of then-Yugoslavia a tradition that was remarkably similar to Homeric poetry in terms of both form and content. The Muslim communities concentrated in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Sandžak region of Serbia and Montenegro had developed a particularly rich repertoire of songs describing battles and raids along the Ottoman frontier of the recent or remote past. Parry, however, was interested less in the content of the songs than in their formal features and the techniques of their production. He embarked on an ambitious project of collecting audio recordings and written records intended to document as fully as possible these formal and technical aspects of the tradition. Lord, Parry's student and assistant in the field from 1934-35, continued this project with subsequent fieldwork in the 1950s and '60s. Their recordings and texts—which number in the thousands and are today conserved in the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature at Harvard University—allowed these two scholars to identify and describe phenomena that have been recognized as characterizing numerous oral traditions worldwide, principally the phenomenon of "composition-in-performance," by which is meant the technique of performing narrative through manipulation of traditional themes as expressed in traditional verbal formulas, without reference to a fixed text.

The phenomenon I intend to examine in this essay is likewise common to very many oral traditions, and for that reason it may at first glance appear to be unremarkable. Like performers in diverse other traditions, the singers of South Slavic epic frequently have occasion to address their audiences directly in the course of performance. It is not readily apparent whether these appeals to the listener—which are accomplished, as we shall see, by means of very short, relatively inconspicuous expressions—have any function beyond simply inviting the audience to experience a sense of participation in the performance. I will argue, however, that patterns of

[1] Parry's writings are collected in Parry 1987. Lord 2000 represents the classic description of the South Slavic epic tradition. John Miles Foley has produced a number of important comparative studies of South Slavic tradition, which are routinely cited along with the works of Parry and Lord by writers on oral tradition more generally (see espec. Foley 1990, 1991, 1999).

direct address in fact have an important discursive function, at least within the corpus of songs I have selected for examination. Appeals to the listener serve as cues that guide listeners' perceptions of narrated events and assist them in tracking points of articulation in the song.

Methods and Theory

My analysis is based on the epic idiolect of Halil Bajgorić, a Muslim from the Stolac district in Herzegovina, from whom Parry and Lord collected a number of songs.[2] Bajgorić uses a set of recurring expressions to direct his audience's attention to particular characters or events in his narrative. The most important of these is the expression *kad evo ti*, which has a number of formulaic variants. This expression translates approximately into English as "when—here you are." Its normal usage can be illustrated with the following lines from Bajgorić's song *Ženidba Bećirbega Mustajbegova* (*The Wedding of Mustajbey's Son Bećirbey*, PN 6699, ll. 181-84):[3]

sidje Djulić na avliju kletu	Djulić goes down to the accursed courtyard
pa otvori na avliji vrata	and opens the courtyard gates,
kad evo ti careve gazije	when—here you are!—the sultan's hero
na doratu konju kosatome	on his long-maned bay horse.[4]

Kad is the subordinating conjunction "when," which links the expression to its syntactic context. *Ti* is the dative of the second personal pronoun, "you," and *evo* is a proximal deictic marker, something like Italian *ecco*. It is deictic because it *points* to something available to the perception of the addressee—deixis means "pointing"—and it is proximal because it points to something that is near rather than far.[5] Both *evo* and *ti* encode in themselves a direct appeal to the addressee. *Evo ti* is an expression one would use when presenting someone with an object, for example, a book or a glass of water. For this reason, I refer to this formula as a "presentation formula." Bajgorić's epic idiolect includes variant expressions with the *distal* deictic marker *eto*, for pointing to more distant objects; these too are presentation formulas, and figure into my analysis. Finally, I will direct some comments to another expression that is *not* a presentation formula, but that makes an equally direct appeal to the listener: this is the expression *a da vidiš*, which can be

[2] For detailed information on Bajgorić, see Foley 2004:22-36.

[3] Throughout this paper I refer to texts by the number assigned to them in the archives of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature. Numbers prefixed with "PN" (for "Parry Number") indicate texts collected by Milman Parry, while those prefixed with "LN" (for "Lord Number") indicate texts collected by Albert Lord. The Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature is housed in Room C of Widener Library at Harvard University. In my transcriptions of Parry Collection texts, I avoid the use of punctuation, following the practice of Parry's assistant Nikola Vujnović. In the traditional medium of South Slavic epic, each verse normally constitutes a syntactic unit, so that punctuation becomes largely unnecessary for construing the meaning.

[4] In translating passages from PN 6699, I have made use of Foley 2004.

[5] For an introduction to the "poetics of deixis" in the context of ancient Greek epic tradition, see Bakker 2005:71-91.

roughly translated as "you should have seen" or "just look!" All of these expressions, it must be emphasized, are visual: they appeal expressly to the addressee's senses, and they place the object of reference within his or her perceptual sphere. In the context of performance, this perceptual sphere is the "mind's eye" of the listener; the formulas under consideration are the means by which the singer directs his audience's mental gaze.

I have selected for analysis seven songs that Bajgorić provided to the collecting team of Parry and Lord in June of 1935, and two songs he performed for Lord in 1950.[6] This set of nine texts provides an ideal object of analysis for two reasons. In the first place, Bajgorić's *Ženidba Bećirbega Mustajbegova* has recently been published in an excellent edition by John Miles Foley (2004), and the recording, with an electronic edition, is available on the Internet.[7] Unlike the majority of the Parry Collection's singers, therefore, Bajgorić has some broader currency. More importantly, however, Bajgorić's corpus exhibits an illuminating diversity in the manner in which songs were performed and collected. It includes texts that were sung and recorded on phonograph discs, texts that were recited (that is, performed in spoken delivery and without instrumental accompaniment) and recorded, and texts that were not recorded but rather taken down by dictation. These nine texts, which total about 5,370 verses, are the following:[8]

PN 6693. *Marko Kraljević i Nina od Koštuna* (*Marko Kraljević and Nina of Koštun*). 360 lines. Dictated, June 12, 1935.

*PN 6695a. *Marko Kraljević i Nina od Koštuna* (*Marko Kraljević and Nina of Koštun*). 464 lines. Sung, June 13, 1935.

PN 6696. *Paše udaraju na Koštun* (*The Pashas Attack Koštun*). 311 lines. Sung, June 13, 1935.

*PN 6697. *Alijaga Stočević i crni arapin* (*Aliaga of Stolac and the Black Arab*). 207 lines. Sung, June 13, 1935.

PN 6699. *Ženidba Bećirbega Mustajbegova* (*The Wedding of Mustajbey's Son Bećirbey*). 1030 lines. Sung, June 13, 1935.

PN 6702. *Boj na Osjeku* (*The Battle of Osijek*). 1072 lines. Dictated, June 13, 1935.

[6] I have excluded two additional songs from my analysis because they are either incomplete or unusable. These are PN 6695 and LN 84. The former is a *proba* or "test" for the recording of PN 6695a: Parry routinely had his singers perform the first few lines of a song in order to make sure his recording equipment was functioning properly. The recording of LN 84, a version of *Marko Kraljević i Nina od Koštuna* collected by Lord in 1950, was not of sufficient quality to allow either Lord or subsequent researchers to transcribe the text.

[7] At http://www.oraltradition.org/zbm.

[8] I have indicated with an asterisk (*) texts that are currently available online through the website of the Milman Parry Collection (http://chs.harvard.edu/mpc). For complete information on the texts Parry collected from Bajgorić, see Kay 1995.

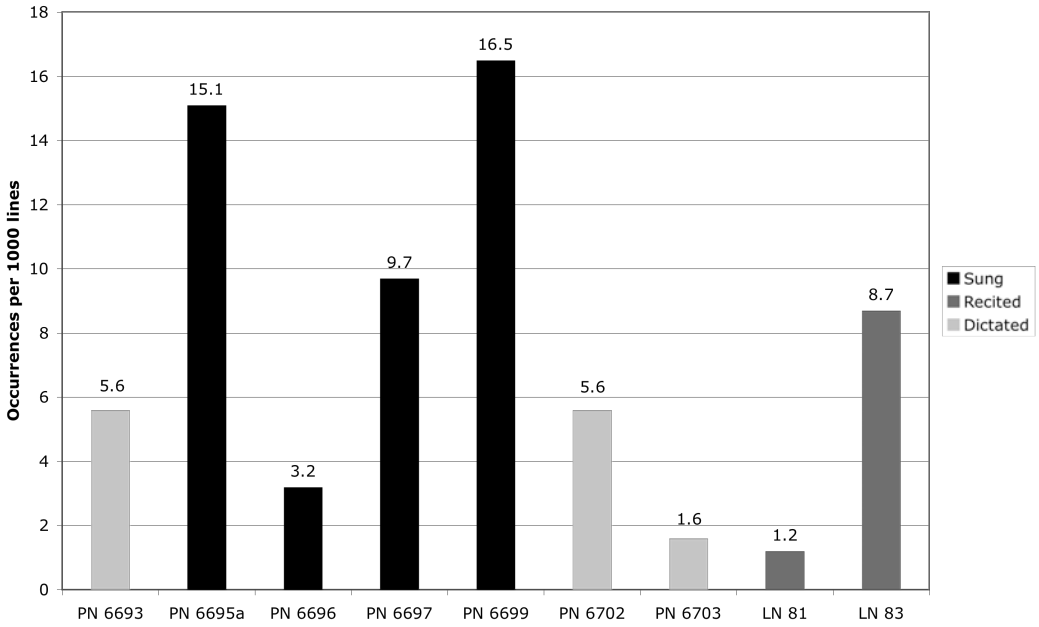
PN 6703. *Halil Hrnjica izbavlja Bojičić Aliju iz tamnice od Kotara bana* (*Halil Hrnjica Rescues Bojičić Alija from the Prison of the Ban of Kotar*). 638 lines. Dictated, June 13, 1935.

*LN 81. *Boj na Osiku* (*The Battle of Osijek*). 828 lines. Recited, June 7, 1950.

*LN 83. *Alijaga Stočević i crni arapin* (*Aliaga of Stolac and the Black Arab*). 459 lines. Recited, June 7, 1950.

The diversity of collection methods (recorded song, recorded recitation, or dictation) represented by these texts is important because we are examining a feature of Bajgorić's discourse that relates directly to the circumstances of the performance. In the earliest stages of my investigation I formulated the hypothesis that, because presentation formulas explicitly involve the audience, they would be more frequent in those texts that approximated a real performance—that is, the sung as opposed to the dictated or recited texts—because in singing Bajgorić would be more aware of the performative relationship with his audience. Subsequent analysis tended to confirm this hypothesis. Figure 1 shows the frequencies of presentation formulas in Bajgorić's texts, expressed as occurrences per 1000 lines. Although there is no hard and fast rule—PN 6696 (sung) exhibits a lower frequency than two of Bajgorić's dictated texts, while LN 83 (recited) approaches the frequencies of the sung texts—nevertheless there is an observable tendency toward higher frequencies in the sung texts.[9]

Fig. 1. Frequency of Presentation Formulas



[9] The values shown in Figure 1 reflect only those presentation formulas spoken in the voice of the narrator. I have not included presentations uttered by characters within the narrative, since these are not explicitly addressed to the audience. Nevertheless, at the end of my paper I will point out that even those presentation formulas embedded within the characters' speech can resonate with the performative context and thereby contribute to nuanced discursive and aesthetic effects.

The bias in the distribution of presentation formulas is what we should expect, if we suppose that the sung texts reflect something closer to the circumstances of a "normal" performance than the dictated or recited texts. It is not difficult to understand the reasons for this bias. Wallace Chafe has identified second-person references such as those under consideration as symptomatic of the kind of "involvement" that generally characterizes oral discourse (1982:46). This "involvement" is naturally most apparent when contrasted with the "detachment" of written discourse, but, in a separate paper, Chafe has shown that the contrast between involved and detached language can be just as useful in distinguishing different kinds of oral discourse. Relatively more involved modes of speech—those that feature a high degree of interaction between speaker and hearer—are characterized by the presence of devices for "ongoing monitoring and feedback," relatively detached modes by their absence (1981:141-42). Presentation formulas and the attention-getting *a da vidiš* serve precisely this monitoring function: they are things "the speaker may do . . . to prod the listener into noticing and acknowledging the flow of information" (1982:47). As such, they are relatively more at home in the very involved mode of communication that is sung performance.[10] Singers within this tradition are constantly monitoring the reactions of their audiences and seeking ways to capture their attention, through modulation of the sung or instrumental melody, variations in tempo, eye contact, and so forth.[11] By contrast, dictation and recitation are relatively more detached modes of performance, with dictation representing the maximal degree of detachment. Parry's method of collecting songs by dictation was to seat the singer in some quiet place with his native assistant, Nikola Vujnović. The singer would recite verses one by one, pausing to allow Vujnović to write them down. Parry's photographs show the singers rather carefully observing the movements of Vujnović's pen (see Figs. 2-4): obviously they are monitoring the production of a text, not the involvement of their interlocutors in the narrative.[12]

[10] Luka Marjanović, editor of an important collection of Bosnian epics, noticed a comparable phenomenon among his informants. When singing their songs, they would occasionally introduce a hypermetrical *ti* (dative of the second personal pronoun, essentially a highly compressed presentation) into lines that would be delivered "normally" (that is, with ten rather than eleven syllables) in recitation (Marjanović 1898:liv). For application of many of Chafe's ideas to the oral epic tradition represented by Homeric poetry, see Bakker 1997.

[11] This is a point that was brought home to me when I attended the performance of the Albanian *lahutar* Isa Elezi in Pejë (Peć) in August, 2003. (The epic songs of the Rugova mountains belong to a tradition that is cognate with the traditions of the South Slavs. *Lahuta* is the Albanian word for the *gusle*, the instrument on which the South Slavic singers accompany themselves.) Elezi made very effective use of melody, tempo, and eye contact in involving his audience in his song. The recordings in the Milman Parry Collection provide good documentation of the singers' manipulation of the musical aspects of performance. It is important to note that one often observes a modulation of melody or change in tempo at a point in the song where one might expect to find a presentation formula.

[12] For Parry's collecting methods, see Lord 1954:7-11. These pages contain excellent reflections on the "problem" posed by the absence of an audience in dictation, a problem that Parry managed to overcome by using his recording apparatus to capture a more or less normal performance (see espec. pp. 8 and 10).

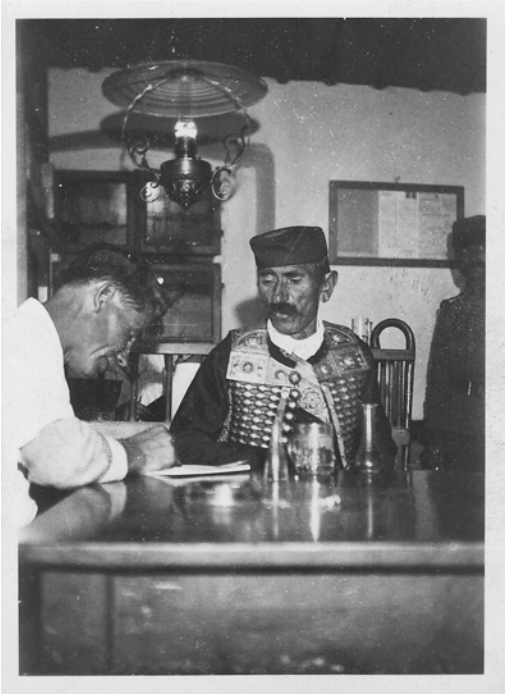


Figure 2. Mićo Savić dictating a song to Nikola Vujnović.
(Photograph courtesy of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature.)

Figure 3. Hajdar Habul dictating a song to Nikola Vujnović.
(Photograph courtesy of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature.)

Figure 4. Šćepan Prkačin dictating a song to Ilija Kutuzov.
(Photograph courtesy of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature.)

Because presentation formulas involve a deictic gesture, and therefore appeal to a particular point of view on the narrated events, they can usefully be considered in terms of a second set of theoretical concepts, in addition to Chafe's "involvement" and "detachment." In 1959, Émile Benveniste proposed a distinction between two different "plans d'énonciation," which he termed *discours* and *histoire*. *Discours* can be defined as that mode of utterance that "presupposes a speaker and an addressee, and in the former the desire to influence the latter in some manner"—there is an obvious connection here to Chafe's "involvement." In *histoire*, by contrast, the speaker disappears; events "seem to narrate themselves." That is to say, there is no discernible relation between the narrated events and any particular moment of narration, no linguistic trace of the presence of speaker or listener. *Histoire* is confined to writing, and is arguably made possible only by writing, while *discours* includes both speech and the many kinds of writing that, like speech, presuppose the interaction of a speaker and a listener, an "I" and a "you" (Benveniste 1959:70-73).

The distinction between *discours* and *histoire* is especially evident on the level of deixis. In essence, what Benveniste showed was that *discours*, linguistically anchored to the moment of utterance, proceeds from the point of view of the present shared by speaker and addressee. On the other hand, in the pure *histoire* of certain kinds of writing, the narration proceeds objectively, as it were without a narrator, and without the mediation of a point of view in the present. That is not to say, however, that such narration lacks a point of view: subsequent researchers have shown that the point of view of *histoire* is defined by the narrated events themselves (cf. Le Guern 1986, Basset 1989). That is, the notions of "here" and "now," "near" and "far," are defined by the characters and events within a narrative, not by an external narrator. Deictic cues, therefore, are oriented with respect to the moment of utterance in the case of *discours*, but with respect to some point of reference internal to the narrative in the case of *histoire*.

The consequences of Benveniste's distinction for narrative deixis have been confirmed and further developed by cognitive scientists investigating the psychological processing of narrative. Their approach, called Deictic Shift Theory, posits that, in narratives that lack an

explicit narrator, the center of the deictic field—the "origo," or point of reference with respect to which "here" and "now," "near" and "far" are defined—"is not the 'speaker' of the text but the experiencing character within the story world" (Galbraith 1995:25).[13] In other words, the deictic center, which in discourse is defined by the moment of utterance, is shifted into the world of the story in the case of written, fictional narratives.[14] Moreover, the deictic center shifts *within* the world of the story as it is progressively redefined by the unfolding events: there is not one deictic center, but as many as the writer contrives to establish.

The different deictic characteristics of performed utterances (Benveniste's *discours*) and the pure narration of (written) *histoire* are of immediate relevance to the presentation formulas we will shortly be examining. In the first place, the very appeal to the audience is enough to show that, in the case of these performed narratives, the deictic center is firmly anchored in the performance: we are dealing with a preeminent example of *discours*. Characters and events can be presented—can be made present—to the audience because "here" and "now" are features of the performance, and not of the spatial or temporal framework of the narrated events. Moreover, we will find that presentation formulas tend to occur at moments when our attention is being shifted from one character or place to another—that is, moments when, in pure *histoire*, the deictic center would shift in accordance with Deictic Shift Theory. In fact, such presentations mark an analogous shift on the level of *discours*. This is not so much a shift of the deictic center, since the center is always fixed by the moment of utterance, but a shift of the narrated world vis-à-vis that center. To use a somewhat fanciful image, it is as if the performance were a fixed lens through which the audience were invited to view a film strip depicting the events of the narrative. Presentation formulas shift that film strip, advance it, and bring a new character, place, or event into focus.[15] They reorient the participants in a performance by placing these new story elements at the center of their attention.

To broaden the use of filmic metaphors, we might describe the function of presentation formulas in terms taken from the cinema. Such formulas mark discursive shifts and articulate the movement in discourse from one point of focus to another.[16] This process of shifting and the resulting articulations can be thought of cinematographically as like the cuts of montage or as a kind of zooming in on a particular feature of a larger scene.[17]

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[13] For a complete introduction to Deictic Shift Theory, see Duchan, Bruder, and Hewitt 1995.

[14] For a comparable deictic shift in the ancient Greek historian Thucydides, see Bakker 2005:160-64.

[15] Bakker (2005:154-76) uses the proverb about Mohammed and the mountain to capture the ability of performed discourse to make narrated events present. Presentations are a matter of "the mountain coming to Mohammed."

[16] For this reason, presentation formulas and the *a da vidiš* formula can be included in the general class of "discourse markers," on which see Schiffrin 1987:31-41 and Siepmann 2005:34-45.

[17] An interesting question is whether the reverse process of "zooming out" similarly requires a conscious shift, or whether the epic idiom can accomplish this broadening of perspective simply by elaborating contiguous details. For an analysis of a scene from *Beowulf* in cinematographic terms, see Renoir 1962. I thank Anna Bonifazi for suggesting to me the cinematic metaphor.

Presentation Formulas in the Songs of Halil Bajgorić

Bajgorić's basic presentation formula *kad evo ti* is part of a formulaic system that provides the singer with a considerable degree of flexibility in the deployment of presentations. The initial *kad* ("when") can be replaced by a variety of other monosyllabic conjunctions, including *pa* ("and"), *a* ("but"), and *dok* ("until"). The proximal deictic *evo* can be substituted by the distal deictics *eto* and *eno*, which correspond roughly to English "there" (as opposed to "here"). Finally, the second-person pronoun *ti* can be replaced by the third-person pronouns *ga* ("him"), *je* ("her"), or *ih* ("them"), in which case the pronoun refers to the object being pointed to, rather than the person being addressed. (The second person is nevertheless implied in the deictics *evo*, *eto*, or *eno*, all of which signify that the speaker is drawing the addressee's attention to something.) The complete formulaic system can be schematized as follows:

kad	*evo*	*ti*
pa	*eto*	*ga*
a	*eno*	*je*
dok		*ih*

Each expression within this system conveniently fills the first colon of a traditional 10-syllable line (as does the *a da vidiš* formula discussed below). The variability built into the system allows the singer to integrate presentations into a wide variety of syntactic and contextual environments. Further flexibility is provided by a related set of expressions consisting of *evo, eto*, or *eno* followed by a disyllabic noun in the genitive case, for instance (to take an example from one of the passages discussed below) *eto bega*, "there is the bey." These too are presentation formulas, since the deictic offers the object to the mental gaze of the listener. Such flexibility is an essential part of the craft of the South Slavic *guslari.*

In Bajgorić's epic idiolect, the *kad evo ti* presentation formula and its formulaic variants serve the function, in terms of the metaphor suggested above, of a cinematographic cut. This is well illustrated by the lines cited earlier, which I now give with slightly more context (PN 6699, ll. 180-85):

skoči Djulić, izmet mu učini	Djulić jumps up, performs the service for him,	180
sidje Djulić na avliju kletu	Djulić goes down to the accursed courtyard	
pa otvori na avliji vrata	and opens the courtyard gates—	
kad evo ti careve gazije	when—here you are!—the sultan's hero	
na doratu konju kosatome	on his long-maned bay horse.	
pade momak begu u avliju	The young man arrives in the bey's courtyard.	185

In this passage, the initial focus is on Mustajbey's son Djulić as he descends from his father's tower to open the gate for Đerđelez Alija. But at line 183, Bajgorić shifts focus to Đerđelez, the hero, as he enters the courtyard. The camera has cut from one character to another. The formula

kad evo ti marks the appearance of a new figure on the scene, and directs the audience to shift focus from Djulić to Đerđelez.

We find a similar moment somewhat later in the song when Bajgorić suddenly "cuts" from Đerđelez's conversation with Mustajbey to Mustajbey's brother Mehmedaga as he arrives outside the tower (PN 6699, ll. 278-88):

tad zavika careva gazija	Then the sultan's hero begins to shout:	
ja ću, beže, u svatove poći	"I will join the wedding party, bey."	
u tom vaktu i u tom govoru	At that moment, as they are speaking—	280
kad evo ti brata Mehmedage	when—here you are!—Mustajbey's brother Mehmedaga,	
na njegovu debelu gavranu	on his stout black horse.	
pravo ide uz rosnu livadu	He goes straight up the dewy meadow,	
pravo ide pod begovu kulu	he goes straight to the bey's tower.	
u avliji konja razjašijo	He dismounted his horse in the courtyard,	285
mladji njemu konja prifatiše	a youth took his horse.	
evo momka na kulu bijelu	Here is the young man at the white tower,	
evo nosi hegbe sa mrkalja	here he carries his black mount's saddlebag	

Here the shifting function of *kad evo ti* has left its mark on the syntax, in the anacolouthon between lines 280 and 281.[18] The shift in focus involves not just a "cut" from one mental image to another, but a syntactic "cut" as well. Bajgorić uses a series of deictic markers—*evo ti* in 281 followed by the repeated *evo* in 287 and 288—to keep our attention focused on Mehmedaga until he can be introduced into the frame that is the main center of interest, the ongoing conversation about the prospective wedding of Mustajbey's son. Evidently, Bajgorić is keenly aware that he has briefly left one stage of action in order to track events unfolding on another. He uses the repeated *evo* to keep our gaze on the secondary stage until Mehmedaga can join the main group, and the two scenes coalesce into one.[19]

Line 287 exemplifies an important secondary usage of the deictic markers *evo* and *eto*. We have so far seen examples where the presentation formula "cuts" from one character to another. Variants of this formula can also serve to articulate movement through space, tracking a single character and cutting from one scene of action to another. In line 287, Mehmedaga moves only from the courtyard to the tower, but Bajgorić's songs are filled with clearer examples. Compare the following instance from his *Marko Kraljević i Nina od Koštuna* (PN 6695a, ll. 260-64):

[18] We expect a finite verb to follow l. 280, but Bajgorić has substituted the presentation formula *kad evo ti* (which is nearly equivalent to "there appeared"). The slightly jarring effect of the syntax goes hand in hand with the sudden shift to a new object of interest.

[19] Alternatively, we might say that the repeated *evo* marks Mehmedaga's gradual progress toward the main stage of action, Mustajbey's room. That is, in accordance with the technique I discuss next, Bajgorić is using deictic markers to shift focus from one place to another. It is highly unusual for *evo* to mark such fine degrees of movement. The repeated use of the deictic is indicative of Bajgorić's acute awareness of the *telos* of Mehmedaga's journey: he is trying very deliberately to connect this new character with the main thread of the narrative.

kad to začu Kraljeviću Marko	When Kraljević Marko heard this	260
i prečita knjigu od matere	and read the letter from his mother,	
pa on dobra pritište šarina	he mounted his fine piebald horse,	
pa evo ga turskome Stambolu	and here he is at Turkish Stambol,	
pa upade caru na odaju	and he arrives at the sultan's hall	

The variant formula *pa evo ga* shifts the scene of action very suddenly from the Arabian border to Istanbul, where Marko Kraljević travels to ask the sultan for a release from military service. In this case the sudden shift across great distances emphasizes the remarkable speed with which Marko completes his journey: it is important to note that, in addition to their discursive function, presentation formulas can convey meaningful information.

The cuts Bajgorić makes by means of these presentation formulas involve varying degrees of displacement, but generally speaking they are always relatively major shifts in perspective. *Evo ti* and its variants therefore indicate a certain discontinuity in the narrative. When shifts of a less radical nature are required, Bajgorić tends to use a different formula, but one that likewise appeals to the audience's perspective: this is the *a da vidiš* formula mentioned earlier. If *evo ti* corresponds to a cinematographic cut, *a da vidiš* represents a more continuous movement, something like zooming in on a particular detail or the panning of the camera from one side to another.[20] Bajgorić tends to use this formula when he wishes to switch focus from one subject to another that is in immediate contact with the first. The switch in focus is less noticeable because the narrative itself leads in that direction. Compare, for example, the following passage, also from the *Ženidba*, which describes the most involved ritual moment in the song, the moment when the wedding party actually takes possession of the bride (PN 6699, ll. 603-8)[21]:

aj! djeveri na noge skočiše	Aj! the sponsors jumped to their feet,	
ej! Zlatiju curu prifatiše	ej! they took the maiden Zlata,	
digoše je na konja bjelana	they raised her onto the white horse.	605
a da vidiš ličkog Mustajbega	But just look at Mustajbey of the Lika:	
puno hegbe prosipaše zlata	he poured out his saddlebag full of gold,	
sve daruje prijatelje svoje	he presents gifts to all his friends . . . .[22]	

Bajgorić "pans," so to speak, from the bride to the father-in-law as he performs his part of the ritual. This switch from one character to another is less abrupt than what we have seen in

[20] With reference to the singing of another of Parry's Stolac informants, Ibro Bašić, Foley describes the *a da vidiš* formula as the core of a "boundary line" that effects a transition to a new traditional unit ("multiform, motif, or element") within the song (1990:295-96; cf. Foley 1991:80, 1995:15n34, and 2004:211, 212, 214). My comments are intended to specify in greater detail the precise nature of this transition in Bajgorić's idiom.

[21] Cf. the comments of Foley (2004:212) on this passage, especially on l. 606.

[22] *Prijatelj* ("friend") refers in this context to a relationship established through the ritual of marriage. Similarly, Albanian *mik* (< Latin *amicus*) means both "friend" and "in-law."

previous cases, because at this moment in the ceremony the bride and father-in-law are a closely associated pair.

Later in the song we find the same formula being used to zoom in on an individual detail within a broader picture. Bajgorić shifts our attention from the army as a whole to one particular figure within the army, Buljubaša Mujo, as he asks the chief of the wedding party, Osmanbey, for directives (PN 6699, ll. 723-31):

kad su prvi na Mezevo bili	When the first Turkish troops arrived at Mezevo,	
polju pola vojska pritisnula	the army covered half the plain,	
redom vojska Baturića bana	the ranked army of Baturić ban.	725
namjestili od boja topove	They positioned their war cannon,	
u turbeta grla okrenuli	they turned their muzzles toward the tombstones.	
kad su Turci na Mezevo bili	When the rest of the Turks arrived at Mezevo,	
sastavili, redom iskupili	they assembled, ordered themselves in ranks—	
a da vidiš buljubaše Muje	but just look at Captain Mujo,	730
dje ovako Mujo progovara	where Mujo speaks thus	

A da vidiš in line 730 suddenly zooms in for a close-up view of what is going on in one particular part of the army (cf. Foley 2004:214). This is a logical, and so relatively continuous, movement; but it nevertheless marks an important point of articulation within the narrative, since it initiates a new sequence of action. Mujo's question prompts Osmanbey to isolate the bride from the rest of the army and establish a second, rearguard camp for her protection. This is an important point: the shifts in focus signaled by appeals to the audience often coincide with boundaries between distinct units of action.[23] In other words, Bajgorić's explicit demands for the audience's attention often mark the beginning of a new action or sequence of actions that is continuous internally but in a certain sense discontinuous from what precedes.[24]

The articulation of the epic's action, however, is not solely a matter of discontinuity. Actions and sequences of actions are the building blocks of the epics, so that the articulation of action becomes a means of flagging the formal structure of a song or its elements, that is, a way of signposting progress and thus continuity. Since any larger unit within a song tends to be

[23] Cf. above, n. 20, on Foley's term "boundary line." Generally speaking, the most formulaic expressions in the South Slavic epic idiom often serve to initiate new units of theme or action. Thus the next major unit in Bajgorić's song begins with one of the most formulaic lines in his repertoire: *[a kad] svanu i ogranu sunce* (l. 745). From the singer's perspective, it is obviously advantageous to have at one's disposal ready-made formulas to serve as the "glue" between discourse units. But any adequate understanding of the performance must also view it as a communicative act, and assess the function or effect of these lines from the *audience's* point of view. From a communicative perspective, it is tempting to think of these formulaic incipits in terms of Chafe's "light subject constraint" (1994:85-92). If formulaic expressions are "lighter" in semantic content than non-formulaic ones, such expressions can serve as useful "starting points" in the sense developed by Chafe (1994:82-92).

[24] Conversely, we can observe an avoidance of presentations and *a da vidiš* formulas in passages that strive for an impression of continuous, fluid action. This is above all true of battle narratives. The complete absence of any direct appeal to the listener in the climactic battle scene of PN 6699 is a sign that Bajgorić wants to present the action of the battle as fluidly as possible, without the jarring effect of "cuts." The first "cut" after the battle—to Bećirbey (*kad evo ti bega Bećirbega*, l. 999)—actually marks the end of the fighting.

analyzable as a sequence of smaller parts, marking the individual parts can also serve to outline the larger unit they compose. In this way, the very expressions we have thus far examined in terms of discontinuity can also be used to establish the formal unity of large segments of discourse. I will cite several examples in which Bajgorić uses presentation formulas to delimit some of the most prominent formal structures in his songs.

The catalog of heroes as they arrive at Mustajbey's tower in preparation for the expedition is, for a Homerist like myself, the most epic moment in Bajgorić's corpus (PN 6699, ll. 390-405, 448-53):[25]

stade begu sila dolaziti	The bey's forces began to arrive,	390
a evo ti paše sa Budima	and—here you are!—the pasha from Budim,	
dje on vodi pet hiljada druga	where he leads five thousand comrades,	
pet hiljada druga dovodijo	five thousand comrades he brought.	
kad evo ti silna Osmanbega	When—here you are!—powerful Osmanbey,	
i on vodi dvanaes' hiljada	and he leads twelve thousand.	395
kad evo ti Biščević Alije	When—here you are!—Biščević Alija,	
i on vodi stotinu momaka	and he leads one hundred young men.	
kad evo ti buljubaše Muje	When—here you are!—Buljubaša Mujo,	
i on vodi pe' stotin' momaka	and he leads five hundred young men.	
dok evo ti Topalova sina	Then—here you are!—Topalo's son,	400
i on vodi pet hiljada druga	and he leads five thousand comrades.	
kad se sila iskupila bila	When the forces had gathered	
pa stadoše svate razbrajati	and they began to count the wedding party,	
koliko je kićeni' svatova	how many were the fine wedding guests,	
sve je društvo, samo Tale nema	the whole company is there, only Tale is lacking	405
sve gotovo samo Tale nema	Everything is ready, only Tale is lacking.	
dok evo ti budaline Tale	Then—here you are!—the great fool Tale	
na kulašu konju kosatome	on his long-maned dun horse.	450
a uzd'o ga šarenom uzicom	He reined it in with a motley string,	
a na njemu pa ni sedla nema	and on it there wasn't even a saddle,	
vet' gunjinu samu prebačijo	but he threw on only a coarse blanket	

Each individual entry is marked by a presentation, including the emphatically postponed entry for Tale, which is incorporated into the larger structure by means of the presentation formula. By thus marking each entry, Bajgorić establishes the catalog as a unified segment of discourse with a well-articulated structure. This structure is in fact an important element of the song's architecture: it provides the framework for an earlier scene, in which Mustajbey writes to each of

[25] I am thinking of course of the great Catalog of Ships in the *Iliad,* Book 2. It is interesting to observe that the entry for Achilles' Myrmidons is displaced from Book 2 and postponed until Book 16 (ll. 168-97), in a manner perhaps comparable to the way Bajgorić postpones the entry for the hero Tale.

these heroes in the same order, and it is reproduced in an attenuated form on at least one other occasion.[26]

In Bajgorić's song *Boj na Osjeku* we find a similar structuring device, but this time making use of the presentation formula in its spatial aspect. The progress of the hero, Osmanbey, is marked by presentations as he stops at each of several locations (PN 6702, ll. 605-8, 618-19, 631-34):

pa eto ga na tabiju prvu	And there he is at the first bastion	605
đe mu taraf leže Osičana	where his division of Osijek men is stationed:	
ima njiha dvanaes hiljada	there are twelve thousand of them,	
dobri trista od rata topova	three hundred fine war cannon	
eto bega na drugu tabiju	There is the bey at the second bastion,	618
đe mu bjehu heratli spahije	where his division of *spahijas*[27] was	
pade beže na treću tabiju	The bey arrives at the third bastion	631
đe no bjehu Arnauti ljuti	where his fierce Albanians were—	
Arnauti kako vatra živa	Albanians like living fire,	
po broju i za dvanes hiljada	over twelve thousand in number	

Osmanbey's forces are divided into three distinct units. As the bey visits these units, his progress is marked by the phrases *pa eto ga* and *eto bega*; the omission of the presentation formula in the case of the third unit is part of the singer's strategy for emphasizing its special status (something like the postponement of Tale in the previous example). As in the catalog of PN 6699, the structure outlined by these presentations is formally important, because it determines the way in which the subsequent battle narrative unfolds.

Perhaps the most simple and at the same time most elegant example of the formally significant deployment of a presentation formula comes from Bajgorić's dictated version of *Marko Kraljević i Nina od Koštuna*. There is only one occurrence of the *evo ti* formula in this song (PN 6693, ll. 191-94):

sjede Marko pod žutu naranču	Marko sat beneath the yellow-green orange tree,
sjede Marko i opočinuo	Marko sat and rested.
kad evo ti careva telala	When—here you are!—the imperial messenger,
traži telal Kraljevića Marka	the messenger seeks out Kraljević Marko.

The presentation formula marks the arrival of a very minor character—an imperial messenger—but this is an event of considerable formal importance. This messenger, who summons Marko back to his home in Prilep, which has been ransacked by Nina of Koštun, is the exact counterpart

[26] Sequence of letters: ll. 306 ff. Cf. also the sequence of heroes who pass the disguised Baturić ban at ll. 625 ff.

[27] A *spahija* or spahi was a member of an elite Ottoman cavalry corps.

of the initial messenger who had summoned Marko to the Arabian frontier, and thereby exposed Marko's home to danger. These two messengers not only articulate the action of the story; they also demarcate its two thematic poles of foreign and domestic. It may seem incongruous that our attention is so forcefully drawn to a minor character who immediately disappears from the narrative—that is, until we realize that this is the very moment when the structure of the song emerges clearly into view. The presentation formula marks the appearance of this structure as much as anything else.

Beyond Idiolect

I hope to have demonstrated that, in the epic idiolect of Halil Bajgorić, direct appeals to the listener serve a number of important discursive functions. They provide a signal to the audience that the singer is switching to a new point of focus, and so assist listeners in tracking the unfolding action. When used to delimit actions that belong to a larger series, they also help to establish the outlines of this larger discursive unit. My last example will show that these techniques are in fact not confined to the idiolect of this one particular singer. Moreover, and more importantly, it will show that the poetics of deixis—which is in essence the manipulation of distance in space and time from the performance—is not restricted to the narrator's voice, but can also involve the internal, quoted speech of the characters. Both voices can combine to produce sophisticated aesthetic effects.

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Andro Murat, a young seminarian from the island of Šipan (near Dubrovnik), collected from his mother Kate the song of "Ivo Senjanin's Misfortune," *Huda sreća Iva Senjanina* (printed as no. 10 in Perić-Polonijo 1996:116-19). After an initial dialogue between Ivo and a girl of Senj, Murat's epic-flavored ballad relates the defeat of Ivo's army—and the death of his son Tadija—in a series of three messenger speeches. The arrival of each messenger is marked by the same presentation formula with which we are now very familiar. I reproduce here a generous portion of the text, as printed in Perić-Polonijo's edition (ll. 47-84, 98-116):

Još su oni u riječi tako,	They are still speaking thus	
kad evo ti Đure Senjanine.	when—here you are!—Đuro Senjanin.	
Jedva igra pod sobom dorina	Scarcely does his bay horse pace beneath him,	
niz konja je glavu prevjesio	he has hung his head along the horse's back,	50
vas u crnoj krvi ogreznuo.	he has been entirely drenched in dark blood.	
Govori mu Senjanine Ivo:	Ivo Senjanin speaks to him:	
"O moj pobre Senjanine Đuro,	"O my brother-in-God Đuro Senjanin,	
to ko te je tako izranio?	who has wounded you so?	
Nijednoga dobra ne vidio.	May he not see a single good.	55
Đe je, Đuro, silna vojska moja	Where, Đuro, is my powerful army	
i Tadija, drago d'jete moje?"	and Tadija, my dear child?"	
Njemu Đuro jedva progovara:	Đuro scarcely answers him:	
"Prođi me se, pobratime Ivo.	"Leave me be, brother-in-God Ivo.	

A moj pobre, kazat' ti ne mogu.	Ah my brother-in-God, I cannot tell you.	60
Na meni je trides' ljut'jeh rana	I bear thirty fierce wounds,	
na konju mi trides' i četiri.	my horse bears thirty-four.	
Pobro dragi, n'jesu rane male	Dear brother in God, these aren't small wounds,	
neg' je svaka od pedi junaške.	but each one is a heroic foot in length.	
Za mnom ide Senjanine Vide	Vido Senjanin is coming behind me,	65
on će tebi kazati pravednu;	he will tell you rightly;	
mene pusti, dragi pobratime,	let me go, dear brother-in-God,	
pusti mene b'jelu dvoru momu.	let me go to my white manor.	
Da bi meni Bog i sreća dala	May God and fortune grant	
da živ Đure b'jelu dvoru dođem	that I, Đuro, may come to my white manor alive,	70
da bi moje ja puštio duše	that I may give up my spirit	
na kriocu drage ljubi moje."	in the arms of my dear love."	
S tez'jem Đure prođe naprijeda	With difficulty Đuro passes on,	
kad evo ti Senjanina Vida.	when—here you are!—Vido Senjanin.	
Nosi jadan Senjanine Vide	He is carrying, wretched Vido Senjanin,	75
nosi jadan desnu u lijevoj	he is carrying, wretched one, his right arm in his left,	
pod njim doro na tri noge skače.	his bay horse hops on three legs beneath him.	
Govori mu Senjanine Ivo:	Ivo Senjanin speaks to him:	
"Pobratime Senjanine Vido,	"Brother-in-God Vido Senjanin,	
to ko te je tako izranio?	who has wounded you so?	80
Nijednoga dobra ne vidio.	May he not see a single good.	
Đe je, Vide, silna vojska moja	Where, Vido, is my powerful army	
i Tadija, drago d'jete moje?"	and Tadija, my dear child?"	
Njemu Vide jedva progovara	Vido scarcely answers him	
S tez'jem Vido pođe naprijeda	With difficulty Vido passes on,	
kad evo ti Mata Senjanina	when—here you are!—Mato Senjanin,	
dobro igra pod sobom dorina,	his bay horse prances well beneath him,	100
n'jesu Mata rane dopadnule.	no wounds have fallen upon Mato.	
Govori mu Senjanine Ivo:	Ivo Senjanin speaks to him:	
"Dobro doš'o, Senjanine Mato.	"Welcome, Mato Senjanin!	
Đe je, Mato, silna vojska moja	Where, Mato, is my powerful army	
i Tadija, drago d'jete moje?"	and Tadija, my dear child?"	105
Govori mu Senjanine Mato:	Mato Senjanin answers him:	
"Pobre dragi, od Senja Ivane,	"Dear brother-in-God, Ivan of Senj,	
rad' bi tebi bolje kazat' glase	gladly would I tell you better news,	
ma ne mogu neg' kako je pravo	but I cannot but speak the truth;	
a ti primi ove za najbolje.	take it as best you can.	110
Sva je tvoja vojska izginula	Your army has perished entirely,	
i Tadija, drago d'jete tvoje:	and Tadija, your dear child:	
eno ti ga u gori zelenoj	there you are!—on the green mountain	
mrtav Tade drumu pokraj puta.	is Tadija, dead beside the highway.	

Na njemu je vrane i gavrane	On him are crows and ravens,	115
piju crne oči Tadijine.	they are drinking Tadija's dark eyes.	

As in the case of Bajgorić's songs, the presentation formula serves a dual purpose: it "cuts" cinematographically from one subject of focus to another, and it articulates the song according to its three primary structural components, the three messenger speeches. The repeated presentations also place at the center of the audience's attention the pathos-filled spectacle of the wounded, dying soldier.

The emotional power of the final revelation of Tadija's fate depends on the interaction of the last messenger's words with the pattern of presentation established by the narrator's voice. At line 113 the last messenger "points" to Tadija's corpse using a variant of the presentation formula that employs not just the distal deictic marker *eto*, but *eno*, which refers to something that is actually absent, inaccessible to the participants in the moment of utterance. The pathos of these words lies in the distance that separates Ivo from his son, who is now lost to him forever. And we, too, as members of the audience, can feel the depth of that pathos by virtue of the deictic field established by the narrator's presentations. By means of the repeated *evo ti*, the narrator has repeatedly brought before our eyes the survivors of the battle. But now the survivors of the battle can only gesture toward Tadija as someone unpresentable, permanently lost even to the characters within the narrative, let alone to the audience as spectators of that narrative. Moreover, we must always keep in mind that, in performance, the words of the characters are pronounced by the voice of the performer, and so in a sense speak as much to us, as audience members, as to their intended addressees within the song. Thus, when the performer quotes the words of the messenger, we cannot help but feel the distance encoded by *eno* just as much as Ivo. If Tadija is now unbearably distant from Ivo, he is equally distant from us and the time and place of performance. The artful evocation of this distance makes our sense of Ivo's loss all the more vivid and immediate.[28]

Harvard University

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The Art of Dueling with Words: Toward a New Understanding of Verbal Duels across the World

Valentina Pagliai

A common view of verbal duels posits that they are a cathartic expression of aggression. This is partially due to the fact that—although a body of cross-disciplinary studies on verbal duels demonstrates their complexity as forms of expression—works intended to summarize and disseminate them have tended to rely on a minor number of sources, many of them studies on the African-American "dozens," and to adopt a restrictive definition of verbal duels as exchanges of insults.[1] For example, in his definition of "poetic contests" for *The New Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Earl Miner writes: "Indeed the poetic contest itself is not a genre at all but rather the verbal expression of a general mode of human interaction—the aggressive and agonistic—whose roots extend deep into biology and psychology" (1993:925). Marco Jacquemet, in a review of verbal conflicts for the *Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*, defines verbal duels as "the competitive exchange of usually obscene insults and invectives between at least two parties" (2005:4923).

The view of verbal duels as a cathartic expression of violence where the negative impulses of society or its members get released, and conflict gets resolved, developed in an ethnological milieu dominated by functionalistic and structural-functionalistic theories around the middle of the twentieth century. The scholar most closely associated with the concept of social catharsis is probably Max Gluckman (1954; 1963), who defines it as "the purging of emotion through 'pity, fear and inspiration'" (1963:126). Gluckman saw verbal duels as particular cases of *rituals of rebellion*, which had the function of venting aggressiveness against power in a way that reinforced the status quo.[2] As summarized by Andrew Apter (1983:525), "rituals of rebellion are, for Gluckman, an 'acting of conflict' in a sacred context which allows 'unbridled excess.' In these ritual acts, the implicit tensions surrounding the kingship—the threat of rival heirs or a disaffected public—are made explicit. [This] serves as a collective psychological release, what Van den Berghe (1963:414) glosses as the 'blowing-off-steam' hypothesis."

As a cathartic expression of aggressiveness, verbal duels have been interpreted as an

[1] This problem is compounded by the limited availability of many original works on verbal duels, which are hard to locate, out of print, or even unpublished.

[2] With particular reference to the African context.

alternative to the rule of law in societies that were perceived as "lacking" a Western-style law system (cf. Bohannan 1967). As such, they have been associated with the "primitive," with the "old-ways" of the "ethnics" and "folk," or with undesirable social groups, such as racial minorities, seen as living on the boundary of society itself and its rule of law. For example, E. Adamson Hoebel saw Eskimo song duels as juridical instruments used to settle disputes not according to justice but merely by making the contestant "feel relieved" (1941:682, emphases mine):

> In these ways, Eskimo society, without government, courts, constables, or written law, maintains its social *equilibrium*, *channeling* human behavior according to its own accepted standards, buttressing the *control dikes* along the channels with primitive legal *mechanisms*, or their equivalents.

Here civilized justice is substituted for by a sort of homeostatic mechanism that insures release of tension, a release valve for conflict—namely, verbal duels. Thus verbal duels are explained as having a normalizing social function, as the negative but temporary eruption of conflict and chaos into an otherwise orderly social organization.[3]

In other studies, functionalist arguments reduced verbal dueling to fulfilling only one role in society. At times these theories have a racializing character. Roger Abrahams, for example, writes about the "dozens" as "an early example of the infantile fixation illustrated by the use of agonistic rhymed verbal forms, a neurotic symptom which is observable in many Negro males through much of their lives" (1962:209). Other scholars, focusing on verbal duels entailing exchanges of insults among young males, instead interpreted their function as expressions of male sexuality (cf. Dundes et al. 1970).

These studies continue to be cited today, in disciplines as distant as law (for example, Nader 1965) and in sociobiological accounts of youth criminality in Detroit as the "young male syndrome" (Wilson and Daly 1985). They can be found in encyclopedias and books on child psychology, as well as anthropology textbooks. Margo Wilson and Martin Daly (69), for instance, link confrontational disputes among young American men to homicide and then cite, as evidence from other cultures, Penelope Eckert and Russell Newmark's work on Eskimo verbal duels (1980). Hoebel's theorization of law-ways in primitive societies (1967) has been cited so many times that it has become the prototypical example for verbal duels.

This history of research may have had the important secondary effect of creating a sort of distorting lens that led other scholars looking at verbal duels to adopt a stereotypical image of what duels should look like—something close to the image of the Eskimo song duels, or to the "dozens," for example—and thus to record exactly those aspects of them that would fit such an image. This is clearly the case, for example, in David Schwebel's study of verbal duels among U.S. teens, where the author defines verbal dueling as "the artful exchange of spoken teases and insults between two or more participants, usually performed in informal circumstances" (1997:326). He then restricts his data-gathering to include only exchanges of insults (329).

[3] See also Lefever (1981:80), who considered such duels (in particular "playing the dozens") a social control mechanism.

In sum, while a large and complex literature on verbal duels exists, a bias persists (especially among the wider academic public) that identifies verbal duels with insults and aggressiveness, notwithstanding the fact that scholars have often found verbal duels to have very different forms and social uses. For example, Karel Van Der Toorn (1991), looking at ancient Near Eastern poetic duels, explains them as vehicles for critical reflection on social and political changes and underlines their political importance. Correspondingly, John Zemke (2005) demonstrates a link between the Basque *bertsolaritza* and the expression of cultural identity, pointing out that the improvised poetry in song duels is akin to "a prophetic mode of speech" and comparing the artists to seers who perform cultural tradition itself for their audiences (84).

In this article, I will argue for abandoning definitions and will suggest the following. First, it is crucial to consider the enormous variety of forms of verbal duels across the world, many of which may not deploy insults or at least may not do so most of the time, and are not performed by young people or by males. Second, it is important for future inquiry to carefully distinguish insults from what I will call "outrageous speech" such as "dirty words" and profanity. Third, we need to rethink the link between insults and aggressiveness. Insults are not necessarily threatening, and cannot always be interpreted as aggressive or violent behavior, or even as "causing offense" to the other party. Finally, it is important to avoid conflating verbal duels with ritual insults, since these are substantially different, albeit overlapping, genres. I will try to tackle each of these issues in order. In conclusion, I will ask the question of why, despite so much evidence to the contrary, a reductionist and overgeneralizing perception of verbal duels as the catharsis of aggression among young men persists. The answer, I will suggest, may be connected to a tendency to dismiss and gloss over argumentative genres of language.

As a start, I would like to propose a relatively open and inclusive definition of verbal duels as *a genre of argumentative language that entails exchanges between two persons, parties, or characters that challenge each other to a performative display of verbal skillfulness in front of an audience*. The dialogic form is fundamental to all verbal duels. Differing from other genres, dialogue in verbal duels is always argumentative.[4] Some kind of opposition of different views is necessary. Yet this is true of any form of debate and argumentative language. In addition, in verbal dueling there is stress on the performance, the display, and the search for a public witnessing. At the same time, in verbal duels there is also a heightening of the poetic dimension of language.

I base my attempt at definition on a reading of the available literature, as well as on more than a decade of work on a genre of sung, improvised verbal duel, the *contrasto* of Tuscany and central Italy, performed by artists called *poeti bernescanti*, or simply poets.

The first thing to know about the *contrasto*, the poets say, is that it takes two: that is, two singers, two voices, and two minds. A harmony between them must be developed as they attack each other. The poets admit that sometimes a single person can try doing stanzas alone. In this circumstance one has all the time necessary to think through his or her stanza, choose the rhymes with which to end it, rethink and change it many times, and polish the finished product. The poet

[4] Even in those rare but possible cases in which a verbal duel is created by one author, two characters will be represented.

Realdo Tonti once told me that he liked to sing when he worked. He would think of poets he had met and imagine duels he could conduct with them. "Then maybe they would say to me something like this, then I could answer this way," he explained. This practice kept him company during the long hours he spent working at the factory. The poet Altamante Logli remembered singing alone in the fields as a child. It made him feel less lonely. But other times he adamantly insisted that each duel must include two performing voices. On your own you are free to put it as you like, the poets say, but it is not the same thing. I found the same need for the expression of two sides in all of the verbal duels I reviewed. Beyond that core similarity, verbal duels demonstrate an astonishing heterogeneity of forms around the globe.

The Variety of Forms[5]

Verbal duels can be highly structured or more free-flowing; some traditions use rhymes, while others prefer alternate forms of parallelism. They can be performed primarily by men or women or both; they can be done by children or by elderly persons. They can be insulting or praising; they can be improvised or memorized, or even written down; sung or spoken.

The *contrasto*, for example, uses a highly complex fixed structure that has remained virtually unchanged for centuries. The poets duel by exchanging octets, stanzas of eight verses in hendecasyllables, in rhyme (following the scheme ABABABCC), on a theme usually proposed by the audience. The octets are "chained," in that each poet's first verse must use the same rhyme as the previous poet's last verse. This strategy assures that the octets will be improvised and cannot be previously prepared. In terms of performance, however, the *contrasto* is relatively simply managed: the poets stand near each other, dressed as on any other day, and exchange turns.

By comparison, a form of verbal duel known as the *haló* of the Anlo-Ewe of Ghana presupposes a complex performance apparatus, including preparations and events that can last for years. Daniel Avorgbedor writes that the *haló* can be summed up as a multimedia event, "a sociomusical drama that involves songs of insult, dance, drumming, mime, poetry, spoken forms, costume, and a variety of visual icons" (1994:84; see also Avorgbedor 1999; 2001a and b). The *haló* duels can take place between villages or within factions inside the village, and the participants include large groups of people. The performances are carefully prepared and rehearsed in secrecy (1994:92-93):

> Before a new song is performed publicly in the normal musical situation, a special session known as *havɔlu* is held in secret. In this session allusions, metaphorical references, and facets of personal biography and history not commonly available, which are contained in the song texts, are

[5] While the present article covers examples of verbal duels from various parts of the world, it does not attempt a survey of current studies on verbal duels. Instead, I present only a very limited number of examples, chosen mainly to cover various geographical and cultural areas and to demonstrate the variety of forms. In addition, I have given priority to studies of contemporary performed genres, and thus have not included many excellent studies of verbal duels in the classic written tradition. For a sense of the scope of those studies, see Bossy 1987, Brogan 1993, Miner 1993, Parks 1986, Reinink and Vanstiphout 1991, and Waugh 1995.

> explained to members of the performing group.

Later, during the actual performance, singers may interrupt their singing to give an exegesis and a commentary on the texts sung, "including explanation of allusions and metaphorical constructions" (93-94). Dancing and music accompanies the singing, and specially prepared carvings called *dufozi* are displayed, or mime is used to underline particular verbal attacks. The music includes talking drums that can encode and repeat part of the song texts so that "the rhythmic or musical content of these verbal forms is also usually supported by the accompanying drum ensemble" (104).

In contrast, some forms of verbal duels are relatively spontaneous. Such are the white "dozens" studied by Simon Bronner (1978) and Millicent Ayoub and Stephen Barnett (1965), or the verbal duels among U.S. college students researched by Schwebel (1997). The white "dozens," writes Bronner, are called by various names by the performers, commonly *ranking* but also *mocks*, *cutting*, and *scamps*, and they take place in moments of relaxation, while "hanging out" with friends or at work (120). They happen with practically no previous set-up or preparation and, as Bronner describes it, "the performance usually involved two players facing each other while an audience ranging from one to ten individuals laughed and shouted encouragement" (121). Similarly, in the verbal duel exchanges among French Algerian teenagers in France, as studied by Chantal Tetreault (2009), the duel can emerge and develop at any moment as the participants interact.

These forms of verbal duels, like the *contrasto*, are improvised. As noted by Bruno Nettl (1974), any performance is in part improvised and some element of improvisation is always present in verbal duels. However, verbal duels differ in the extent to which the performance is prepared and rehearsed. The *haló*, for example, is carefully prepared in advance. Similarly, memorized texts are involved in verbal duels in Fiji, among people of Indian origin, as reported by Don Brenneis and Ram Padarath (1975). As they explain, Fiji Indian "song challenges" include both improvised and memorized songs as well as songs learned from written texts (285-86):

> Two distinct types of songs with different performance styles are sung. *Bhajan*, "religious songs," taken from books written and published in India, are used in weekly worship services as well as in competitions.… *Gayan*, "songs," are usually local products; some are composed on the spot, some are sung from memory, and some are sung from handwritten collections made by villagers.

In Somalia, poets who desire to respond to another poet may compose a poem.[6] Customarily, that poem will mention the target poet's name and will be closely related intertextually. Once composed, such poems are recited to an audience that memorizes them, or recorded on tapes, and repeated again and again, including today by radio. In this way the poems spread quickly from one context to another, and from one audience to another, until they

[6] There are several poetic genres in Somalia, each of them used for different purposes. They can be improvised or composed in advance, and can be performed in various contexts. For more on Somali genres, see Samatar 1979; Andrzejewski and Lewis 1964; and Luling 1996.

eventually reach the ear of the poet for whom they were originally destined. In this case it is the audience that has the important role of performing the poem for the poet who is supposed to receive it.

Forms of verbal duels also differ according to the amount of innovation involved, and in the use of a rhapsodic style in which the artists weave together pre-existing formulas, expressions, proverbs, and so forth in new and creative ways. The *balah* of Yemen, for example, is improvised, but the singers employ many pre-existing formulas. As Steven Caton explains (1990:285-86):

> The *Balah* is constructed out of relatively fixed linguistic expressions known as formulas. The formula is used as a building block to construct a regular meter in a rapid-fire performance.… The poet's challenge is to finish the hemistich by linking the fixed formulas and epithets available to poets as a system.… Selection from the system of formulas is only half the problem, for the poet has to know how to combine them into the syntagmatic or sequential unit of the hemistich so it will scan according to the desired meter.

Caton, however, notices that the Yemenite poets also insert original verses (96ff.).

In other forms of verbal duels, innovation is stressed and predominates. According to Tanure Ojaide, among the Urhobo of Nigeria the *udje* contests, while not improvised, require songmakers to create original compositions (2001:50-51):

> If by chance, according to Ogbariemu who attended many of such workshops in his practicing days, there was a word or phrase that appeared in another song elsewhere, it was removed. There was to be no copying of words, and the song had to be a purely original composition. Usually at night they went into the bush by the palm oil press and sang out the songs before their wives married from other towns. The women identified songs that had language close to theirs and such songs were re-phrased. This rigor made *udje* songs highly crafted original poems that bore the stamp of the poet or his quarter.

However, in the case of the *udje*, repetition of song segments is commonly managed in performance both by the main singer and by a chorus (66). In the *contrasto*, on the other hand, formulas can be used, but repetition is kept to a minimum. *Contrasto* poets can never re-use the same words to rhyme during a performance.

Stanzas in verbal duels can have one part that is improvised and another that is repeated or formulaic. This kind of pattern is found, for example, in the Bolivian *coplas de todos santos*. In the *coplas* the stanza has four verses, and each verse is composed of a six-syllable improvised section plus a five-syllable formulaic refrain, thus forming a hendecasyllable. Here is an example quoted from Thomas Solomon (1994:394):

(11) Isabel:

Charangueroytawan, ay palomita	With my charango player, ah little dove
Phifianachiwanki, por vos vidita	You made me get mad, for you, little dear

Guitarreroytawan, ay palomita	With my guitar player, ah little dove
Reparachiwanki, por vos vidita	You made gossip at my expense, for you, little dear

In regard to music and singing, many forms of verbal dueling are sung, but not all. In Guyana, both the insults in *busin* and the friendly bantering in *tantalisin* are spoken performances only (Edwards 1979). Among the various verbal dueling styles in the Afro-Caribbean tradition, the "dozens" studied by William Labov (1972) are also spoken with no music. Yet in rappers' sessions (belonging to the same cultural-historical matrix as the "dozens") there is both singing and music.[7]

Tuscan *contrasto* poets sing, yet there are no musical instruments accompanying them. In many other cases instrumental accompaniment is present and fundamental to a successful performance. In the Kazak *aitys*, as described by Eva-Marie Dubuisson (2009), the performers sit and play the *dombyra, "*a two-stringed wooden instrument":

> One of the first things I learned about *aitys* was that poets accompany their song with music from the *dombyra* because oral poetry is inherently imperfect. Unlike written poetry, say poets, where the author has plenty of time to think carefully and choose precisely the right words and phrasing, oral poetry is composed on the fly and is therefore inherently imperfect; the music of the *dombyra* makes the song whole.

In the case of the Anlo-Ewe *haló*, as discussed earlier, talking drums can be used to exchange messages. In many forms of verbal duels, the text of the song tends to be favored, even when music is present. In the *contrasto*, the music tends to be relatively repetitive, and its chant-like quality allows the singers to bend it to the necessities of versification. However, this is not a universal rule.[8] In the *didong* verbal duels among the Gayo of highland Sumatra, there has been an increasing tendency in recent years to include music in the performances. In this regard John Bowen noticed (1989:31) that

> as the content of the song came to take precedence over the contextualized event, performers began to record their works on cassettes and market them in Takengen. In the 1970s the leading *didong* groups added guitars and Indian *dangdut* melodies on these recordings (which were never used for live performances, however). As tapes and tape players became more widely available, Gayo living elsewhere in the highlands began to adopt the new form as more "modern" and prestigious. Even in Terangon, in southern Gayoland, where only individual poetic duels are performed, Takengen songs are now inserted into the performance.

[7] Other genres that include singing and music are the Argentinean-Chilean *payada* (Rubman 1967; Dannemann 2000), the Maltese *spirtu pront* (McLeod and Herndon 1975), and the Lebanese *zajal* (Haydar 1989), among others.

[8] While not properly a verbal duel, it is interesting to mention that musical duels, called *muqabala* and accompanied by improvised music, are present in India (MacIszewski 2001) and in the Indian diaspora.

In the *didong*, and in many other cases, a chorus is present. This is true in the Sardinian *gara poetica* (Mathias 1976), the Yemenite *balah* (Caton 1990), and the *haló,* among others.

From the preceding discussion it appears that verbal duels cannot be restricted to a particular structure. Nor are they always staged performances, although, as with any other genre of speech, they are undoubtedly appropriate to certain contexts and not to others. The beauty, creativity, and complexity of the genres also show that there is a great deal more to them than a simple exchange of insults. They more appropriately belong to the realm of the poetic, art forms, aesthetic systems, and the expression of human creativity.

In terms of who can, must, or must not duel, there is similar variety. The *contrasto*, for example, can be performed at any age, although many poets are older. It can be done by men and women, although the majority of the poets today are males. Although rare, female poets in Tuscany are well respected and encouraged to perform. Other genres, such as the *coplas*, are performed by men or women at any age, against practically any adversary (Solomon 1994:383). Tetreault (2009) reports young French-Algerian women and men exchanging duels, but no older adults or elders. Alan Dundes, Jerry Leach and Bora Özkök (1970) reported verbal duels in Turkey as performed only by young males. However, Mark Glazer (1976) noticed that women will at least occasionally engage in these duels as well.[9] Similarly, while the African-American "dozens" or "sounding" have usually been associated with young males (among others, Abrahams 1962; Labov 1972; Lefever 1981), John Dollard noted that "dozens" were done by women as well (1939:4).

The Sardinian *gara poetica* is performed only by adult males (Mathias 1976).[10] In Sardinia, male shepherds spend months at a time isolated from their villages as they lead the herds to pasture. In these periods, verbal duels are a common pastime among men. By contrast, the *busin* style of verbal duels in Guyana, which entail the exchange of vicious insults, is used mostly by women. In fact, *busin*, far from being associated with masculinity, is directly associated with femininity, as Edwards reports (1979:25):

> Because men do not buse each other in Guyana, one frequently finds cases where women buse against men, secure in the knowledge that men are prevented by the social rules from responding in kind. If a man in such a situation attempts to buse, he opens himself to the insult of being labeled an *antiman* (i.e., a homosexual). The situation is sometimes resolved by a female relation of the man *taking up* for him and busing against his tormentor.… Note, however, that extrovert Guyanese male homosexuals who wish to publicize their "gayness" often buse each other or buse against women, much to the amusement of audiences.

During the *fiesta de wayllunk'a* in Bolivia, only women are supposed to sing *coplas* (Solomon 1994:388):[11]

[9] It must be noted that the data used by Dundes et al. (1970) were based on self-report by the co-author Özkök, himself male, who might not have known of similar forms among women and older adults.

[10] I have independent confirmation of this practice from my own fieldwork in Italy.

> For these fiestas giant swings are specially constructed, hanging from high sturdy tree limbs or from a framework of poles planted in the ground. The men pull on ropes attached to the seats of the swings to make the women swing. The women are supposed to sing *coplas* while swinging, and the men encourage them to sing by swinging them fast and high. The *coplas* sung by the women may be directed at the men swinging them or at other people present at the fiesta.

I must note that in some genres male poets can impersonate female characters or vice versa. This is true in the *contrasto,* where characters are assigned by the audience. Sara Davis (1999) reports women impersonating males in courtship verbal duels among the Tai minority in Yunnan, China. In the *contrasto* there is often a multiplication of images of both femininity and masculinity, rather than a simple upholding of a dominant or hegemonic one, so that the genre problematizes gender itself (see further Pagliai and Bocast 2005).

Since verbal duels cannot be considered only a (young) male activity, interpretation of verbal duels as connected to masculinity cannot be generalized. The same is true of psychoanalytic explanations that connect verbal duels to the Oedipal complex (such as Abrahams 1962:214). The problem may be compounded when such explanations are based on relatively scarce data. Solomon, discussing the interpretation of Turkish verbal duels given by Dundes et al. (1970), notes that "the authors' psychologistic explanation of Turkish male sexuality" is based on "generalized examples, not taken from actual performed duels observed during fieldwork" (1994:378).

The list of variations I have so far given does not exhaust the subject, but provides some sense of the difficulty of a definition. This diversity also shows how problematic it is to understand verbal duels as a simple display of aggressiveness or exchange of insults. However, in many cases verbal duels do appear to deploy insults. The place of insults in such forms thus needs to be addressed, and the best way to start is by first asking what exactly is an insult.

The Problem with Insults

Insults, as we know from Judith Irvine's beautifully argued analysis (1992), can be practically anything that participants decide they are. Irvine refutes previous attempts at categorizing insults, including, most famously, Edmund Leach's model of verbal abuse. According to Leach (1964:28) there are three categories of verbal abuses: "(1) 'dirty words,' usually referring to sex and excretion; (2) blasphemy and profanity; (3) animal abuse—in which a human being is equated with an animal of another species."

Contra Leach, Irvine notices that "verbal abuse involves evaluative statements grounded in specific cultural systems. Even with a detailed familiarity with cultural context, there can still be no hard-and-fast semantic criterion distinguishing statements that are abusive from statements that are not" (1992:109). Instead, she continues, we need to know the specific context and the identities of the participants; it is only contextually that we can hope to decide which insults are

[11] See further Olmos Agreda 1966:125-27; Paredes Candia 1976, i:220-21.

more or less insulting. Irvine concludes that no expression, action, or even lack of action could be considered as insulting per se (110):

> Insults are not simply a set of statements, or a type of content inherent in statements. Instead, insult is a communicative effect constructed in interaction—constructed out of the interplay of linguistic and social features, where the propositional content of an utterance is only one such feature. In fact, the content could even look like a compliment.

In verbal dueling many insulting behaviors and words may not be immediately apparent as such. Not showing up for a performance, for example, is a serious insult that one *contrasto* poet can perpetuate on another, an insult by absence.

Outrageous Speech

Leach's distinction is, however, worthy of further consideration, not as a categorization of insults but as pointing toward what I will call "outrageous speech," including obscenities, vulgarities, blasphemy, dirty words, and so on. As far as I know, every society has a category of outrageous words and expressions that, even when not used as insults, raise people's eyebrows, so to speak. However, what actually falls into this category still depends on context. Their level of outrageousness is also contextual, and may be connected, for example, to the age, gender, or status of the speakers. A word like "mouse," neutral in English, can be used in Tuscan Italian (in the female form only, *topa*) as a dirty word to indicate the female genitalia. Yet the same word (in the male form only, *topo*), when uttered among lovers of either sex, is a term of endearment. Similarly, the word "bitch" in English—insulting in some contexts—may simply refer to a female dog in others.

Outrageous speech, words that cannot be used lightly, are more powerful than others in modifying the mood or key of the interaction. These words are often connected with liminal states, with the carnivalesque, with strong emotions and their threatened release, with the breakdown of everyday rules of appropriate behavior and hierarchies of power, with the upsetting and upending of social distinction, with rebellion and iconoclastic behavior, with the "lower" impulses, with what Barbara Babcock (1978) calls "the world upside down." They are also associated with irony, in itself connected to the unexpected, to the growth of chaotic elements, to the inversion of perceived social truths and realities. They often index the power of the speaker to go against society and its morals, or they may be used exactly to claim such power.

Outrageous speech may or may not be used in conjunction with insults, or as insults. Obscenities, per se, are no insult. In fact, people often seem to derive pleasure from using or hearing them. The capacity of outrageous words to suspend social distinctions makes them into a powerful means of social bonding; they can foreground friendship. In some contexts, they are able to "lighten" an otherwise awkward atmosphere, just as in others they can create awkwardness. Outrageous speech can also be used for other reasons, for stress and emphasis, for example, or as an expletive or response cry. In verbal duels, it can be employed for self-aggrandizement. In the following excerpt from a duel between two rappers in Los Angeles,

Flawliss and Lyraflip (Alim et al. 2009*)*, the former boasts:

186	F:	[Imma chew the top off
187		and imma letchyu flow
188		nigga, my dick longer than the damn election ^***pole***
189	L:	^((lip synch's F's rhymes))

We must be aware not only of what counts as outrageous speech, then, but also of what ends and outcomes it achieves in the emergent, contextualized interaction. When used in conjunction with insults (or to insult), outrageous speech may increase, amplify, or decrease the effect.[12] Such speech may point to a dangerous internal state of rage of the speaker, to his or her willingness to break boundaries. But it can also play up irony, make the insult hyperbolic, and thus negate rage. More generally, outrageous speech may point to a condition of powerful agency and unbound liminality of the speakers. It always attracts the attention of the audience and, undoubtedly, the attention of scholars as well. Yet, taken alone, instances of outrageous speech are far from constituting the whole picture of what there is to know about verbal duels.

The Target of Insults

Contrary to obscenities, which do not need a target (although they have audiences and recipients), insults do require a target (although the person does not need to be present or hear the insult or even be aware of it). A few more words must therefore be spent on targets. We owe to Erving Goffman (1974) the distinction between various speaking personae in the *participant framework* of interactions. Using a theater metaphor, he distinguished the addressor as *principal, author,* and *animator* of the speech. One speaker or different speakers may embody the three roles. When the three roles are distributed among separate speakers, the responsibility for what is said or performed, including insults, is also distributed among them (cf. Irvine 1992; Yankah 1995:9; Goffman 1974:540). Similarly, the addressees can include primary recipients of the speech (to whom the utterance is told), targets (to whom the utterance is addressed), and bystanders (either overhearers or eavesdroppers). As Stephen C. Levinson (1983:68) notes, "the speaker or spokesman can be distinct from the source of an utterance, the recipient distinct from target, and hearers or bystanders distinct from addressees or targets."

One of the best examples of this distinction can be found in Kwesi Yankah's analysis of the Akan *okyeame* of Ghana (1995). Among the Akan the chief will never address an audience directly, but will always talk through his orator, the *okyeame*, a mediator who "transmits the message in embellished form, either through artistic elaboration or paraphrasing" (13). People addressing the chief, in turn, will not do so directly, but rather speak to the *okyeame*, who then relays their words to the chief. It is important to know that in these situations the chief is present, thus probably hearing and being heard. However, what the chief says is not considered as having been said—that is, it does not take effect—until the *okyeame* repeats it.

Similarly, the target of an insult may not be the same person to whom the insult is told.

[12] However, insults, as Irvine appropriately noticed (1992), do not require outrageous words to be insulting.

This is particularly important in understanding interaction in verbal duels, where these speaking roles are often distinguished. In the *contrasto*, for example, the recipient of a poet's speech, the other poet, embodies at least three *personae*: the poet as person,[13] the poet as artist, and the poet as character (namely, the personage being represented). When an insult is hurled, the target can be any of these three personae. However, it is only when the insult targets the poet as person or the poet as artist that recipient and target are one and the same. If the target of the insult is the character, the target and the recipient are no longer the same. In this case, the actual target is whoever or whatever is being represented. For example, in a duel where the theme contrasts known Italian politicians, such as "Prodi vs. Berlusconi," the targets of the insults are the politicians, who thus get publicly insulted in front of an audience. In an extreme case, the distinction between poet and character enables a poet to indirectly insult the character he or she is impersonating through the use of double voice.

Decades ago Thomas Kochman noted that there is a distinction to be made between "personal insults and insults taken personally" (1975; quoted in Edwards 1979:22). A person can realize that he or she has been insulted and still not take "offense" over it. Conversely, a person can take offense at a speaker's words that s/he has overheard, without the speaker even knowing about the existence of the offended person. Yet in this latter case one can hardly argue that the speaker intended to be aggressive or to insult. It is necessary, then, to ask when and for whom an insult becomes insulting or causes offense.[14] The simple use of insults in a verbal duel, or in an interaction in general, does not allow us to know whether the insult is meant to hurt or is said in jest. The distinction most often is ambiguous and subject to interpretation by its target. Furthermore, in verbal duels, the audience is fundamental in deciding what is or is not an insult, whether the target should be considered as having been offended or not, and the appropriate reaction to the offense. Considering that audiences do not necessarily have homogenous knowledge of the context and participants, and may have differing opinions of what is going on, in the end this uncertainty constitutes a further level of ambiguity around insult. At the same time, there may be particular expectations in regard to the appropriate reaction to an insult, and the target may or may not react according to these expectations. Again, the ends of an insult and its outcomes are contextual.

Variety of insults, praises, outrageous speech, and reactions to them

Having made some finer distinctions in regard to insults, I can now move to examine their use in verbal duels. The first thing to be noted is that while many verbal duels do involve the exchange of insults (contextually understood), others do not. Many verbal duels, conversely, involve the exchange of praise. Similarly, obscenities, however they are defined in specific contexts, are used in some verbal duels, but not in others. Even when insults are included, this does not mean that the performers are actually targeting or insulting each other. Finally, when

[13] Including the poets' physical appearance, behavior, sexuality, social identities, and family ties.

[14] Considering also that the consequences of an insult are not necessarily negative for the offended person, since social ostracism may affect the offended or the insulting person equally (see also Haviland 2009 for a discussion of the consequences of a verbal fight).

they are employed, insults may still be perceived as "not meant to cause offense," and thus the expected reaction to them also varies.

In the *contrasto*, insults may be exchanged in some cases, praises in other cases (they may occur at the same time, in fact), and in yet other cases the poets debate by articulating different opinions without insults or praises. For example, in a *contrasto* between "The Present Times and the Past Times" ("il mondo vecchio e il mondo nuovo") sung by the poet Lio Bianchi with the poet Gianni Ciolli, no insults were exchanged.[15] As we see below, in this case Bianchi, an older man, was singing about the past times, and Ciolli, a young novice poet, the present times:

Gianni Ciolli / Present	
La chioccia a lungo sai lo cova l'ovo	The brooding hen, you know, long broods the egg
e po' alla fine l'alleva il pulcino	And then at the end she raises the chick
e come lui incerto un po' mi muovo	And like him, a bit uncertain, I move
a imparare a fa' i'ppoeta contadino	To learn to be a peasant poet
lo vedo sai mi chiedi i'mmondo novo	I see indeed, you ask me about the new world
certo trasmuta tutto ogni poinino	Of course everything transmutes so often
ma io son di questa generazione	But I belong to this generation
un po' ci trovo anche soddisfazione	I find in this also a bit of satisfaction
Lio Bianchi / Past	
Io quando nacqui per combinazione	When I was born, by chance,
lassù nel territorio Massetano	Up there in the Massetano territory[16]
e c'era una piccola stazione	There was a little train station
e di un trenino che vi andava piano	And a little train that would go through slowly
ora è cambiata la situazione	Now the situation has changed
e vedi in cielo c'è l'areoplano	You see, in the sky there is the airplane
e in terra su le strade e c'è i motori	And down on earth on the roads are the cars
quanto gli da importanza a que valori	How much importance do you give to those values?
Gianni Ciolli / Present	
Vedi questa l'è l'era degli esploratori	You see, this is the age of explorers
l'uomo sulla luna già c'è andato	Man has gone already on the moon
e quando io nacqui aveo degli umori	And when I was born I had some inkling
di un mondo sai informatizzato	Of a world, you know, informatized
in televisione vedi i giocatori	On television you see the [soccer] players
chiunque ragazzo vent'anni gli ha studiato	Anybody young has already studied twenty years
tra i'ccomputer e l'autovettura	Between the computer and the car

[15] This *contrasto* was sung at the annual gathering of the *poeti bernescanti* in Ribolla (province of Grosseto) in April 1998.

[16] In the province of Massa and Carrara.

di molto gli è cambiato la cultura.	So much culture has changed
Lio Bianchi / Past	
E un sai te quanto è bella la natura	You do not know how beautiful nature is
ci son le foglie ci son le erbe e i fiori	There are the leaves, the grasses and flowers
ma quando che indossava la armatura	But when would don his armor
il cavaliere un c'era i gioatori	The knight, there was no [soccer] player
or ci son cose fuori di misura	Now there are things out of measure
che le più volte recano i dolori	That most times bring sorrows
vi raccomando si col cuore in mano	I recommend to you, yes, with heart in my hand
su certe cose ndateci più piano.	On certain things, slow down
Gianni Ciolli / Present	
Io sono proveniente da Calenzano	I come from Calenzano[17]
laggiù sai nella piana Fiorentina	Down there on the Florentine plains
e quell'è un territorio molto strano	And that is a very strange place
vicino c'è Careggi e Medicina	Nearby there are Careggi and Medicina[18]
nel tempo andato sai nin questo piano	In past times, you know, in these plains
mangiava poco la famiglia contadina	The peasant family would eat little
oggi che la scienza è progredita	Now that science has progressed
di molto si è allungata la nostra vita.	Our lives have become much longer
Lio Bianchi / Past	
La nostra distruzione un è finita	Our destruction is not finished yet
io mi ricordo quando ero bambino	I remember when I was a child
e l'aria mi sembrava più pulita	And the air would seem cleaner to me
e più sano era il pane e il vino	And healthier was the bread and the wine
ora l'è roba si vi è più sciapita	Now there is stuff, yes, more tasteless
tanto a Firenze come sia a Piombino	As much in Florence as it is in Piombino[19]
e ce la fanno si tanta reclame	They make for us so much advertisement
ma è tutta roba nello scatolame.	But it is all stuff in boxes.

Here the poets, while bringing up opposite arguments that undermine each other's points, do not deploy insults, relying instead on their eloquence, cleverness, and beautiful imagery. The exchange between them, appropriate to the theme and the performers themselves, evokes the relationship between the elder poet and a disciple. Notice, for example, the initial metaphor through which Ciolli compares himself to a chick, and by association the elder poet to a

[17] A town in the province of Prato.

[18] Locations near Florence.

[19] A town in Southern Tuscany. The verse means: both in northern Tuscany, where Ciolli grew up, and in southern Tuscany, where Bianchi lives.

protective hen. The metaphor is then extended into the debate as the young poet acknowledges that in the present things may be changing too quickly, but at the same time, as a young person, he appreciates this quick change. The elder poet's voice, by contrast, is the voice of nostalgia and also of experience that cautions the young one "to go slowly" and to think twice, as what seems to be good and new may bring destruction as well: the new life is the end of the old, the opposite sides of the passing of time. The poetry is about particular persons, and concurrently about universal human conditions.

As they argue, poets can use a vast range of rhetorical techniques and strategies to make their points. Describing the Lebanese *zajal* argumentative style, Adnan Haydar writes (1989:208):

> In addition to the main argument, duelers adopt other strategies. A favorite approach is to say that the opponent's argument is old and that the intelligent audience will not buy it. Here the appeal to the audience's wisdom earns the dueler psychological support. Another approach is to put words into the opponent's mouth and then attack these words. Still another strategy would be for one of the duelers to charge his opponent with evading the whole issue, or to berate him for having totally missed the point. Finally, one of the poets may repeat his adversary's weak argument in order to expose and explode it.

I found all of these techniques used in the *contrasto* as well. Insults in the *contrasto* tend to become more frequent when the audience is cold and does not offer a theme—the poets then refer to the insults as "warming up" the audience—or when the theme represents a quarrel, such as "husband vs. wife." Any topic, however, can be discussed with the use of insults (and often is), while any topic could also be engaged without them. Insults seem to be connected to a particular way of building humor and effect, a goal that is relatively easy to accomplish and that has appeal at the same time. In the end, the performers insult each other for the sake of the audience, just as they sing for the audience. It is the success of the performance that matters.

Insults are common in many forms of verbal duels, and seem to dominate the performances in some genres, such as the "dozens," the *busin* in Guyana, the New Guinean *kroses* (Kulick 1993), and Eskimo song duels. Below is an example from this last tradition (Hoebel 1941:679):

> Now shall I split off words
> Little, sharp words
> Like the wooden splinters which I hack off with my ax.
> A song from ancient times
> A breath of the ancestors
> A song of longing
> For my wife.
> An impudent, black skinned oaf has stolen her
> Has tried to belittle her.
> A miserable wretch who loves human flesh
> A cannibal from famine days.

Reciprocal praising in verbal duels is also common. A *contrasto*, for example, may be completely based on reciprocal praising between the poets, or the poets may compete in offering praises to the audience. In this case the element of challenge is still present and it is articulated in the competition to build beautiful octets and to elevate the other poet or the audience. Poets may also produce verses that lower themselves in order to enhance the greatness of their interlocutors. In the Yemenite *balah*, generally sung at weddings among the male participants in the wedding party, there are praises to the Lord Allah, to the groom and hosts, and to various guests (Caton 1990). In the U.S., rappers will often insult each other, but they will also at times praise allied rappers.

In Palestinian improvised debates, performed at traditional weddings, circumcisions, baptisms, and feasts, praises are common. Palestinian improvised poetry takes several forms and meters. In the following *qarr ādi* poetic debate (Sbait 1993:112), the poets Jihad Sbait and Hanna Sbait praise each other while debating the theme of "The Olive Tree in the Land of My Country":

iii. Jihād:

An olive tree in the land of my country
Is a cure for my heart.
My grandfather planted it,
And I am proud of it.

Refrain by the audience:

The olive tree in the land of my
country, the clouds are hung over it.

iv. Hanna continues:

You [Jihad] have a sense of honor in your poetry,
You sound happy with your poems.
The light shines from the [oil of] the olive tree,
So we have to be proud of it.

In the *desafio* verbal duels among Canadians of Azorean origin, we find a range "from the exposition of a topic or story, to the logical debate of a question or series of questions, to the joking exchange of personal criticisms" (Avery 1984:3). In the following *quartera* from one of these verbal duels, the poet himself fluently articulates the balance between insults and praises (319):

Sung by poet Bravo to Poet Charrua

Trago-te n'alma e coração,	I bring you in my heart and soul,

Tal é a minha grande fé!	Such is my great faith!
Tal é a minha grande fé!	Such is my great faith!
Se te deito co' uma mão,	If I lay you low with one hand,
Co'â outra ponho-te em pé.	I also lift you up with my other.

The power that destroys is also the power that creates. Praise and abuse are in the end two sides of the same coin, since to praise one side is to debase the other. This double identity is well described by Charles Keil in his analysis of Tiv songs (1979:99):

> In effect praising *and* blaming, "crying" (*vaan*) about sufferings *and* "begging" (*zamber*) for help are four quadrants of the same cycle.… Praise for one elder implies a low opinion of his nearest rivals, asking for help implies suffering caused by someone, and "crying" poverty (*ican*) implies blame.

Where insults are used, outrageous speech is often present as well, but not necessarily so. In the *contrasto*, for example, obscenities are rare and expressed in metaphorical, indirect form. The poet Altamante Logli described this preference with a metaphor: "the use of insults should not rise above the low roofs." By "low roofs," he explained, he meant the many children, who were present at all performances. The insult must be covered enough by metaphors and ambiguity that the simpler minds of children would not understand it, nor would they learn foul language inappropriate to their age. The innuendo created by the metaphor increases the irony of the insult, and the insult expressed so indirectly is more—not less—funny or cutting.[20] In the following octet by the poet Gabriele Ara, impersonating the character of "the lover" in a *contrasto* among "The Lover, the Husband, and the Wife,"[21] an "illicit" sexual act is described:

Gabriele Ara (Lover)

Ebbene glielo detti i' guiderdone	Thus I gave her the reward
Come il cannolo cià in cima la panna	Like a *cannolo*, it has whipped cream on top
E i fatti vi dimostrano ragione	And the facts demonstrate the reason
Che gliene detti più di una spanna	That I gave her more than a *spanna*[22]
La sta—l'era abituata a i' penzolone	She was—she was used to the big pendulum
Ma conosciuto gli parea di ave' la manna	But she thought she had discovered the manna
Che a te a parlarti di donne	That talking to you about women
Gli è come dare i' cconcio alle colonne.	It's like giving manure to columns.

The lover insults the husband by accusing him of impotence and telling him how he can

[20] I heard obscenities used in very few cases, most frequently by beginning poets. The younger poets, the others would say, think it is fine to just throw in obscene words, but they should refine their vocabulary instead.

[21] A rare *contrasto* with three poets singing, all males, including the one impersonating the wife.

[22] An ancient form of measurement that refers to the measure from the tip of the thumb to the tip of the smaller finger with the hand held wide open.

sexually satisfy his wife. Although the references are all quite explicit, there is no direct mention of the sexual act or body parts. Instead, the graphic effect is built up completely through metaphors and allusions. In the fifth verse, for example, Ara creates a new word by taking the verb *penzolare* (to hang down), transforming it into a noun, *penzolo* (something that hangs down, like a pendulum), then adding to it the accrescitive suffix *–one*, thus creating *penzolone* (something big that hangs down) and a rhyme with *guiderdone*. The context clarifies that the *penzolone*, to which the wife was used (and resigned), is the penis of the husband incapable of erection. This sequence explains why she is so happy to have met the lover, as if she had received the food of the gods. The poet concludes with a common metaphorical formula: giving manure to columns is useless, since columns cannot grow. This formula can be interpreted as an accusation of impotence and possibly homosexuality. I must note that both poets were laughing as Ara sang this octet, showing that no actual offense was taken.

Finally, we could ask when insults in verbal duels are supposed to offend, and when they are taken personally. Matters here are even fuzzier, since everything depends on the way people interpret what is said and its possible intentions. In many if not most forms of verbal duels, however, the participants agree that insults are to be taken in jest. Such is the case of the "dozens," the *desafio*, the Puerto Rican *relajo* (Lauria 1964), and some forms of Eskimo verbal duels (Hoebel 1941:681), among others. This is not a general rule, however, since in some other forms insults are supposed to offend and hurt. Such is the case in the *haló*, *busin,* and *kroses,* as well as in verbal duels among the Sori of New Guinea (Chodkiewicz 1982), among others. There may be finer lines that are not supposed to be crossed. Labov, for example, argues that in the "dozens" insults should be hyperbolic in order not to offend. In the Fiji-Indian verbal duels, Brenneis and Padarath (1975) note that opposed sides perform in separate places, at a physical distance, to avoid the possibility of matters getting out of hand.

Francis M. Deng observes that even if insults are present in Dinka song duels, the songs are "generally taken as funny and not particularly insulting to the competitor" (1973:94) because they were composed before the competition, when the identity of the actual competitor was still unknown. In other words, they cannot be considered to be *ad hominem*. Suggestively, this dynamic may be at play in the "dozens" as well, and in other genres that use formulaic insults. What makes the insults less insulting, then, would be not only the hyperbole but also the general knowledge that the insults are part of a memorized repertoire and not composed to insult the particular opponent. This is something to keep in mind: who is the target of the performance and who was the target of the original composition? The new target is superimposed on the old, and in a way the insult loses some its sting. This lessening of force may be even more the case with formulaic insults.

In the Tuscan *contrasto*, insults to the poet as person or as character will not offend; however, insults to the other poet as poet are considered offensive, and can bring the performance to a halt and create hostility between poets. As such, they are usually avoided in a duel.[23] However, in other cases, such as the *balah* and the *desafio* (Avery 1984), insults to the other poet's ability and art are acceptable and considered extremely humorous.

[23] Even in this case, however, everything depends on the context and the participants. Poets who are good friends can insult each other as poets and still have their words perceived as a tease, not as an aggressive offense.

In most forms of verbal duels, the insulted party is supposed to laugh at the insults or remain unfazed by them, regardless of the possibility that they may be taken personally. In Turkish verbal duels, for example, when the poet (called an *ashik*) is insulted, he is supposed to remain calm. As Yildiray Erdener explains, "a talented ashik uses his imagination to come up with a witty insult. As one of the ashiks put it, 'A competent ashik should respond with a novel insult and should not get angry at all. Only incompetent ones get angry'" (1987:144).

In this case, then, an angry poet would literally be seen as the cause of the offense, not the victim of it. Note also that in this case the poet loses face not for being insulted but because of his reaction to the insult. There are exceptions to this practice as well, however. In the *haló* the offended party is expected to answer—even with physical violence (Avorgbedor 1994). Overall, it depends again on the context and the participants involved.

Ritual Insults

A problem with defining verbal duels as "exchanges of insults" is that it leads one to confuse or conflate duels with ritual insults. This conflation may in turn have been furthered by the relative attention given to one form of verbal duel over all others: the African American "dozens." In this genre there is indeed exchange of insults, and these exchanges are ritualized. William Labov (1972:*passim*) in fact calls them "ritual insults" rather than verbal duels. Such categorization may have been a factor leading scholars to see all verbal duels as ritualized exchanges in general, and from there to understand them as "staged conflict," or "not real conflict," even when the duelists themselves stress improvisation and the conflictual element is quite strong.

However, they are simply not the same thing. Ritual insults are, as the name itself indicates, ritualized forms of insults. As such, the principal/author/animator of the insult may not be seen as personally responsible for the insult itself, since it is part of a ritual. Or the insult may be understood as not even having a principal and author, except in tradition itself. Nor do ritual insults have to be argumentative or part of an exchange. To clarify the distinction, I will present three examples of ritual insults performed without dialogue.

The *xaxaar* is a genre sung in celebration of marriages among the Wolof of Senegal (Irvine 1992). The performance is carried on by a female *griot* and sponsored by the co-wives of the new bride. During the *xaxaar*, the *griot* sings the worst possible insults to the bride, including allegations of misbehavior not only by the bride herself, but especially by her near and even distant kin. All of the village's women may be invited to witness a *xaxaar*, and to participate in it as a chorus. Thus the publicly sung insults can raise gossip that can be damaging to the bride's family. Throughout the performance, however, the bride is supposed to sit still and listen without replying or showing anger, lest she confirm people's suspicions that the insults may be true. No reprisal is allowed against the insulting *griot* singers; the insults are to be treated as no insult at all. As Irvine explains, "What would really insult [the bride] is if this were not done, since it would imply that she had absolutely no importance" (116). Thus the insults go in one direction only, without any possibility for exchange. Since they are spoken as part of a traditional ritual, the personal agency of a principal or author to insult is obviated.

In the Swazi *ncwala* ritual, songs including insults are sung against the Swazi king in his

presence. Andrew Apter calls this a "ritual of dispraise" (1983). As part of the speech-act, songs of praise and dispraise alternate. In the meantime, the king is ritually killed through the sacrifice of a bull, while he remains inside a sacred enclosure. Eventually he will emerge from it purified (and symbolically reborn) the next day.

A last example comes from Italy. In Napoli, on precise dates three times a year the blood of Saint Gennaro (the protector of the city), which is preserved in two cruets in dried form, liquefies. The miracle is witnessed every time by thousands of the faithful, including church and city officials. It is considered to bode a good future for the city. But if the blood fails to liquefy, people interpret the event as a warning of hard times to come. A group of faithful older women, called *parenti del santo* (relatives of the saint), stands at the front inside the church and intones ancient prayers during the ceremony, asking Saint Gennaro for the miracle. If the result they seek is not immediately forthcoming, these women may start ritually insulting the saint, in some cases also falling into trances (see also Niola 2003:131; Malafronte and Maturo 2008). Of course, these women are not faulted for such a performance, not even by the saint.

A verbal duel thus may deploy ritualized forms of insults, but not necessarily. Moreover, many insults used in verbal duels are not ritualized. Such duels are no more similar to ritual insults than, for example, to the ritual dialogues studied by Greg Urban in indigenous South America (1986; see also Fock 1963), where insults are excluded and the accent is on cooperation, social solidarity, and the construction of harmonious relationships.

Conclusions

In summary, performers in verbal duels will draw on a wide range of rhetorical and non-verbal means to sustain their position, and they may (but do not always) resort to insults. They perform according to what they perceive the audience wants to hear, including at times insults. This kind of dynamic is well described in the words of Vasco Aguiar, a *desafio* singer interviewed by Avery (1984:247).

> You see it depends on the audience that is listening to the *cantigas*, because . . . just as there are differences in *cantigas*, so also are there differences in the way one appreciates the *cantigas ao desafio*. There are those who like funny *cantigas*. There are others who like *cantigas* about a topic which they know, and to hear it in rhyme. . . . And then there are others who like the secular. It depends on the audience that is listening. Over there may be one or two or ten or twenty who don't like that theme: "I would like it more if it were something which had a meaning, which developed a topic." There is another who says: "Ah, I would like it more if it were humorous!" And when it falls to the contrary you have your so-called "poor *cantoria*."

Only such an ability to adapt to the audience's tastes assures a successful performance, applause, or other forms of approval. It is by pleasing the audience that the duelers obtain their authority or renown. In many cases, it is the voice of the audience that their voice carries. The construction of the performance between poets and audience is therefore the key.

Understanding each form of verbal duel requires a careful attention to its context, the

meaning it has for the participants themselves, and the history and social matrix of the societies where it is performed. Even inside a single genre, situations, different participants, and different audiences can lead to very different outcomes for the verbal duels. At times there may be anger and previous conflict, at other times not. It is well to consider their variety, and the need to understand them as part of the linguistic and cultural system where they belong.[24]

Interpretations based on a particular form and context can be valid for that particular case, but they should not be hastily generalized to all forms of verbal duels. To see all verbal duels as egalitarian law systems for conflict resolution (Hoebel 1967) is problematic, since they are present in non-egalitarian societies. Explanations connected to growing and becoming an adult (Dundes et al. 1970) cannot explain verbal duels conducted by elderly people. One argument at times used to demonstrate that verbal duels have a cathartic function is that this conflict is "staged" rather than real. In part this belief is due to the conflation between verbal duels and ritual insults that I already examined, and does not always hold true. On the other hand, stressing the aggressiveness of insults misses the distinction, for example, between the recipient and target of attacks in verbal duels.

The question remains of why insults, aggressiveness, violence, and catharsis attracted the attention of scholars in the first place. I believe that this inclination stems, in part, from the concept of (civilized) society as rule-governed. As Don Kulick (1993) noticed in his analysis of *kroses*, studies of conflict language are still rare and insufficient. He surmised that perhaps the reason for this situation is that "anthropologists—despite over a decade of postmodernist rhetoric and elegant lip service to multiplicities, difference, and cacophonies—still remain more comfortable with order than with disorder, and are happier concentrating on those social processes that seem to promote order (e.g. conflict settlement or talk about conflicts) than they are seriously engaging with the chaos and disorder of abuse" (511). Nor was Kulick the first to complain about the lack of pertinent studies. Marjorie H. Goodwin had previously wondered if there was an avoidance of studying conflict determined by a bias against conflict in White American middle classes (1990:141). And more than a decade earlier Jean-Luc Chodkiewicz, reporting a genre of verbal duel among the Sori of New Guinea (1982), had noticed the lack of recognition of the widespread presence of verbal duels across the world and their scarce analysis. I believe Kulick and Goodwin are correct in pointing to a predisposition in the social sciences toward conceiving of society as rule-bound, and of relegating chaos and disorder to a position or status external to it, as a "problem" to be quickly resolved. For these reasons verbal duels have often been disregarded and, when studied, have been seen as aggression and explained away as catharsis, or as providing an eventual normalizing social function.

As argumentative language, verbal duels always present a conflict of some kind: between two personae, two factions, two characters, two points of view, and so on. The conflict can originate in the social relationship between the performers (as in the *kroses*) or in the larger society (as in the case of *contrasto* poets debating the point of view of two political parties); in such cases the performers become the spokespersons for a conflict that does not originate in their personal relationship. But verbal duels do not necessarily work toward resolving conflict. On the contrary, they may raise and exacerbate it (such is the case of the *haló*; Avorgbedor 2001a). As

[24] Cf. Gary Gossen's analysis of Chamula duels as "recent words" (1971).

forms of argumentative language, and independently from the use of insults, they create, mirror, and sustain conflict; in many cases they increase it, dwell on it, and bring it to the fore (see also Pagliai 2009).

Finally, one should not forget that the artists are unique individuals who produce unique art. To understand verbal duels, we need to listen to them. What emotions are expressed when they sing? Why do they choose a verse? Why does the audience applaud a particular rhyme? What makes them angry? For the *contrasto* poets, a primary goal is to entertain their audience, since successful performances, and also renown for the artists, accrue from it. Of equal importance for such duelers is expressing themselves both as artists, by producing beautiful poetry and unique verses, and as political agents, by proposing often scathing critiques of the Italian state and its institutions. To achieve each and all of these goals, the *contrasto* poets have to collaborate with each other in performance. "It takes two to do poetry," they often repeat—two minds, two voices. But their collaboration is built on disagreement and argument, and heightens sociopolitical conflicts. By understanding the milieu and the uniqueness of verbal duels, as well as the aesthetic and performative sense of their creators and their audiences, a door can be opened toward a rich and complex universe of verbal art that has been insufficiently explored and understood.[25]

Remarque Institute
New York University

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Dialogues in Rhyme: The Performative Contexts of Cretan *Mantinádes*

Venla Sykäri

In Crete, a tradition of rhyming couplets, the *mantinádes*, is still widely used to shape one's thought into a sharper, more expressive form. These short, communicative poems contain two rhyming fifteen-syllable lines and a full, independent meaning. Even today, new poems are constantly composed and new and old poems are sung and recited in a wide range of performance contexts. Until the 1980s, this poetic model was extensively used in feasts and other singing events, as well as in the casual verbal discourses of the oral village communities. During the last thirty years, the society and the ways of communication have undergone major changes in Crete. Although oral composition and performances continue to take place, it is more likely that an outsider encounters these couplets today as songs performed by professional musicians, in written form, or in daily TV and radio shows. However, one of the chief means of understanding the way local people mentally contextualize even these modern performances is to return to the oral arenas. Some of these still exist as current practices, whereas some are present mentally since they have been lived through by all adult generations. The main aim in this article is to explore the basis for the local experience of meaning and creativity associated with the poetic language of *mantinádes* with regard to the appearance of the poems in the different kinds of performances.

Similar local models of short, contextually extemporized poems have been common in most societies, but just how they function as communication and self-expression is less comprehensively known and researched. Today, most of these traditional, short poetic languages have already disappeared; *mantinádes* in Crete still provide a good opportunity to observe how a communicative, versatile oral poetic language works. Even if many collective forms of oral communication are already remote to contemporary citizens, many individuals continue this verbal tradition. Moreover, the disciplines focusing on verbal arts provide today a good ground for understanding communicative performances. Methodologically, the research of two anthropologists, Michael Herzfeld (1981; 1985a:141-49; 1985b) and Charles Briggs (1988), has been especially influential on short, conversational forms. They both emphasized that the *local focus* in the use of these verbal forms is on situational meaning and communicative creativity. The objective of my research is to show how, in addition to being a vehicle for communicative creativity, the poetic model is also a remarkable vehicle for self-expression and artistic creativity in the composition of poems. This side of the poetic tradition serves as a bridge when entering modern society.

My acquaintance with the Cretan tradition dates from a period of studies as an exchange-student at the University of Crete in Réthymno in 1997. Since then I have returned many times and spent several years conducting fieldwork.[1] This paper, and the forthcoming dissertation, is largely based on participative, dialogic, long-term fieldwork and focuses on the local experience among the contemporary poem-culture, with a perspective on the past as far as still recollected by the local oral history. My main experience is from central Crete, the Departments of Réthymno and Iráklio, but I have conducted several field trips and interviews in the eastern and western parts of the island as well. From 2001, while conducting fieldwork, I have lived in a small village in the Milopótamos valley, in the Department of Réthymno. I will refer to this locale here as the "Village."

A view of the Milopótamos valley and the Psilorítis mountain range. Photo by the author.

[1] I first studied in Réthymno from February to June 1997. I returned there to study and to conduct fieldwork for the whole academic year 1999-2000 and part of 2000-01, when my stay was supported by a grant from the Greek state. I completed my Master's thesis on the theme in February 2003. The ongoing long-term doctoral research began in 2004 and has been made possible by a three-year grant (2004-2006), and a six-month grant (2007) from the Finland's Cultural Foundation as well as a grant from the Finnish Literary Society in 2007. I spent eight months continuously in Crete in 2004, and thereafter have returned at regular intervals for stays from two to six weeks up to this date. During the spring of 2001, when we first rented a house and integrated ourselves into the life of a small village in the Milopótamos valley in Central Crete, and in 2004, my Greek partner, Giánnis Hatziharalámpous, participated as a co-fieldworker in most field trips and experiences.

Earlier research already attests to the creativity and multipurpose uses that are characteristic of the register: the versatile format and improvisation typical of *mantinádes* were structurally studied as early as in the 1930s by the Swiss ethnomusicologist, Samuel Baud-Bovy (1936). During the 1970s and 1980s, American anthropologists and folklorists conducted field research widely in the Mediterranean area, and Anna Caraveli (1982, 1985) and Michael Herzfeld (1981, 1985b; also 1985a:141-49) contributed important studies on the dynamics and meaning of the social poetic communication with *mantinádes* in Crete, Rhodes, and Karpathos. Another contributor to this field is Pavlos Kavouras, who wrote his dissertation on the "poetics of exile," the social discourse through poem performances (1991).

Among the other cultures nearby, many parallel traditions are encountered: for example, Steven Caton (1990) has shown in detail how conversational forms of oral poetry are composed and used in the situations of contest and conflict, and Lila Abu-Lughod (1986) has introduced the meaning of short emotional verses sung and recited by Bedouin women and young men.[2]

A closer look at the Cretan tradition of singing, reciting, and composing *mantinádes* challenges one to focus on the *individual experience of creativity* in the use of the traditional poetic language. By this phrase I refer to the creativity and meaningfulness of each person's experiences. These include one's artistic, recreational, self-expressive, or communicative experiences from the perspective of each person's very different background, intentions, and competence. Making rhymes attracts the masters of communication as well as those composing their first verses, and both experience creativity in this poetic activity. Although it is interesting to consider the competence in, or the textual or communicational results of, the process of making or performing a poem, my primary focus will be on capturing this experience.

In broad terms, my research focuses on how tradition and individuality interact in this kind of oral poetry that I refer to as *dialogic*. By this term I mean that the primary nature of these short poems is dialogic, communicative. People communicate through poems, in the concrete dialogues of singing or reciting poems. People also communicate with the tradition and the poems themselves, in their inner emotional dialogues and in composition. Poems are thus in *explicit* dialogic relations to other poems and performances, or to the whole tradition. Dialogism, and dialogic intertextuality between performances and texts, is a broadly recognized phenomenon (Bakhtin 1986), and textual and contextual features are somehow in dialogue most probably in all verbal registers and genres (see, e.g., Briggs 1988). The naming of such short, communicative registers as dialogic oral poetry, or dialogic registers, is an effort to point to their special, essential characteristics, and to place them among the ecology of traditional oral poetries.[3] In the forthcoming dissertation I will elaborate on a theoretical frame for dialogic oral

[2] For Arabic traditions see also the articles of Jargy, Haydar, Sbait, Sawa, and Sowayan in *Oral Tradition,* 4 (1989); for couplets in the Balkans see Kligman 1988, Lockwood 1983, and Sugarman 1988; in Turkey see Bartók 1976; in Malta see Herndon and McLeod 1980.

[3] John Miles Foley proposes the word ecology (or ecosystem) to characterize the coexistence of different "species" of oral tradition in natural societies (Foley 2002:188-218; 2005:75-78). These species can be recognized as scholarly genres (epic, lyric, lament, genealogy, folktale, and so forth.), or they can be indigenously identified (Timonen 2004:84-157). Special dialogic registers have existed widely in traditional societies, and people have also used other registers dialogically (see espec. Tarkka 2005 and Tarkka forthcoming), although during the earlier research paradigms, researchers and collectors did not notice this phenomenon or did not regard such registers

poetry. In this dissertation, the subject of my research is the poetic register itself, the social and individual motivations and values in the use of the tradition, the variety of performances, the technique of composition, the meaning of the poetic idiom as a mental model, and the interaction and coexistence of oral and literary.

The focus of this article is on the performance of *mantinádes*, and especially on the multitude of the *possible* performance arenas. I will use the notion *performance arena* in the sense introduced by John Miles Foley (1995:8, 47-49): beyond the physical environment where the performance takes place as a *virtual* arena, where the meanings and references carried by the *register*,[4] the shared special language of expression, can be expressed and understood economically. I concentrate here on the oral performance arenas, which I think also form a necessary basis for any conversation on the performances in the written or media arenas. I have grouped these oral arenas into the following five frames: first, the sung performances 1) in a *glénti* (feast), 2) in a *paréa* (a get-together of a group of friends);[5] and second, the recited performances 3) embedded into speech (proverbial, referential, meditative, etc), 4) telling a story of a past performance, 5) presenting poetic inventiveness.

I will first introduce some general characteristics of the verbal tradition, then describe the traditional singing performance arenas as they were up to the 1980s, and as they are in their present forms, and then proceed to the recited performances. In the end I will briefly summarize how this traditional dialogic communication with poems is immanent even today.

One must take into consideration the reality that the local differences in the ways people traditionally celebrated and entertained musically are remarkable across eastern, central, and western Crete. Although the presentation of these forms can only be suggestive here, I wish to include some major lines, since a national myth constructed in middle of the twentieth century of the lyra (*lira*; see below*)* as *the* original musical instrument largely still prevails in many sources presenting what is referred to as "Cretan" music. *Mantinádes* are, however, "*said*"[6] and *made* similarly throughout the entire island. They have also been popular in other southern Dodecanese islands.

The Register of *Mantinádes*

Historically, the poetic model of the *mantináda* was created when end-rhyme, with the introduction of new Western literary models, became established in the fifteenth century when Crete was governed by Venetia. This end-rhyme bound together two of the already established Byzantine *dekapentasíllavo,* fifteen-syllable metrical lines. The new model became established

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valuable or appealing. Research on conversational folklore forms occurs mainly during the last three decades of the twentieth century, and is taken up by scholars carrying out long-term fieldwork in a community.

[4] For the use of the term register, see Halliday 1978:31-35, 110-11; Hymes 1989:440; and Foley 1995:15-17, 49-53.

[5] In standard Greek the word *paréa* generally means "company."

[6] The Modern Greek verb *léo* means "to say," but in connection to songs it also means to "sing."

both as a unit of composition in the popular literary romances of the Cretan school (especially predominant in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries) and in the narrative folk songs, *rímes*, and as independent oral couplets, *mantinádes.* The essential characteristic of a *mantináda*, other than fulfilling the requirements of meter, rhyme, and poetical virtues, is that it contains an independent meaning within the short two lines.[7]

Mantinádes form an oral poetic tradition where an idea, a short story is ideally encapsulated in a poetic picture, which is drawn with quick, referential strokes in the frames of the tightly rule-governed traditional metrical model. The language closely resembles natural language, but the poetic pictures, metaphors, and the metrical mold make it clearly differ from everyday speech. Dialectal Cretan forms are extensively used at all the levels of language. The model is structurally extremely versatile and the ideas that are expressed are limitless: many of the poems are romantic, erotic, or emotional, but *mantinádes* can as well comment on or negotiate a situation proverbially, they can greet, tease, or satirize a person, they can state a general philosophical idea, or they can express personal views on life. Besides the communicative, argumentative dimensions of the poetic language, the community highly values poetic virtues and individual inventiveness.

In Crete, creativity in the use of the tradition is seen both in the composition of new couplets as well as in the clever, apt contextual use of a poem in a singing or speech situation (Amargianákis 1988:328; Herzfeld 1985a:141). In performance a *mantináda* is thus a contextually and personally loaded argument, and/or a presentation of the person's poetical skills. Between performers it is a *parole* in a communicative chain of verses. Poems can be textually extemporized on the spot (*epi tópou*), or the poem can be selected from the person's poetic reserve to meet the needs of the situation. The poetical reserve contains a variety of traditional poems and poems made by the performer, or by another known singer or composer.

Today the skill to compose a poem extempore in the situation is becoming rare. This skill is appreciated, but it never was the only or the most important standard for successful performance: what counts is the skill to create *meaningful* poems and to have *good timing* in a performance. Most contemporary composers, even those who have the talent to extemporize, emphasize that meaningful new poems are more likely to spring up in the composer's mind in privacy, when he or she is contemplating something personally felt or experienced. Situational new poems are brought forth in performance, but personal, philosophical life-story poems can be created any moment when important inner or outer impulses make poem out of a thought, an experience, or a feeling. These poems can then be "announced" at once to one's immediate circles, or held for a later time when the right contextual moment arises.

Three poems can serve as an illustration of some structural and expressive differences between the poems that have been extemporized due to an outer situational impulse and those

[7] For more information on the literature and society of Venetian Crete, and the origins of the metrical model, see Holton 1991; Beaton 1980; 1989; Alexiou and Holton 1976; for detailed study on the metrical form and poetic means, see Baud-Bovy 1936, Kavkalás 1992, 1996, 1998; and Sykäri forthcoming. The "couplet" form that is common in many cultures is most often conceptualized and written in four lines and with the rhythmical pattern abcb (many other rhyme patterns also exist). According to Alexiou and Holton (1976:22-25), the most probable origin of the Greek *dekapentasíllavo* is the structure of popular poetry, a combination of lines that are octosyllable and heptasyllable. Contemporary Cretans also often write a couplet in four half-lines.

that have "come down" through an inner thought, an emotion. The first poem is from the repertoire of the coffee-tavern owner Simisakogeórgis (Geórgos Sifákis) from Réthymno. He told me that he enjoys situational extempore composing but qualifies these compositions as being mere *dístiha*, couplets; *mantinádes* are the poems that contain a deeper philosophical idea and have poetic virtues. This poem was improvised during a stream of conversation with two female customers, one of whom he learned was from the island of Hios, which is known for its mastic, from which chewing gum is made. He also learned that this woman worked in the Town Hall (*dimarhío*). This all took shape in the following couplet:

Θά 'ρθω μια μέρα να σε βρώ μέσα στο δημαρχείο
Να δώ αν δουλεύεις ή μασάς μαστίχα απ' τη Χίο!

I will come one day to meet you in(side) the Town Hall
To see if you are working, or chewing mastic from Hios!

This poem is a humorous comment entirely bound to the communicative situation.

In the second example the poem is also improvised in a conversational situation. During my last trip to Crete in September 2007, Kostoúla Papadogiánni from Iráklio told me about a situation that had taken place recently. She and her husband had entertained a group of guests at their village house, and one male guest had especially admired the way her husband helped her during the entire evening. This guest had then asked Kostoúla if her husband really is always like this, so helpful. She answered with a *mantináda* in her warm, emotional style:

Μοιάζει με δίφορο δεντρό π' όλο το χρόν' ανθίζει
γιατί τσ' αγάπης μου νερό τη ρίζα του ποτίζει

He's like a twice-bearing[8] tree, which blooms all the year
Because the water of my love waters its roots[9]

The first half-line is structurally connected to the situation, referring to a person, but the poetic picture that follows is universally lyrical, and in dialogue with many traditional elements of erotic *mantinádes*.

[8] A tree that bears fruit twice a year—thus flowers nearly continuously, and often bears flowers and fruit at the same time (in Crete, especially lemon and orange trees).

[9] "Since – of my love – the water – the root of it – waters." Due to the different grammatical structures in the Modern Greek and English languages, it is difficult to adequately translate the Greek poetic use of syntactic structures and inflectional forms, which are, however, extremely meaningful for this short couplet form. Verbs are conjugated, nouns and also articles (feminine, masculine, and neuter) are declined in four cases in standard Greek. Idiomatic and poetic language often uses articles elliptically to refer to extra-textual entities. A native speaker understands these references intuitively from the context, but in the non-native translations of songs and poems this often causes confusion.

The third example occurred during the same trip in Crete in September 2007. Antónis Stefanákis in Zarós told me his news by reciting the following *mantináda*. For some years he has been involved in a major building project, and the final cost had required a huge personal loan. The poem refers to the pains of now finding the money for the monthly repayments:

Βάσανα στ' άλλα βάσανα, πίκρα σε άλλη πίκρα
'Οσπου να γιάνει μια πληγή, ανοίγει άλλη δίπλα

Trouble on other trouble, bitterness on bitterness
Until one wound gets healed, another opens beside

This poem composed earlier by Antónis, and brought forth by him in our conversation, reflects his situation and emotions; it is very balanced, crystallized, and proverbial in form. It is thus also easily reusable in other relevant contexts.

Local differences also emerge in what is valued: in eastern Crete, as in the nearby islands Karpathos and Kasos, the emphasis seems to have been much more on immediate improvisation, whereas the philosophical and poetic weight of what is said seems to characterize more the region of central Crete. In the past, the mental performance arenas were thus different in the different communities: in western Crete, one "wrong" *mantináda* could be a reason for serious conflict, whereas far eastern Crete, Sitía, has been famous for a singing culture that is teasing, mocking, and (among males) sexually openly suggestive. Even there, quarrels and fights were common in the *glénti*, in weddings; however, as the violist Vaggélis Vardákis from Ierápetra observed, if people saw that someone was getting angry then the following was said:

Με τα κολοκυθόφυλλα, δεν κάνουμε ντολμάδες
μηδέ και παρεξήγησεις έχουν οι μαντινιάδες

With zucchini leaves, we do not make dolmades
Neither do misunderstandings have *mantiniádes*[10]

The differences in local mentality likewise reflect the women's freedom to participate in public events: the western Haniá and Sfakiá, and the mountainous pastoral areas, generally are well known for extreme patriarchy as well as for the suppression of female participation in public discourses, whereas in eastern Crete, in the agricultural and fishing lowland cultures, active female participation in public performance was the rule (for further information, see below).

While the society has changed and people and their occupations have moved from closely knit village communities to urban or to semi-urban environments, during recent decades, new forms of communication have also adapted the *mantinádes* to new vehicles. The composition of *mantinádes* is a very common hobby today, and poems are sent to the media and presented daily on radio and television programs (it is often said that television has replaced the *paréa,* the "get-

[10]Throughout eastern Crete the form of the word *mantináda* is *mantiniáda* (pronounced "mantinyáda").

together"). Poems are printed in newspapers, in booklets of personal poetry, and in anthologies. Responding to new technology, poems are also widely exchanged through mobile phone messages by composers and by the active tradition-bearers.

Poetic expression as well as the negotiation of contemporary local identity takes various forms: the use of the rich Cretan dialect and metaphorical language is fundamental for many active composers, while other composers apply a markedly modern and prosaic vocabulary. The adult Cretans who have lived through the more discreet ways of communicating that largely prevailed until the 1980s (especially between the two sexes), generally despise these modern forms, because much of the allusive, decorative poetic vocabulary and the inner musicality of the poems has been lost. Whereas in the old metaphorical expression a boy wanted to became a basil plant in the garden of the loved one, to be watered and cared for by her, today there are songs that go straight to the heart of the matter.

Even today the composition process is oral, but poems are preferably written down later. Although oral poems that have been written down aim more towards poetic rather than situational meanings, many current practices show how natural the interchange between *oral as action* and *literary as store* can be in an oral culture. For example, poems are often learned from written collections especially in order to have a large repertoire for singing in the quick, thematically progressing situational improvisation in *paréa*. As a result, the best poets sing their poems many times to test their musicality before printing them in collections.

Cretan Music and Dance

If one asks Cretans, they define two main performance arenas for *mantinádes*: 1) *glenti*, the collective feast with music and dance in life-cycle festivities, carnival time, and yearly village festivals, and 2) informal singing with *paréa*. Both these events have been important performance arenas in which verbal creativity has become one with music and dance, and socially significant discourses have taken place among the members of the community. In traditional singing events up to the 1980s, *mantinádes* have served as the essential language of all communication, from creating an atmosphere and sense of solidarity to verse contests and detailed personal messages. The Cretan musical tradition has continued without interruption, although in a changed society.

Cretan dance music is an important vehicle for verbal expression in *mantinádes*. Except for the *rizitika* songs of western Crete (see below), the calendar songs, and a small number of other songs, all of which are performed vocally without instrumental accompaniment, most Cretan music consists of instrumental dance music. These instrumental forms were and are performed at all major feasts, with some intended especially for informal singing in a *paréa*. Their lyrics are almost without exception *mantinádes*. The poetic text can be fixed to the melody, or the musical form can support extempore singing and versemaking (especially the *kontiliés*). Improvisatory *kontiliés* and the "loose" singing style, *himatikó*, have been extremely popular in eastern and central Crete. All Cretan dance music is performed in 2/4 time (the *sirtá* also in 4/4). Of the asymmetrical rhythms that are popular on the mainland and largely in the Balkans, the once common *kalamatianós* (7/8) is rarely performed today.

From the great wealth of local dance music forms, five types are mainly performed today. Of these, the instrumental *kastrinós* and *pentozáli*, and the *soústa*, which has fixed lyrics, have established musical forms. The *kontiliés* and *haniótikos sirtós*, which can serve as a vehicle for verbal expression along with *mantinádes*, were instead developed zealously by many local musicians during the early twentieth century (see Amargianákis 1988:327-28; Deiktákis 1999; Kaloyanides 1975; Williams 2003). Both *kontiliés* and *haniótikos sirtós* consist of melodic formulas that offer the creative musician an opportunity to improvise by creating new variations as these formulas are repeated many times (for details, see Kaloyanides 1975:139-50).

With the exception of the *sousta*, all of these and most other local dance forms are line dances.[11] The *haniótikos sirtós* is today the most popular dance in feasts, as everyone knows the basic steps. The *kontiliés* (or *siganó pentozáli*) is performed only at weddings as *horós tis nífis*, the bride's dance; this is the first dance after the wedding ceremony, during which *mantinádes* are traditionally sung to her. The main importance of this musical form is as a vehicle for improvisatory singing.

The workshop of Antónis Stefanákis in Zarós. Stefanákis constructs all kinds of stringed instruments. Visible here are two *laoúta*, two *bouzoukis*, and a *laoúto* (hanging on the wall); situated on the table are half-made *lyras*. Photo the by author.

[11] A comprehensive description of Cretan dances is available in Tsouhlarákis 2000.

Antónis Stefanákis still makes reed pipes (called the *habióli* or *thiamból*i, depending on the region) and he is most likely the last one in Crete to play this pastoral instrument. Photo by the author.

The main instruments played in Crete today are the *lyra* (*líra*, a fretless bowed lute with three metal strings), the *laoúto* (also *lagoúto*; a large, long-necked[12] fretted, plucked lute with a pear-shaped body), the violin, the mandolin, and the guitar. The pastoral mountainous areas, which in the past had a tradition of wind instruments (reed pipes; bagpipes in Lasíthi), no longer have this tradition.[13] The *laoúto* and the violin are the oldest melodic instruments. They were introduced through the urban areas during the period of Venetian occupation (1211-1669), and they appear in Cretan literary documents beginning in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The *laoúto* and later the mandolin have been used especially for singing in informal *parées* and for *kantádes* (serenades). Some assume that *mantinádes* might have come as a "parcel" to Crete during the Venetian times; this can be interpreted etymologically from the most probable origin of the word *mantináda* < *mattinato* (= a morning song, a serenade-type vocal song).

[12] Not to be confused with *oúti*, the short-necked Arabic lute, which is also played in Crete and Greece but very rarely.

[13] For the instruments and their history, see Amargianákis 1988:329-30; Anoyanakis 1972, 1991; Papadákis 1989; Tsouhlarákis 2004 and also his website: http://www.tsouchlarakis.com.

A *paréa* in Ierápetra, with Egglezonikolís on the violin. The photograph was taken during the first half of the 1960s. Photo courtesy of Vaggélis Vardákis.

The violin has been played in eastern and western Crete since Venetian times, and it remained the principal solo instrument in dance music there until the latter half of the twentieth century. During the time recollected by the local oral history, in eastern Crete the violin was accompanied by the mandolin and by a small double-membrane drum, *daulάki*; in the western area the *laoúto* accompanied the violin. The violin was an expensive instrument since it had to be made by a master and ordered from Italy; thus, the new instrument that was introduced to the island during the eighteenth century from Asia Minor, the *lyra*,[14] quickly became popular especially in the central and rural parts of the islands. The lyra could be made cheaply from local woods by skillful craftsmen and even by musicians themselves. In the *glénti*, the *lyra*-player or violist is responsible for melodic elaboration and variation, and he is often also the main singer, alternating between the vocal and instrumental sections. Before the twentieth century, the *lyra* was played alone with the accompaniment of tiny bells attached to the bow.

[14] The pear-shaped ("Cretan") *lyra*, which underwent an evolutionary process in the first half of the twentieth century, is played in the southern Aegean islands: in Crete, Kasos, and Karpathos. The first mention of this type of an instrument called the *lyra* by Greeks dates back to the tenth century from Asia Minor. It is known to have been played in Crete since the eighteenth century, but how and when it entered this area is unknown (Anoyanakis 1991:259-75).

Antonis Papadomanolákis on the *laoúto* and Kostas Kiritsákis on the *lyra* during a performance at the *mezedopolío* Mesostrati, Rethymno. May, 2007.

The *lyra*-player alternates between singing and playing. Both photos by the author.

During the first half of the twentieth century, many talented local musicians introduced new influences into the traditional Cretan styles and thereby enriched them. The Ottoman occupation in Crete came to an end, and the Orthodox Greek refugees from Asia Minor, who replaced the Muslim Cretan population (culminating in the forced population exchange in 1922-23), were mostly from urban, intercultural towns and regions. These refugees brought a strong musical tradition that enriched the local music during the fertile middle-war period. Moreover, local and expatriated musicians cooperated extensively.

During this middle-war period, the *zigiá* (pair) of one *lyra* and one or two *laoúta*, which was formed in central Crete, became the emblematic ensemble that is today widely identified with "Cretan music." The *laoúto* was now used especially for rhythmical accompaniment, but when there are two *laoúta* in the *zigiá* the other may play melodically, a phenomenon that used to be more common in western Crete. During the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s, Cretan musical expression continued to flourish and many of the musicians became well known internationally.

Meanwhile, a political "purification" campaign in Crete interpreted the violin as a "foreign, non-native instrument." With this erroneous interpretation by Simon Karrás, the director of the folk music programs at the national Greek radio, the use of the violin in the performance of Cretan music was banned in all radio programs in 1955.[15] Karrás later admitted his error, but the prohibition was never officially lifted.[16] This ban, and the simultaneous electrification of the *lyra-laoúto* ensemble, now suitable to perform on stage with loudspeakers, gave superiority in power to the *lyra* throughout the entire island. Several violists in western Crete continued their tradition in this difficult situation, but especially in eastern Crete these developments caused the acoustically performing generation of violists to withdraw in the 1970s.

[15] The full history is narrated in Papadákis 1989:42-47. See also Tsouhlarákis 2004.

[16] See also Brandl 1991.

The far western and eastern parts of Crete, and their respective violin performance styles, differ clearly from each other. The performance practices in eastern Crete were markedly bound to the social, improvised communication in the local society. In the most popular local dance form, the *angaliastós*, it was the dancers who improvised *mantinádes* one-by-one to each other (this practice is unknown elsewhere in the island). The break-up of the traditional acoustic performance setting and the loss of the repertoire arranged for violin resulted in a quick loss of this rich musical and verbal tradition.

In the mountainous, rural areas of western Crete, the prefecture of Hania, the main form of entertainment has been and remains the performance of slow, crystallized narrative songs called *rizítika*. These are sung by a male voice and choir that repeats the verses, without instrumental accompaniment, to a slow, free rhythm. *Mantinádes* are sung at the beginning of the event and at the end of each song. Today, *mantinádes* connected to the *rizítika* performances are mainly traditional, in line with the reason for the celebration. Until the 1970s, however, a competitive exchange of reciprocal *mantinádes* could be improvised in the beginning or in middle of the feast. In these areas, the dance music and instruments were and are played in the villages solely for dancing during the evening of a marriage or during other major feasts; in the past, musicians were brought in, especially from the far western area of Kissamos, which was famous for its violinists and *laoúto*-players. Entertainment during the get-togethers and shared festive meals consists of singing *rizitika* songs.

A Common Arena: the *Glénti*

In the village communities, annual and seasonal celebrations, such as the village saint festivals and carnival time as well as life-cycle feasts (especially marriages and baptismal celebrations), formed the main means of common entertainment. All members of the village took part in these festivities, and friends and relatives travelled on foot and by donkeys from other villages in order to participate. This was an important opportunity for young people to see each other, and a time for covert communication through secret eye-contacts and sung poems, which is the most that could be dared in this society of honor and shame.

The *panigíri* of Saint George (the 23rd of April) in Así Goniá, 1997. Photo by the author.

The *glénti* is the feast, the entertainment after the ritual acts and religious ceremonies. The village saint festivals start with a mass in the evening prior to the day. The principal mass is conducted early in the morning, and followed by the breaking of a special sweet church bread, a Lenten food, or another food typical of the day. The culmination of

the festival is the evening *glénti*. A traditional wedding feast lasted for several days and consisted of a huge repertoire of *mantinádes* sung at various moments of preparation, and before and after the ceremony. Still today, in some of the bigger villages, the women perform traditional *mantinádes* when they prepare the bride and the groom. *Mantinádes* can also be sung during the metaphorical game, when the escort of the groom comes to fetch the bride to take her to the church. In earlier times it took hours or days for the procession to make its way from the village of the groom to the village of the bride, and singing was the natural pastime.

In the traditional format of a *glénti* held in the village square, the musicians sat in the center in traditional peasant chairs, which were half-turned towards each other. Initially, musicians would assume the main responsibility for the singing, but little by little other performers who were known for their voices and repertoires gathered tightly behind them. When the dance began, the dancers formed a circle around the musicians. The people sitting and standing formed a circle around the dancers. As a result, performers, dancers, and audience were all near each other.

The first selection of *mantinádes* to be sung depended on the reason for the festivity, and they were often traditional. Later themes were developed according to the personal and communicative aims, although always in accordance with the most important rule: poems must be performed dialogically, in succession and thematically interconnected. One theme was taken up, and *mantinádes* on this theme were sung until it was exhausted; only then could a new theme be introduced.

During the feast and after the men had consumed a fair amount of wine and *rakí*,[17] the exchange of *mantinádes* readily took the form of a competitive verse duel between two or more villagers. These duels could serve as a domain for competitive and offensive male discourse. In patriarchal pastoral society, these competitions often dominated public performance practices. For example, many stories are still told of the conflicts between eager son-in-law candidates and fathers who rejected them contemptuously, as well as of the shame of singing old, hackneyed *mantinádes*.[18]

Duels could also support discourse of an erotic nature between a woman and a man in those villages and areas where women were free to participate. Many adult informants state that this practice was pervasive in the first part of the twentieth century. The shift in the public role of women to lamenter is attributed to the Second World War, owing to the great loss of human life during that time.

In eastern Crete, in addition to these big feasts, dances were typically organized every Sunday in villages where there were girls of marriageable age. As described to me by the violist Vaggélis Vardákis from Ierápetra, and also in the foreword to the collection of *mantinádes* by María Lioudáki (1936), beginning in the morning, young men went around the village and asked the parents' permission for the girls to participate. During the afternoon, the dance was organized

[17] Strong homemade brandy that is distilled from grapes.

[18] For descriptions of verbal duels, see Herzfeld 1985a:142-46, with an extended discussion in Herzfeld 1985b; for a parallel tradition in the village of Olympos in Karpathos, see Caraveli 1985 and Kávouras 1991.

in a spacious house, on a square, in the courtyard of a church, or in the shade of a big tree near a well. The girls went there with their mothers, but it was mainly the younger ones who danced. As Lioudáki explains, "in these dances the young boy in love always found an opportunity to declare with *mantinádes* his love or pain, sorrow or joy to the loved one, even anger to the unfaithful" (1936:i).

In this area the popular *angaliastós* was always the first dance to start the *glénti*. Here a girl, who was placed at the beginning of the line (alternating between girls and boys), started the singing. She improvised a *mantináda* for each participant, then left her place to the next in line, and in this way a full round was danced. I asked Vaggélis Vardákis why the role of the woman in the performance was so important in eastern Crete. He responded that even though the woman was not free in the society, her ability to perform and improvise by singing and dancing during a social occasion was regarded as an important demonstration of a woman's ability to maintain her social identity as wife and householder. Nevertheless, when Vardákis inquired of his teacher why a woman always started the singing in this improvisatory dance, his teacher answered, "because women have a much better command of words."

During the 1970s, most of the weddings or baptismal *gléntia* were transformed from village squares to special permanent or seasonal commercial centers of entertainment, *kéntra* (sing. *kéntro*). These were built first in the urbanizing centers after the Second World War, and from the 1970s onward throughout the whole island, inspired by the (politically launched) wave of interest in the endemic musical tradition (Kapsoménos 1987:15).

A marriage *glénti* in an open-air *kéntro* in Anógeia, September, 2006. Photo by the author.

Today, the festivities and *glénti* may still take place in a village-square setting, but this happens less and less frequently. The *panigíria* (village saint festivals) and the marriage celebrations that still command a large audience in Crete (from one to three thousand guests) are often transferred from village squares to the *kéntra*. In the village where I work, the baptismal feasts, which typically have about 300 guests, are organized in the village square, or during the winter in the village society building, more often than in a *kéntro*. The village still has one marriage every two or three years as well (when the number of guests is reduced to around 1000, which the square can accommodate).

The organization of these festivities in the village is an amazing collective effort, in which reciprocity, and a sense of solidarity, is shared among the relatives, co-villagers, and friends involved. During the summer season, well-known Cretan musicians participate in *panigíria* in different villages nearly every day, either in the *kéntra* or in the village square. In the latter case, the village society or the local athletic society can organize the events, and the profit from the food and drinks sold provides the necessary income for its activities. Successful villages have good organizations and regular feasts, advertised with posters throughout the community.

A local ensemble in a baptismal *glénti* held at the village society's festival hall. Milopótamos, October, 2004. Photo by the author.

Parents, godparents, and close relatives begin the first dance to the *sirtós* tune. Photo by the author.

The musical and singing activities in these festivities are entrusted to professional musicians, and creative audience participation takes place mainly through dance. The dances are booked with the head musician for a family or *paréa* on behalf of one of its members. Each group then takes turns dancing when announced. The musicians either sing traditional verses or verses from their own repertoire, which may contain their own compositions, but most often consist of *mantinádes* written by a *mantinadológos*, a *mantináda*-poet (it is generally thought that musical and verbal creativity are different, and that only rarely are both present in one person).

During the late hours, and after warming up by consuming alcohol and partaking of the social atmosphere (just like in the traditional village environment), a *paréa* may take up a most traditional dialogue in *mantinádes*. Often, when the *glénti* starts to break up and the large audience has dispersed, a *paréa* of those most involved (for example, the bride's male relatives, the groom, the father, and the godparent) gathers in front of the musicians and is given the microphone to sing. Audience participation in singing is also a very popular part of late-hour performances in the music clubs in town during the winter season.

The *paréa* of the father and godfather singing *mantinádes* at the end of the evening. Photo by the author.

The society has changed, and there is a critical local attitude as well. The shift of the feasts from the village square, where musicians played acoustically and sat in the middle of the space, to a setting where musicians are raised up on a bandstand and the music is mediated electrically by amplifiers, has been abrupt. The modern star culture around the "name" musicians and the use of powerful amplifiers without professional sound engineers often result in high noise levels. For this reason many adults avoid the contemporary *gléntia*. Many critical voices also point out that a person's individuality when performing and improvising was traditionally displayed in disciplined, virtuous ways. In modern Cretan society, however, interpretations of individuality can be quite egocentric in nature (see also Dawe 1996, 1999).

Entertainment Among Friends

A *paréa* in Ierápetra during the early 1960s. Manólis Egglezákis plays the violin. Photo courtesy of Vaggélis Vardákis.

Until recently, the informal gatherings of a *paréa*, a circle of (male) friends or relatives, took place regularly in a *kafeneíon* (a traditional coffee-bar where men pass their time) or a village square. Even further back in history, these gatherings took place in turn in houses in a village. These encounters were the most common arena for singing or reciting verses. All my informants affirm that in the lively village communities a *paréa* was formed on the flimsiest of pretexts. Although the Second World War and the accompanying social change reduced such collective manifestations, the sharpest privatization of performance habits in Crete has taken place since the beginning of the 1980s, when television became a permanent fixture in every *kafeníon* and living room, and the possession of cars became common.

Since the 1980s commercial entertainment has replaced much of the self-made collective local culture. As a consequence, the role of a musical *paréa* is now clearly that of an optional pastime, whereas until the 1980s it was the only option for casual entertainment among men and an important arena for social discourse. As the *mantinadológos* Aristídis Hairétis from Anógeia puts it, although everyone currently yields to these *parées,* they don't take place since "there is not the first person to make it happen."

A clear decrease in collective traditions has been evident even during the last eight years of my own fieldwork. In my village eight years ago, during the summer the generation of teenagers still gathered to barbecue, sing, and play nearly every evening at a spot a little outside

the village. As young adults this generation is now occupied with work and studies elsewhere, and as a result such meetings are now extremely rare. The primary school children nevertheless gather to perform at the village feast place; at least one boy always plays a traditional instrument, and many other children learn *mantinádes* by heart from records and written collections, and also practice their composition.

A contemporary *paréa* in Rethymnon on the 3rd of November, 2007. The *lyra* is played by Antónis Pavlákis, the *laoúta* by Giánnis Apostolákis (left) and Giánnis Markogiánnis. Photograph by Dimítris Politákis, courtesy of Geórgos Sifákis.

After midnight, a *paréa* has gathered around the two musicians who began the performance, and new performers now take turns. Mesostráti, Réthymnon. May, 2007. Photo by the author.

Even today, among those most dedicated to Cretan music and song, traditional musical *parées* do form. During feasts, or due to a private celebration, people come together to perform privately, and there are taverns and *mezedopolía*[19] that encourage people to perform. A musical *paréa* is most likely to gather around at least one instrument—the mandolin, *laoúto*, lyra or violin—but the lack of an instrument is not an insuperable obstacle. *Mantinádes* are sung in turns by fluent singers, or if possible by all present one-by-one in a circle, with each song always thematically connected to the previous one.

The most common mode of such informal singing, in the musical form of *kontilies*, is the following: a singer begins the first *dekapentasíllavo* (fifteen-syllable) line, and the *paréa* repeats it (during this time the singer has time to think of the second line when improvising verses). The singer then sings the second line, whereupon the next performer immediately takes up his turn; thus the second line is not repeated. Digressions of various lengths are

[19] These are small, intimate, traditional-style places that serve *meze*-plates and traditional drinks: carafes of wine, *raki,* and ouzo. They are very popular among young adults and students as well; the number of these places in the old town of Rethymno, for example, has grown significantly during the last five years.

inserted, and lines may cover two or more musical cycles; dipartite or tripartite structure is the rule when singing to the *sirtós* tune.

Mantinádes sung to the *kontiliés* with one *lyra* and two *laoúta*. Performance in Arólithos, Iráklio, 2000. Singers: Nikifóros Aerákis, Gialáftis (Aristeídis Hairétis), Pologiánnis (Giánnis Aerákis). Recording used courtesy of Geórgos Sifákis. http://journal.oraltradition.org/issues/24i/sykari#myGallery-picture(15)

As in the *glénti,* the most important requirement is that the poems sung are linked thematically so that they form a dialogue. If the first theme taken up is love, or sorrow, or friendship, or whatever else, one's poems must address this theme until it is exhausted; only then will a new theme be introduced. That new focus can be developed in the natural run of poems sung, for example, by someone picking a word, an expression from the previous poem, but completely changing the angle. A theme can likewise be shifted on purpose, as in this extemporized example told to me by Geórgos Sifákis. In a *paréa* gathered in his *mezedopolío* the Mesostráti in Rethymno, one evening many poems were sung about Charos, death, and he wanted to change the subject:

Δεν είναι φεγγαρόλουστο το απογινό το βράδυ
Μα επά να σταματήσουμε τα λόγια για τον 'Αδη

This evening is not illuminated by moonlight
And here we'll stop the words about Hades

Each singer has his own repertoire and style, and when an effective new composition is presented others will show in admiration. As Mítsos Stavrakákis, a well-known *mantinadológos* explained, even in the old days one could not really know if such a new poem was improvised on the spot or merely presented for the first time. He said that he himself often holds onto a new poem until he can surprise others with it; during a singing occasion he would not even introduce the suitable theme himself but wait for someone else to do so. Thus, as I already noted above, the *ideal of improvisation* may be conveyed in a traditional environment through textual as well as through contextual improvisation (the apt introduction of a poem in an appropriate situation).

Twenty years ago, these *parées* also gathered to perform nighttime serenades, *kantádes*, near the house of an attractive girl. After affirmative eye-contact with the girl (for example, in a collective *glénti*), a boy in love would gather a group of three to five boys and set forth singing and playing for the girl's village—all the better if two boys had the same interest and their singing consequently became competitive. *Kantádes* were always performed collectively, for in this society it would have been problematic, even dangerous, to approach a girl alone.

A *kantáda* can also have another form and meaning: until recent decades, during the late hours of any *glénti,* a *paréa* might start going around the village from house to house. Food and drinks were served to them, and a chicken might even have been cooked for a soup to refresh throats tired from singing. In my village, even ten years ago, *parées* were formed to visit the homes of the celebrating heroes of the day during name-days, when traditionally a banquet is organized at home for friends, relatives, and passers-by.

Recited Performances

Musical performance arenas and the musicality of the poetic expression are essential parts of the verbal tradition. I have described the traditional forms of singing and entertainment in some detail, because the dialogic nature of the communication in the *glénti* and *paréa* is implicitly present in the contemporary mental conceptualizing of the tradition and poetry. Today, *mantinádes* sung by professional musicians still introduce this communication within the tradition and the collective values expressed by that tradition.

It is important to notice, however, that even if *mantinádes* are emblematic of the popular Cretan musical life, a good deal of the oral composition and traditional dynamics breathe silently underneath public events and surface only on private occasions between friends and families. *Mantinádes* were always tied to the situational, communicational meaning and moment; in Crete, this poetry was never the "contest poetry" improvised in public spaces in a style that seems to characterize the western Mediterranean and especially the contemporary Basque *bertsolaritza* poetry (see Armistead and Zulaika 2005; Garcia et al. 2001).

In the recent past as well as today, the idea of performance in Crete is far from exhausted by naming the traditional singing performance contexts (or media environments). In practice it is much more common to be drawn into poems for the purpose of citing, referring, recollecting, and telling stories, and for presenting and negotiating poetic inventiveness. In many villages there are still people who are told to weave everything into a *mantináda*, to "say it to you at once." In earlier times, poems were widely embedded proverbially in everyday speech situations, and they were recited to tease or to provoke a poetic dialogue, a verbal duel. As shown by Michael Herzfeld (1985a), at the end of the 1970s poetic verbal duels were still an important form of establishing and shaping one's identity in communities where improvisatory, performative skills were required as evidence of a man's social worth. In the women's world, poetic expression likewise played an important role, and many contemporary poets and musicians emphasize the role of their mother or grandmother as a paragon of poetic self-expression and poetically philosophical way of speech in everyday life.

The story recounted immediately below will help us understand some elements of casual, local performance discourses. It is based on my own experience of actual performances of a single, recent composition in September 2005:

We had been sitting and talking with Antónis Stefanákis, 68 years old at that time, about his life and *mantinádes* at his workshop in his village. Leaving the workshop afterwards to walk 100 meters down to the village center to eat and spend the evening with the *paréa,* Antónis presented me with a *mantináda* that he had recently composed:

Στα χέρια σου έχεις τις χαρές αυτές που εγώ στερούμαι
Κι' είχα μισή και σ' έψαχνα για να τη μοιραστούμε

In your hands you have the delights, the ones that I lack,
Once I had half, and I was looking for you, to share with you that

The initial motivation for the poem was an encounter with a very beautiful girl. She had the "delight" of exceptional beauty and a very pleasant personality. Antónis' poem admires this girl who has all these good qualities, which he does not have, and tells his wish to be able to share just a little bit of something good with her from his side. The poem, however, speaks to "you," so it can be addressed to any other person as well. The Greek word *hará* means "joy", "delight," but in plural (*harés*) it can also mean "skills" or "a wedding."

Antónis told me that after composing this poem, he recited it to his friend, a peer poet and musician. He now presumed that the friend would certainly re-use it somehow if we happened to meet him, since he had very much appreciated the poem.

On the road, we first stopped in a small clothing shop to try on some jeans, which Antónis had requested from the woman owner before. The jeans were fine, but the trouser legs had to be shortened. The woman promised to do this, just as she had always done. Then, as a "thank you," Antónis uttered the same *mantináda* to her—this time placing emphasis on the concrete idea of the delights she had *in her hands*.

After we had eaten in a very small tavern, sitting at one of the few outside tables, a man came from across the street and put two peeled cactus fruit on the table in front of us, reciting: *Κι'είχα μισή και σ'έψαχνα* . . . "Once I had half, and I was looking for you . . ." This was the friend who valued the poetic picture and the traditional idea of sharing whatever little you have, as well as his invitation to come and join him.

Here, the new poem has been recited after its composition to a friend, a peer poet. The poem is performed in social, circumstantially motivated communication in the shop. The poem is re-used by the poet, and by another performer, to refer to and recollect earlier discussions and meanings. Antónis' friend quotes a part of the poem to refer to the idea of sharing, both as approval of Antónis' poetic skill in capturing the idea in a *mantináda*, and within the social discourse as an invitation. Antónis' recitation before the shopkeeper is also a performance, or a reference, for me. And now I tell a short contextualized story of past performances, which is likewise a typical local form of discourse.

This example shows that a performance of a *mantináda* can occur in several kinds of performance discourses:

1) *as a social communication*: a poem uttered extemporaneously to fit the face-to-face circumstantial context (to the shopkeeper),
2) *as a performance for displaying poetic inventiveness* (here between active poets and to me: to show the quality of the poetic form and the contents of one's new poem; to share the meaning and values)
3) *as a reference*, a recollection by re-using an already heard poem (between those present in the former recitations)
4) *as a short, contextualized story* of a performance in the past (for someone who has not been present at the given situation)

Except for the telling of a story, where contextual information is given sparingly, all these communicative forms are extremely short, highly referential, and allusive. A compact recitation contains a long story, and decoding it requires extensive local and interpersonal knowledge.

Anna Caraveli, who has researched Greek folk songs in other areas, notes that the nature of the Greek folk song performance tradition is generally extremely referential (1982:129-33). Besides the short, referential rhyming distiches, longer songs are also fragmentary and often left unfinished in performance in other parts of Greece. An intense referentiality may therefore be understood as typical both of the Greek mentality behind verbal expression in general, and of the short, apt poetic language of the *mantinádes* favored in Crete.

Poems Embedded into Speech

The improvised proverbial and phraseological use of *mantinádes* in speech is certainly restricted more to the traditional way of life in a village environment, and is also becoming rare in Crete. These verses are composed on the spot, or memorized, and the poem is uttered without preparation, on the spur of the moment. The goals of these verses are various—from greeting, joking, or creating atmosphere to expressing one's feelings, opinion, or interpretation of something physically actual or referentially present.

Such a *mantináda* often is recited to affect the direction of the conversation or situation, just like the uttering of proverbs or proverbial sayings in many other cultures. In Crete, as in Arab cultures (see espec. Caton 1990), the poetic verbal duel has been a socially established form of quarrel and negotiation. Herzfeld observes that "in a community where manhood requires a constant exhibition of performative skill, the clever *mantináda* can reduce an opponent symbolically without giving him the chance to respond in any other domain" (1985a:144). This observation is part of his description of the uses of verses and other means of the manly "idioms of contest" in a Cretan mountain village (1985a:123-62). Even if verbal contests have today lost their role as a serious negotiation of social worth and boundaries, communicative situations contain many interpersonal and circumstantial elements that can unforgettably be negotiated through such metaphorical expression.

I will turn to a few experiences in which I was myself both the reason for and the addressee of the poetic expression, which will allow me to comment on the part of the interpreter (although of course, I was not able to respond with *mantinádes*!).

On a walking day trip I took alone in southern Crete in 1998, I stopped in a *kafenío*n to rest. It was midday and very hot, and I conversed with some older men, seemingly frequent guests of that place. I began to feel hungry and, upon my inquiry, the tired owner agreed to prepare me a lunch of what the house provides, salad and eggs. The other men left to have lunch at their homes, and the owner started cooking for me as well as for himself. It became clear that his wife, who normally had a cooked meal available every day, had traveled to visit their adult children in Athens. The owner and I started our meal, and suddenly, in middle of our casual conversation (he had been partying all night in the absence of his wife), he got the idea that I must stay to party with him that evening in the nearby village. I thanked him for the offer, but told him that it was not possible. He kept on insisting and I kept rejecting his offer, until finally he burst into *mantinádes*:

Είσ' όμορφη, είσαι σκληρή, είσαι και πεισματάρα
Και πως πληγώνεις μια καρδιά, δε δίνεις μια δεκάρα

You are beautiful, you are hard, you are stubborn too
And that you hurt one heart, you don't give a penny

I was very taken by his summoning the poetic tradition for help, but I told him that he must understand that I was not able to stay; having a long, exclusive relationship with my partner, I could not hurt him by staying and partying with a strange man. Now he resorted to exploiting all his poetic powers:

Χωρίσαμε προσωρινά, μη χάσεις την ελπίδα
Μα την καρδιά μου κυβερνάς σα ναυτική πυξίδα

We were separated temporarily, don't loose your hope
You govern my heart like the compass does the sailor

Δε θα μας ξεχωρίσουνε οι στρατηγοί τσ' Ευρώπης
Γιατί αγαπηθήκαμε εις τον ανθό της νιότης

All the Europe's armies will not tear us apart
Because we fell in love in the bloom of the youth

And so on he continued with other romantic verses. I told him that even though his *mantinádes* were great, I soon had to leave. I asked him if I could write down these *mantinádes* (which I did). When he then realized that I "knew" *mantinádes*, he became even more ardent: he would recite me thousands of them if I would stay! But finally I got up to leave, and he was disappointed and commented:

Πολλά τα δέντρα που ανθούν μα λίγα που καρπίζουν
Πολλ' είν' εκείνοι π' αγαπούν μα λίγοι που κερδίζουν

Many are the trees that bloom, but few the ones that bear fruit
Many are the ones who love, but few the ones who gain

He was using traditional *mantinádes* on this occasion first as a provoking statement, then to create a confidential and understanding but also romantic atmosphere, and finally as an interpretation of that frustrating situation. Even if my staying was just an impulse he had at the moment, the poetic discourse took the challenge very seriously. From my perspective, I was allowed to misread the seriousness, and to stress instead the flirting playfulness.

When my Greek partner-to-be, Giánnis Hatziharalámpous recited a *mantináda* for me during our first conversation, the situation was quite different. He was born and grew up in Athens, but had spent the previous eight years mainly in Crete. Although he by no means was

able to make verses, he was familiar with *mantinádes* from the repertoire of the local musicians with whom he played. We had never met before, but having spent some evenings in the same *paréa*, where he was performing, and after keen, continuous eye contact between us all this time, one evening we were talking together. I told him of my interest in *mantinádes* at last and that I was returning to Crete after the summer in order to carry on fieldwork research on this traditional poetry. He looked at me and said:

> Να κάμω θέλω ταραχή σαν το κακό Γενάρη
> Να ρίξω χιόνια και νερά, άλλος να μη σε πάρει!
>
> I want to create disorder like the evil January,
> To throw snow and water, so that no one else will get you![20]

Within the tightly knit village communities this veiled, metaphorical way of talking via *mantinádes* was the only way to declare emotions between the two sexes. Even on this occasion, the atmosphere created by this romantic utterance changed the frame of reference of the following discourse completely. With the playful metaphor and the romantic aura represented metonymically by the mere deployment of the register, he had opened his heart, but safely. I now willingly interpreted the challenge as he intended it, but if I did not have corresponding feelings I could have downplayed his words without the situation becoming embarrassing. What was crucial was how much the right timing in code-switching to the traditional poetic register can mean, how much information can intuitively be packed into a short poem, and how immanent the simultaneous contextualization[21] process is. Connected with the previous example, this experience also shows clearly how the freedom of interpretation by the addressee corresponds to the freedom of the performer to encode the metaphorical utterance. In such poetic discourse, using the register gives access to communication in a special performance arena, and the contextualization process either renders the results valid in the "real life" or not. The rules are fair enough.

The above *mantinádes* are examples of proverbial recitations. The performer uses the poem(s) intending to affect or change the course of the ongoing conversation or situation. The same, of course, happens in singing events, within a more ritual and prepared frame.

A *mantináda* can also occur in the stream of a conversation, in the nature of an inner discussion or philosophical statement that is aroused by a memory or the present situational context, associated with the person's worldview or with the interpretation of a personal life situation. When I first began my field inquiries, after having read a great deal of literature about the communicative uses and meaning of verbal arts, I was overwhelmed by how frequently I encountered people, especially many older people, who recited poems outside of any conversational, situational context (or at least any context that I would have been able to

[20] This *mantináda* is traditional and known from the repertoire of the *lyra*-player Psarantónis.

[21] Charles Briggs (1988) points out that instead of talking about context, something that exists or happens "around" the verbal expression, we have to focus on the process of contextualization in which those participating in the verbal act negotiate the meaning of the words in an ongoing process.

understand as such). The meaningfulness of these poems was, however, further enhanced by affirmative eye contact or a common phrase like "see, it has a lot of meaning." In the course of the years, I came to grasp the power of the presence of the traditional poetic universe as a mental frame of reference, as an inner dialogue, and the satisfaction felt in a poetic picture that corresponds with one's feelings and thoughts, that depicts a life story (and brings the psychological release of others having felt the same).

For example, in the village where I have lived, when we sat down to discuss the *mantinádes* for the first time with two old women who became important informants and friends, one said casually quite soon after we had got started:

> Μοιάζει η καρδιά μου μ'εκκλησιά που λειτουργιά δεν έχει
> Μόνο αν μπει κανείς βοσκός να μη βραχεί όταν βρέχει
>
> My heart is like a church that is not used for religious services
> [It is used] only if a shepherd goes in, to avoid getting wet when it rains

She continued by saying: "As it is, it tells you . . . . It has a lot of meaning!" Here she was referring to the typical Greek small churches or chapels that are located a little outside the village and even in very remote places in the countryside. These are built to honor a certain saint and often have a modest liturgy only on that saint's day, in striking contrast to the central churches that conduct regular weekly liturgies, and which, except during these liturgies, are often frequented on a daily basis by locals and visitors who light candles in memory of their loved ones. Later on, we learned that this was indeed how she felt her life to have turned out: her husband and many close relatives had died, and although she had children and grandchildren she regretted that her full life had already effectively passed.

As was demonstrated earlier, *mantinádes* can be embedded into speech as referents to past situations, in which the reciter and hearer(s) have both been present. Such recitals are mutual entertainment: they refer to the given past situation itself (praising or commenting on the individual communicative or compositional skill displayed in that situation), and they also praise the unity of the interlocutors (speech community) by showing how well-equipped the people sharing the same tradition can be in decoding these short, highly referential messages.

Mantinádes **as Stories and Recollections**

I have used the term "proverbial" to refer to the poems, which, once uttered in the stream of an ongoing discourse, emphatically evoke a personal view through the authority of the traditional idiom. They also somehow affect the trajectory and texture of discourse. These are the real *mantinádes* for many Cretans with roots and memories in the old tightly knit village life. Therefore, even if *mantinádes* are rarely performed proverbially any longer, past performances are recollected as stories.

The local people tell many stories about the communicative situations in which someone had the last word with a *mantináda*. They also like to relate stories about a sudden turn of events,

cleverly commented on via an immediately uttered *mantináda*. People even characterize and memorialize persons through the *mantinádes* associated with them.

These stories celebrate the individual's skill at improvising and reproducing ready wit and dexterity in words, and are in that way similar to the referential citing of *mantinádes* uttered in past contexts when among the speech community. For an outsider, the situation is explained to the extent necessary for grasping the point, and the *mantinádes* appear as the punch-line of the performance, often followed by comments and explications. As recounted by Kóstas Kontogiánnis in October, 1999:

> Once we were in the village, we were a *paréa* and we drank water from the spring: one bows down, drinks water, drinks the next; the moment when I bow—this happened really—the spring stops! It was a spring, it was running water, and the spring stops, and I say:
>
> Σκύφτω στη βρύση για νερό μ' αυτή με μια στερεύγει
> Ιντά 'καμα τση μοίρας μου κακό και με παιδεύγει?
>
> I bow to the spring for water but it runs dry at once.
> What evil did I do to my fate so that she mocks me?
>
> We, that is, in Crete, we have the parable: "even if you go to the spring it will run dry." That is, you are unlucky and even if you go to a spring that runs, it will stop running. This happened to me.

Local folk musicians were important people in the villages because the informal entertainment and *parées* gathered mainly around them. For example, the unmarried self-taught *liráris* (*lyra*-player) in the village who had died some twenty years ago was remembered by an interviewee with the following story. In the past, the village was famous for its lack of water supplies, until the united village committee had water pipes constructed:

> A *paréa* who had also a *lyra*, in the neighboring village, was making fun of our village. The other village's *liráris* said:
>
> Καλό χωριό είν' και (το Χωριό), μα έχει ένα ψεγάδι
> 'Οσπου να πάνε στο νερό, τσουκνώνει το τσουκάλι
>
> This village is a good village, but it has one shortcoming;
> Until they get to the water, the cooking-pot gets burnt.
>
> Our village's *liráris* responds:
>
> Το πως δεν έχουμε νερό δεν είναι προσβολή μας
> Κασίδα στο ελάχιστο δεν έχει η κεφαλή μας

That we don't have water is not an insult for us
Scurf, even a little, does not have our head[22]

Our *liráris* then recites another *mantináda* that redirects the blame and hints that there are people in the other village who have scurf on their heads, but my interviewee does not remember the words of this *mantináda*.

The other *liráris* then said:

Τω μερακλίδων τα χαρτιά εγώ τα διορίζω
Παράξενο μου φαίνεται πως να μη σε γνωρίζω

The cards of the merry-masters are assigned by me,
It looks odd to me that I don't recognize you

And our *liráris* recited the following:

Αν θες να γνωριστούμενε να μ' έχεις τω χεριώ σου
Βρες μου μια χήρα Κατσαμά νά 'ρχομαι στο χωριό σου!

If you want us to get familiar and to have me in your hands,
Find me a widow from among your kin, and I will come to your village!

These stories and recollections reflect how the people value the words as *events* (Herzfeld 1981:139). At first, the event and the inventiveness of the words can be a completely "insider" experience, but it can be retold in new forms and can even take on a new shape and meaning altogether. New associations create new events and new stories (Caraveli 1982:132-35).

Half a year after my initial longer stay in the village in 2001, I returned again. My friend, Déspina, who was 71 years old then, had composed poems about our friendship and about my forgetting the people in the village. I had called her some weeks before I returned, and immediately after that she had met with another old woman with whom we used to keep company, and had extemporized the following poem:

Μια φιλενάδα έκαμα από τη Φιλλανδία
Βέρα τηνε φωνάζω 'γώ, κ' εμένα λέει θεία

One (woman) friend I made from Finland,
I call her Vera, and she calls me aunt

[22] Scurf was seen in those days in Greece as a mark of not washing and being dirty.

They told me that at the moment she had extemporized this poem they had laughed until their stomachs ached, and could not hold back their laughter even now (or ever after). I did not quite understand what was so funny about the poem, and they explained that with regard to her calling me by my name, and by my calling her "aunt," these references meant that she had to be extremely old, with one leg in the grave already, since I am an adult myself (born 1962), a mother of an adult daughter, and not a child who would call any woman outside the family an "aunt." They found this image very amusing.

Some years later we sat next to each other at a table during a feast, and when someone referred to my home country in our conversation, Déspina tried to recollect which country I was from. I remembered the above-mentioned poem, which contains this information, and saw that she was also striving to think back to it in her mind. When she triumphed over having found the answer, I recited the poem to her. She could not believe that I had followed her thought so well, and after we had recalled "our" moments of fun with the history of the poem, she now told this new story of my "psychologizing" her to the others.

Presentation of Poetic Inventiveness

I introduced earlier the presentation of a newly made poem as a performance. Some years ago I had the idea that in past village communities the conversational, circumstantially relevant extemporized performances must have been the most meaningful ones. When I asked about people's experiences and opinions about the poetic tradition, and while I listened to the local and personal oral history, I always inquired about this matter. Sometimes the answer was negative: in many districts of central Crete, as in the village Korfés near Iráklio, which is famous for its serious *parées* and quality *mantinádes*,[23] people understood that I was referring to the habits associated with eastern Crete of teasing, mocking, or making fun with *mantinádes*, and made a point to clarify that this particular style was not much appreciated in their village. But could a poem be recited in a moment of daily life, outside the ritual singing events? Of course, they responded, if one had created or heard a good new poem, one could present it to others, for example when coming to the *kafenion.*

Many answers like this one presented themselves until I realized the importance of the local focus on individual poetic creativity and inventiveness as such, and the reality that evaluating success in "capturing a theme" needs few words between those who know each others' repertoire and performance history. When I assimilated this observation, I also began to notice references made by the *mantinadológoi* themselves to this phenomenon of "announcing" new poems publicly. In September 2006, I asked the *mantinadológos* Aristeídis Hairétis (well known for his sarcastic poems and expressive descriptions) if he felt an immediate need to announce a newly created poem. He answered me by stating: "Think, when a baby is born, isn't it such a joy that you run around the village to tell it to every one? A poem born is like a newborn baby, you have to tell it to others!"

[23] See also Papirákis 2004.

This "presentation of poetic inventiveness" is a discourse in which the individual ability to express oneself and capture meaningful ideas, structures, and values of the surrounding reality and tradition in a poem is performed, received, and evaluated without any necessary conversational or situational frame. This discourse is a vital mode of being in the performance arena for the active composers and their immediate circles in Crete.

Dialogic Oral Poetry in Crete

In this paper I have provided examples of how Cretan *mantinádes* appear in a variety of oral performances. These performances span a broad spectrum from the singing or recital of poems within the frames of a feast or informal singing event, to the casual proverbial utterances embedded in speech, to stories told about past performances, and finally to the presentation of poetic inventiveness.

The poetic register used in these performances is both a reservoir of fixed poems and a flexible, shared model for new compositions. The register is used for communication, self-expression, and artistic and recreational aims in lyric, philosophical, sarcastic, humorous, and proverbial tones. The poem-language is essentially a special way of speaking. It helps people to express the meaning potential of their everyday lives and social relations, but it also serves as a source of potential meaning.[24]

Mantinádes are therefore essentially a dialogic register of oral poetry in two ways: first, conversationally, as utterances exchanged in communication between people. This was evident in connection with the traditional *glénti* and *paréa,* and in the stories told about the witty utterances in past performances. Second, the register is also dialogic mentally, as an inner dialogue, where crystallized poetic pictures become matched with personal emotions and perceptions of life situations, and where, in the minds of poetically creative individuals, inner and outer impulses take shape in new poems, in composition. In these dialogues, people use memorized poems or compose new ones to tell others or to conceptualize for themselves what they think, feel, wish, or want to say.

Although most of the spontaneous forms of collective self-expression are lost, much of the *traditional* is still mentally immanent. All the adult population has a living experience of the village oral performance practices; Cretan folk music and dance forms enjoy an uninterrupted continuation and huge popularity today among the young as well; a typical Cretan wedding hosts the whole population of the original villages of the bride and the groom (from one thousand to three thousand guests); and musical *paréa* is an emblematic unit of social presence for Cretans. Traditional festive and recreational arenas, even if mainly professionalized and commercialized nowadays, are not conceived of as being a memory of something past. The poetic mold enables individual self-expression that is also relevant to people today, while the traditional oral register carries values, authority, memories, and meanings from past times and performances, and gives access to a shared way of speaking.

[24] I thank the anthropologist Timo Kaartinen for coining this phrase to express my idea as discussed in our e-mail communication in May 2007.

Since *mantinádes* were always appreciated as an individual poetic practice as well as a mode of communication, they have not lost their meaning and disappeared from modern society, where the veiled metaphorical expression is no longer the necessity it used to be in the traditional, closely knit village environment. The strong local identity has helped the local music and dance tradition to be highly valued, and *mantinádes* as an emblematic part of this tradition are still heard in every celebration and daily television and radio programs. When we understand the more subtle, less framed utterances of the *mantinádes* as performances, as I have done here, it is easier to understand how people contextualize the contemporary, seemingly contextless recitations and the poetry that has been written down. Poetic creativity is evaluated, stories are told, and emotions are expressed in the form of mobile phone messages just as they used to be expressed in casual utterances between those familiar with each other. Today the poems appearing in print and media environments are received by many as a theme to be elaborated on, much as one used to elaborate during the singing of a *paréa* (with the addition that women also frequently perform in these modern arenas). Poetic dialogue in a living poem-culture is thus an ever-ongoing process to which individuals contribute with no necessary setting or frame.

A dialogue is formed of poems as individual utterances that respond to the other people's words (Bakhtin 1986:69) and to one's personal experiences. The locals perceive these poem-utterances as textual products in their own right, but always as products in a process as well. The versatile poetic form is a source of inventiveness for individual composition. The people appreciate good, telling poems by eagerly referring to them, and they produce new meanings through the poems at individual moments. In the course of time these individual compositions become shared property, a part of the tradition. Composing and using poems is an improvisatory process, wherein the textual elements are connected through the poetic means, aesthetic aims, and values inherent to the register, to the emotional world, and to the expressive needs of the person. A *mantináda* is a fixed poem, a text, but never a lone, isolated text: it is part of a process, connected to the tradition and to the communicative and/or mental dialogue of the person and the moment.

University of Helsinki

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Orality and Agency: Reading an Irish Autobiography from the Great Blasket Island

John Eastlake

Introduction

The early twentieth century saw the publication of a singular group of texts in Ireland: the Blasket Island autobiographies. These texts were produced by members of the Irish-speaking community living on the Great Blasket Island off the west coast of Co. Kerry, c. 1850-1953. As a group, they have often been viewed as having greater ethnographic, rather than literary, significance.[1] Seán Ó Tuama's assessment regarding what has been the prevalent appraisal of the Blasket texts, reads: "From the Blasket Islands, in particular, has come a handful of autobiographies which by common European standards are *sui generis*. . . . The only vaguely comparable series of books known to me is that by Indian chiefs describing their ancestral life before the white man's conquest" (1995:203).[2] Ó Tuama's rhetoric serves to assert the degree to which the Blasket texts differ from other Irish-language literature. In so doing, he suggests that these texts owe more to the ethnographic or anthropological than the literary, and, in effect, he cuts them loose from a greater Gaelic literary tradition, leaving them as an island, so to speak, between ethnography and literature. As such, the author-subjects of the Blasket texts have been read as passive informants rather than as active authors. Furthermore, this type of reading has been buttressed by a view that sees oral tradition as static rather than dynamic. As a corrective, I offer a reading that pays careful attention to the ways in which both oral tradition and literacy are utilized in a Blasket autobiography to assert the agency of its author.

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[1] Beginning in 1929 with the publication of *An tOileánach* and followed closely by *Fiche Blian ag Fás* in 1933 and *Peig* in 1936, the Blasket autobiographies were a new development in Irish-language literature, as autobiography had not previously been a prominent genre. Like drama, autobiography was a genre that only emerged in Irish-language literature during the Gaelic revival, c. 1890-1940. An English translation of *An tOileánach*, entitled *The Islandman*, was published in 1934. *Fiche Blian ag Fás* was translated as *Twenty Years A-Growing* in 1933. And *Peig* was not published in English translation until 1974. Arguably, these autobiographies were the first time that self-representative printed texts had been produced by members of Irish-speaking communities located in the West of Ireland.

[2] Ó Tuama's suggestion is provocative in light of the subject and method of my continuing research into Irish and Native American autobiographies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (e.g. Eastlake 2008; cf. Foster 1993:335-37).

In the discussion that follows, I advance my case for considering the Blasket autobiographies as collaboratively produced texts, with particular emphasis on examining the manner in which they were produced. This examination raises several critical questions that will be addressed in turn. How can we best understand the various collaborators' roles in producing the text, particularly that of the subject-author, or native, of the text? It is of particular importance not to dismiss the native's agency in one's reading. In a consideration of how a particular type of critical reading has tended to suppress or misread the native's agency, I take into account how this error is buttressed by a misunderstanding of the theoretical construct of orality. When the individual's role in orality is suppressed in favor of a view that sees primary oral cultures as producing texts independent of individual authorship or agency, a further misreading of printed texts is encouraged. In the final segment of my discussion, I address how a reader might distinguish between two fundamentally different readings of the same text: the native as a representative type and the native as author.

Native Autobiography

The category of native autobiography is fraught with complications, as it involves two words that flirt with genre while consistently resisting stable boundaries. Following Arnold Krupat's work on the problem of author in Native American autobiographies (1985), these autobiographies are more accurately typified by their "process of production" rather than by formal characteristics or genre (4-5; 30-31). While the Blasket autobiographies might be read strictly in relation to the conventions of Western literary autobiography, a reading that is based on careful attention to the process of production offers greater insight into these texts. This process of production involves three roles (fulfilled by a variable number of individuals): the native who serves as the subject of the autobiography; the editor who instigates, structures, and collaborates both creatively and destructively with the native; and the translator, who may be interposed between native and editor, or between text and reader. The translator role also serves to transform the text into a global language. The native, editor, and translator are roles assumed during the process of production, and they are fluid by nature, often shifting between cooperation and resistance. The interaction of these roles during the process of producing a collaborative text is what distinguishes native autobiography from other acts of self-representation.

Krupat has suggested that American Indian autobiographies, produced from the type of process outlined above, constitute "the textual equivalent of the frontier" (1985:33). In David Brumble's words, they are "bi-cultural documents," since they result from collaboration not just between individuals, but also between two or more sets of cultural conventions regarding the production of self-representations (1988:11). As Kathleen M. Sands has commented, "Consciously or unconsciously, I think we have all assumed that the collector/editor is the key to unlocking these cross-cultural autobiographical texts because we assume he or she possesses the exclusive power to control the narrative presentation" (2001:138). Rather than read these texts only as extensions of the editor or translator's visions, we should read them as collaborations between individuals, giving full attention to the agenda of the individual who has been constructed as native. While "native" has often been assumed to mean "naïve," it is often the case

that any person entering into a collaborative project of autobiography has an agenda to which they are dedicated significantly.

The Process of Production: *The Islandman*

An account of native autobiography in Ireland must begin with *An tOileánach* (1929). Its process of production involves the collaboration of the three roles laid out above (native, editor, and translator). Other native autobiographies produced after *An tOileánach (The Islandman)* were developed following—to one degree or another—the example set for them, including the other Blasket texts, such as *Fiche Bliain ag Fás* (*Twenty Years A-Growing*) and *Peig: A Scéal Féin* (*Peig: The Autobiography of Peig Sayers of the Great Blasket Island*). First published in 1929, *An tOileánach* is the autobiography of Tomás Ó Criomhthain, a Blasket Island fisherman. The origins of this book lie within the community dwelling on the Great Blasket, but the catalyst for the project was the great number of visiting scholars who were drawn to the Blaskets by their reputation for being an "untainted" Gaelic cultural area. John Millington Synge was one of the first visitors to the island when he arrived in August 1905 to explore the rich store of Irish language and culture preserved on the margins, far from the influence of Anglicizing forces (Mac Conghail 1987:132). The reputation of the Blaskets as a bastion of "pure" Gaelic language and culture also drew the Norwegian linguist, Carl Marstrander, in late summer 1907. He was directed to Ó Criomhthain for instruction in Irish by the King of the Island.[3] Marstrander studied Irish with Ó Criomhthain, and introduced him to some early Gaelic Revival literature, such as the novel *Niamh* (1907) by Father Peadar Ó Laoghaire (O'Crohan 2000:224; Mac Conghail 1987:135).

Marstrander, in turn, encouraged Robin Flower (1881-1946), an English scholar studying Old Irish with him in Dublin, to go to the Blaskets and Ó Criomhthain for lessons from "the master" (O'Crohan 2000:238). Flower arrived in 1910, ready to learn Modern Irish to supplement his study of Old Irish with Marstrander; he studied with Ó Criomhthain periodically over the course of several years (Mac Conghail 1987:137-38; Dew 1998:10). Nor was it a one-sided exchange, since Ó Criomhthain was able to utilize some of Flower's knowledge of Irish and other literatures to broaden and enrich his own writing, and to go beyond the short articles that he had been writing on folklore for journals (Mac Conghail 1987:139; O'Crohan 2000:x). Flower would also serve as the translator of *An tOileánach*, informed by his studies with Ó Criomhthain, when he produced the English version of *The Islandman* (1934).

While Robin Flower played a crucial role in assuring Ó Criomhthain of the interest of foreign scholars in the culture of the Great Blasket and eventually served as his translator, as Mac Conghail notes (139), without Brian Ó Ceallaigh, Ó Criomhthain might never have

[3] The King of the Island was Ó Criomhthain's childhood friend, Pádraig Ó Catháin. The title of *rí* or "king" was used in several islands off the west coast of Ireland, usually for an individual elected to a position of responsibility and representation in that community. He was called on for local community leadership and served as the island's postman. See Mac Conghail 1987:39; O'Crohan 2000:224.

undertaken the project of autobiography at all. It was Pádraig Ó Siochfhradha (An Seabhac)[4] who directed Ó Ceallaigh to the Blaskets to study Irish, and who also provided him with a letter of introduction to Ó Criomhthain (140). He studied with Ó Criomhthain for almost a year in 1917; before he left, Ó Criomhthain promised him a "page by page . . . account of his life on the Island and that he would supply also a kind of daily account of Island life" (142). In return, Ó Ceallaigh supplied Ó Criomhthain with paper and other supplies (including tobacco and money), and Ó Criomhthain posted journal accounts to him. These were eventually published by An Seabhac as the island diary, *Allagar na hInise* (1928) (published in English translation as *Island Cross-Talk* in 1986). Ó Criomhthain had finished with the journal project by the end of 1923, and began work on his autobiography, sending pages along to Ó Ceallaigh as he completed them through 1924. At this point, the manuscript was nearly completed, and Ó Ceallaigh was attempting to have it published with no success. He eventually left the country and handed the entire project off to An Seabhac (Mac Conghail 1987:142; O'Crohan 2000:x-xi).

An Seabhac reviewed the manuscript, set it in order, requested of Ó Criomhthain certain details to flesh out portions of the text, and solicited the final chapter of the book. He also acted as editor, eliminating portions of it for reasons of length and for "reasons of 'taste', in accordance with the fashion of the time" (Mac Conghail 1987:144).[5] The manuscript was completed in 1926, and the first edition was published in 1929. In 1973 a second edition was edited by Pádraig Ua Maoileoin, Tomás Ó Criomhthain's grandson, whose edition both included and eliminated different portions of the manuscript than the first edition in an attempt to present a more authentic text (Ó Criomhthain 1980:8). A critical edition was published in 2002 from the original manuscript (barring the first chapter, which was lost and reconstructed from the first and second editions), and edited by Seán Ó Coileáin.[6]

Robin Flower's translation, *The Islandman,* was published by Talbot Press in Dublin in 1934, and again in 1937. Oxford University Press has done a great deal towards popularizing *The Islandman,* publishing it first in 1951, and keeping it in print as part of its World's Classics and Oxford Paper Backs series (Dew 1998:14; Ó Fiannachta 1983:44). In 2000, a complete set of the Blasket Island texts was reissued (Doan 2001:81). Although the consistent availability of *The Islandman* is appreciated, the presentation of the texts by Oxford University Press has perhaps contributed to the notion of the Blasket texts as constituting a completed set, a finished project located firmly in the past. The widespread dissemination of the work, in Ireland and elsewhere, has been in the English language, as *The Islandman.*

In the production of *The Islandman*, we have, then, a process of production that involved at least four individuals. Tomás Ó Criomhthain acted as native, providing his life story as the

[4] An Seabhac ("the hawk") was the pen-name of Ó Siochfhradha, who would later serve as editor for Tomás' work. He was heavily involved in the activities of the Gaelic League. He worked as a civil servant, served as a senator, and was an ardent folklorist engaged in collecting, editing, and publishing materials from the oral tradition in Ireland. It was customary for those active in the Gaelic Revival, and subsequently the Free State government, to use pen names when publishing.

[5] For an accounting of An Seabhac's editorial additions and excisions, see Stewart 1976, and Ó Coleáin's "*Réamhrá*" ("Foreword") in Ó Criomhthain 2002.

[6] For a detailed comparison of the first and second editions with the manuscript, consult Stewart 1976.

subject of the text. Ó Ceallaigh and An Seabhac both acted as editors, shaping the manuscript during the process of production by making suggestions and requests of Ó Criomhthain as he was writing. Flower then served as the translator, and it is his translation that has been used as the basis for translation into other languages for global distribution. Flower is unusual, however: unlike the typical translator who may become involved only after the text is finished and proceeds with the job without any direct contact with the native or editor, Flower contributed to Ó Criomhthain's development as a writer before the text was produced. And even before he took on the role as translator of *The Islandman*, he had already begun collecting material from Ó Criomhthain that would appear in a volume of local history edited by Flower. Flower, then, is an important figure in the process of production, and understanding his role is essential to developing a critical reading of *The Islandman*.

Understanding Robin Flower

Flower first visited the Great Blasket in 1910, and he returned regularly for the rest of his life, with a extended absence during World War I, introducing his wife and eventually his children to the Blasket. Flower's impetus for his journey of discovery came from his work. He had undertaken the task of cataloging the Irish manuscripts at the British Museum around 1906 (Ó Lúing 2000:97). Although he had already begun learning Modern Irish, he quickly felt the need for both Old and Middle Irish, and was granted a subsidy in June of 1910 to attend Professor Carl Marstrander's class in Dublin at the School of Irish Learning.[7] Marstrander sent Flower to the Blaskets and the hearth of Ó Criomhthain. As Flower's Irish improved, he began collecting texts from the oral tradition from Ó Criomhthain and other informants, ultimately enabling him to write his own account of the Blasket in *The Western Island* (1944), and to produce a collection of Ó Criomhthain's local history in *Seanchas ón Oileán Tiar* (published posthumously, 1956). Flower also drew on this material for his study, *The Irish Tradition* (1947). This collection of essays, originally delivered as lectures on the history of Irish literature, gave careful consideration to the influences and interactions between the Irish literary tradition and other European traditions. Along with other scholars, Flower "established . . . a climate for the Island community in which it would be possible for the Islanders to write about their lives and the Island in their own language" (Mac Conghail 1987:139).

Flower and Ó Criomhthain shared a friendship that was by all accounts remarkable. As Mac Conghail asserts, their connection was based upon shared "insights into literature, history and the very nature of man. . . . Flower's Irish had, over the period up to the first World War, so improved as to enable him to speak with Tomás on a considerable intellectual level" (1987:139). Flower's extensive training as a medievalist, and his study of Irish, were complemented by his studies with Ó Criomhthain on the Blasket, which introduced him to the medieval Europe of his imagination. As Flower put it, "The Blasket [was] the ultimate shore of the older world, where

[7] "The object of the School was to train native Irish scholars in the scientific investigation, study and publication of unedited Irish manuscripts, thus making available their literary and historical content, so that a true picture of Ireland's past might emerge" (Ó Lúing 2000:98).

one forgot London and the world of the East."[8] He was in the process of discovering evidence of a shared European tradition centuries old, and took great delight in uncovering Ireland's interaction with and assimilation of external influences through oral and scribal traditions.

Flower was one of a series of visitors to the Great Blasket, most of whom found what they had hoped to find. J. M. Synge discovered a model of pre-capitalistic society, George Thomson discovered a window into the poetry and life of Homeric Greece, and Flower found the world of medieval Europe. This is a major theme of Flower's *The Western Island,* which is preoccupied with linking the oral traditions of the Blasket with the (medieval) continent of Europe. He opened his book with the following anecdote of a proverb competition (1985:vii):

> The talk inevitably took the form of a recitation of the rich store of proverbs accumulated in a folk civilization on the necessity of death and the consolations of religious faith. One by one, almost as though reciting a liturgy, men and women produced each of his or her contribution from that apparently inexhaustible supply. At last, however, a silence fell as they waited, visibly searching their minds for a fresh inspiration. Suddenly, an old woman in the corner leaned forward and said with an air of finality:
>
> "Cá'il an sneachta bhí comh geal anuirig?" ("Where is the snow that was so bright last year?")
>
> I sprang up in excitement and cried out: "Où sont les neiges d'antan?" ["Where are the snows of yesteryear?"]
>
> "Who said that?" asked the King, an expert in this lore.
>
> "François Villon said it," I replied.
>
> "And who was he?" he returned. "Was he a Connaughtman?"
>
> "No, he lived hundreds of years ago and he said it in French, and it was a proverb of his people."
>
> "Well," broke in Tomás, "You can't better the proverb. I've always heard that the French are a clever people, and I wouldn't put it past them to have said that before we did."

During his conversations with Ó Criomhthain, Flower discovered a Blasket version of the tale of the Trojan Horse. He also connected Ó Criomhthain's story of a poetry competition and a story "which Laurence Sterne stole, by way of Burton of the *Anatomy*, from Lucian" (1985:17-20). In a newspaper article printed in 1931, he described the great number of traditions present in the oral culture of the Blasket: "I found traces . . . of a collection of tales which were told by Arabs to converted Jews," "three old women . . . told me . . . the story of Shakespeare's *Cymbeline,*" and "I also found traces of one of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*" (1931).[9] When considering the life and ways of the Island poet, Seán Ó Duínnslé (Seán Dunleavy) so important in Ó Criomhthain's narrative, Flower reflects (1985:95):

[8] 1929; cf. Mac Congáil 2004:11.

[9] Cf. Mac Congáil 2004:12.

> [If] we find, as I have found on the Island, a tale which can be traced back, through the jest-books of the Middle Ages and the sermon-books of the preaching friars to the Arabs of Africa, and through Persian books to ancient India, it is by such men that it has been carried from extremist East to farthest West, to die at last by a turf fire within hearing of the Atlantic wave.

Flower goes on to develop these "last of the race" motifs: "With Seán Ó Duínnslé, and with others of his kind and generation, passed the latest examples of a type of poet with whom the whole of Europe had an uneasy familiarity throughout the Middle Ages" (102). His book tends towards the Romantic and the nostalgic in the majority of his representations of the islanders. He draws parallels between the disappearance of the wandering poets and other aspects of the intrusion of the modern world into rural Ireland (106):

> They are gone now, and the fashion of the life they knew has gone with them. The people read newspapers, and, in the police barracks . . . a wireless set strikes wonder into the country people. . . . Perhaps they [the wandering scholars] had a secret of the light foot and the merry heart which is ill exchanged for a music that leaps sea and land to be trapped at last in a machine.

In this final line, Flower's nostalgia becomes melancholy, acquiring the sense of a missed chance; after all, had he been born into a different age, would he not have been one of the wandering scholars, exemplars of a mode of learning that he found more satisfactory than the modes based on modern technologies? He saw the people of the Blasket as engaged with the continuation of oral traditions that stretched back into the medieval period and included Gaelic and continental elements. As I will discuss below, his perspective on Ó Criomhthain's work was consistent with his emphasis on the continuity of oral traditions into the modern period.

Flower recounts that, while being ferried over the waves to the Great Blasket, the rower called out to him, "Say your farewell to Ireland." In response, he said, "And I turn and bid farewell, not only to Ireland, but to England and Europe and all the tangled world of today" (6). The Blaskets were a space outside of time for Flower, or at least outside of modernity, where processes of cultural transmission begun in the Middle Ages were still unfolding.[10] While watching rabbits at play, he reflects: "It was strange to see them sporting unconsciously, as though in some Eden before the coming of man on the earth" (120). Flower needed Ó Criomhthain and the people of the Blasket to give him living examples of the medieval world of his imagination with its interactions between cultures and between oral and chirographic processes. His framing of *The Islandman* reflects his beliefs about the significance of Blasket culture and its role as an exemplar of pre-modern communicative processes.

[10] Cf. Fabian 2002:27 for a diagram of schizogenic time/space, of which Flower's description is a prime example.

Critical Errors

An tOileánach and *The Islandman* are texts that have been read and understood in a fashion that I argue is not only limited, but fundamentally incorrect. This reading may be summarized by Seán Ó Tuama's mastering statement: "*An tOileánach* is more the biography of an island community than of a single islander. . . . [It is] a majestic social document. . . . One senses this public masculine mind revealing itself everywhere in *An tOileánach*" (1995:205). This line of thinking follows closely Flower's own assessment of Ó Criomhthain's work in his "Foreword" to *The Islandman*: "The great value of this book is that it is a description of this vanishing mode of life by one who has known no other, and tells his tale with perfect frankness, serving no theory and aiming at no literary effect" (O'Crohan 2000:vii). Both of these statements elide Ó Criomhthain's individuality and his own personal choices as an author, casting him as a representative type, indeed as *the* Islandman of the title. Mark Quigley argues that Flower "dramatically circumscribes Ó Criomhthain's agency as a writer," and he demonstrates that Flower presents Ó Criomhthain only as "a perceptive recorder of events and traditions" (2003:388-9). Similarly, Ó Tuama's reading marginalizes Ó Criomhthain's agency and individuality, but this view is not supported by a close reading of Ó Criomhthain's exercise of agency within the text.

Reading Ó Criomhthain's Agency

Thanks to the scholarship of James Stewart, Muiris Mac Conghail, and others, as well as the existence of multiple versions of the text, it is possible to assess the extent and nature of editorial collaboration, shaping, and interference in *An tOileánach* and *The Islandman.* While Ó Criomhthain was encouraged, even trained, to produce a certain type of writing, he consistently saw himself as the author constructing his own work, a process that he likened to the manner in which he built his own house—by himself, without any to hand him stone or mortar (O'Crohan 2000:189). This type of assertion must be interpreted carefully. It may prove impossible to evaluate its truth at a factual level, but it can be analyzed for its assertion and purpose in the text. By deploying this trope, Ó Criomhthain is asserting not only his competence as a builder of houses, but also his independence in endeavors that usually require assistance.

In a similar fashion, his encounter with the island poet reads as the explication of his own genesis as a writer, prior to any contact with outsiders. In introducing his first contact with the island poet, Ó Criomhthain begins with a statement of competence: "And, though no one has a word to say in favor of that sort of food nowadays, I was pleased enough with it then, for I had a mill in my mouth to grind it" (O'Crohan 2000:85). Although this statement is unrelated in subject to the following encounter, thematically it is part of Ó Criomhthain's repeated claims to independence and competence. Both his independence and his competence are threatened by the poet. Ó Criomhthain goes out cutting turf, expecting to gather a great deal of fuel, but is interrupted by the poet Dunlevy (Seán Ó Duinnslé). Ó Criomhthain remarks as follows (O'Crohan 2000:86):

> I fancy that no poet has ever been much good at carrying through any job that had any work in it except only poetry. . . for, whenever I take it in hand to compose quatrains (and I often do) I shouldn't be much use in a gang of workers or in the field so long as I was engaged upon them.

Ó Criomhthain establishes the work-shirking character of the poet, foreshadowing the interruption of his labor on the turf. He establishes an equivalency between composing poetry and the effects of hard physical labor, an assertion that he will later generalize to include all writing. And he claims the practice of poetry for himself as well, claiming a certain competence in the poet's craft. The poet bids him to take a break from his work and sit down. Ó Criomhthain complies (*idem*):

> I didn't care much for what he had to say, but I was rather shy of refusing to sit down with him. Besides, I knew that if the poet had anything against me, he would make a satire on me that would be very unpleasant, especially as I was just about coming out in the world.

The effects and fear of a poet's satire are familiar tropes in the Gaelic tradition, but also of interest is Ó Criomhthain's identification of himself as vulnerable during the liminal transition between adolescence and manhood.

The poet then recites the first poem he ever made, "The Black Faced Sheep," a satire composed against a neighbor he accused of stealing his prize sheep. Remarkably, the poet then requests that Ó Criomhthain write it down. "'The poem will be lost,' says he, 'if somebody doesn't pick it up. Have you anything in your pocket that you could write it down with?'" (*idem*). Even more remarkably, Ó Criomhthain fishes out his pencil and paper without any explanation of why he took them out cutting turf in the first place. And bemoaning his misfortune, he writes down the poet's work in an improvised spelling as he was not yet literate in Irish. "And that was one of the first days that I felt the world going against me, for the fact is, for one day that went well with me, five would go wrong for me from that day out" (87). As Mac Conghail has argued (1987:142), there is a link between Ó Criomhthain's genesis as a writer and his encounter with the poet: "Tomás used the only important creative figure he had known from within his culture in the writing up of his genesis as a writer." The increased awareness of hardship reflects Ó Criomhthain's alertness to the difficulties inherent in being a writer. Rather than a passive recorder of the community's biography, Ó Criomhthain constructs and develops an account of his own development as a writer.

The episode ends as Ó Criomhthain, having failed to cut much turf, discovers that his dinner has spoiled while working with the poet. Ending the episode on a note of exasperation has a comedic and lightening effect, but it also serves to underscore the sacrifice that being a writer might entail. By way of further reinforcement, Ó Criomhthain sketches a parallel episode. In the next chapter, his turf cutting is once again interrupted, this time by spirited girls. In this way, Ó Criomhthain draws a link between making poetry, writing as a substitute for work, and sexual activity. Like sex, writing is a potentially debilitating and dangerous enterprise (cf. Kiberd 2001:529). But unlike sex, writing is also a potential source of income, even in old age, which makes it productive in the same way that work is productive. Furthermore, any sort of work that

brings income is not to be scorned in *An tOileánach* and *The Islandman*, since the ability to work underlies all personal independence on the island.

Ó Criomhthain's relationship with the poet is a thread that runs through the bulk of the text. Ó Criomhthain shows himself in command of the poet's repertoire, apparently with some exclusivity. At a Christmas gathering, his Uncle Diarmid says to Ó Criomhthain (O'Crohan 2000:139):

> "God's blessings on the souls of your dead, sing me 'The Quilt.' I've never heard the whole of it together since the poet Dunlevy let it out of his lips." I didn't require much pressing, though 'The Quilt' tried me hard. I sang eighteen verses of it. "O, King of Glory! Eternal praise be to Him! How on earth did he put it all together?" said Diarmid.

In this way, Ó Criomhthain pushes the assertion that he had a special relationship with the poet, and in some ways positions himself as the poet's successor. Certainly, Ó Criomhthain puts forward no other candidates for the position in his text. Shortly after this demonstration of his command over "The Quilt," he is out driving the cattle when he comes across the poet. Once again the poet detains him to write out another of his compositions. '"Have you got any paper in your pocket? If you have, out with it, and your pencil, too. I shall carry all the songs I ever made to the grave with me if you don't pick them up"' (140). By claiming the role of the poet's heir, Ó Criomhthain is making a bid for a powerful double status on the island. He is claiming both the prestige and authority of the Gaelic oral tradition contained within the poet's repertoire, and also a new tradition of island-writer or author of which he is the first (even if not the last).

Ó Criomhthain is well known for his singing and dancing. And, even though he does assert his claim as a respected singer, he argues his claim to poetry through his special relationship with the poet in a more strenuous fashion, suggesting, perhaps, that he might have been gainsaid on this particular claim: "Was I myself fated beyond all the people in the Island to have all my time wasted by the poet?—for I never saw him frequenting any of the others, but only me" (152). This grumbling is boasting, but also a concern about the inability of poetry to bring income. While "quatrains" are as exhausting as physical labor, they are not productive in the same way. Prose writing, however, is a different matter: it is his writing for newspapers and journals that provides him vital income in old age. In Chapter 22, Ó Criomhthain describes in detail some of the wake practices and customs of the island, and he also takes a moment to reflect on the life and work of the poet Dunlevy (215): "The poet had a great character when he was young. . . . I knew his character better than anybody else though he was old in my day." By asserting his relationship with the poet as exclusive, Ó Criomhthain attempts to drive home his claim to both a poet's prestige and a unique position as the island's first author.

Reading Orality in *The Islandman*

There are moments in *An tOileánach* and *The Islandman* that reflect the shift in communicative technologies from orality to a type of literacy. These moments, so beloved of Walter J. Ong, are genuine occurrences; they are not presented in service of a theory of

communications, but they are not unconscious either. While many accounts of the Blaskets are at pains to emphasize the oral modality of communication on the island, Ó Criomhthain was literate, and in his work on *An tOileánach* and *The Islandman* he was operating in some sort of literate mode. As Ong has observed, the transition from an oral mode to a literate one allows for increased self-awareness and gives Ó Criomhthain a vantage point from which to survey his life: "technologies are not mere exterior aids but also interior transformations of consciousness. . . . Writing heightens consciousness" (1982:82). The transition from an oral mode to a literate one allows for increased self-awareness and gives Ó Criomhthain a vantage point from which to survey his life.

Ó Criomhthain was educated in the island school, and there he learned to read and write in English. As noted in his first encounter with the poet, he was initially forced to improvise with the English alphabet in order to set down the words in Irish using the *cló Rómhánach* (Roman script), until he learned to write Irish in the *cló Gaelach* (Gaelic script) in his middle age (O'Crohan 2000:223).

> In the house where I used to stay [on the mainland] the children were always going to school. The Irish language was being taught in the Dunquin school in those days—as soon as it was in any school in Ireland. The children of this house used to read tales to me all the time whenever I happened to be in their company until I got a taste for the business and made them give me the book, getting one of them by turns to explain to me the difficulties that occur in the language. . . . It didn't take me long to get so far that I hadn't to depend on them to read out my tale for me once I understood the differences. For my head was full of it, and, if I came across a limping sentence, all I had to do was to hunt for it in my own brain.

He describes this process as occurring before Marstrander came to visit the island. Unlike critical accounts of his learning to write Irish, which largely emphasize the role outsiders had to play in his progress, Ó Criomhthain, in a self-conscious manner, tells a story about teaching himself to read and write, and locates it before the arrival of the visitors, emphasizing his independence, resourcefulness, and overall competence. His account directly contradicts the critical viewpoint that saw the islanders as a primarily oral community in contrast to the visitors' literacy.

After learning to read Irish, Ó Criomhthain reports: "Very soon I had a book or two, and people in this island were coming to listen to me reading the old tales to them, and, though they themselves had a good lot of them, they lost their taste for telling them to one another when they compared them with the style the books put on them" (*idem*). This does indeed call to mind some of Ong's observations about the wonder that the practices of literacy instill when first encountered in a community that functions largely in an oral mode. Discussing the wonder of literacy, he observes (1982:93):

> Scraps of writing are used as magic amulets, but they also can be valued simply because of the wonderful permanence they confer on words. The Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe describes how in an Ido village the one man who knew how to read hoarded in his house every bit of printed material that came his way—newspapers, cartons, receipts. It all seemed too remarkable to throw away.

While moments in *The Islandman* reflect the dynamics between orality and literacy, a reading focused solely on recovering the text's oral elements sets aside Ó Criomhthain's carefully constructed arguments for his own agency and independence as a writer. A reading focused exclusively on orality potentially undermines even the possibility of agency by portraying the native as being in the midst of a vast communicative shift over which he has no control. This type of reading tends to arrive at the conclusion that the native is merely an informant or mouthpiece, not an active and creative contributor to the process of production.

Writing against Type, Reading the Individual

Understanding Ó Criomhthain as the mouthpiece of his community, as expressing only thoughts held in common with the other islanders, is perplexing in light of what he writes about himself, namely that he was engaged in producing literature. Partly the confusion seems to lie with critics' understanding of the dynamics of orality and literacy.[11] Ó Tuama's statement that *An tOileánach* (*The Islandman*) "is more the biography of an island community than of a single islander" foregrounds Ó Criomhthain's lifelong participation in the oral traditions of the Blasket, but overshadows his career as a writer, since he began writing during the later part of his life. Ó Criomhthain's work does retain many elements of what Ong identifies as the psychodynamics of orality;[12] however, it is a fundamental misunderstanding of orality to suppose that the individual has no place in it. It comes down to an unresolved, possibly irresolvable tension between Ó Criomhthain-as-individual or Ó Criomhthain-as-type. As an individual, he is an author, singular and unique, crafting a literary text. As a type, he is the islandman, a representative of a larger group, ironically also posited as unique. Furthermore, this island community is meant to represent the exemplar of Gaelic identity. This tension is embodied even on the cover of the current Oxford University Press edition of *The Islandman*. The photograph taken by Thomas H. Mason of Ó Criomhthain holding a copy of his book, *An tOileánach*, forms the background of the cover, and in white letters the text "The Islandman [/] Tomás O'Crohan" floats across the middle of the image. Here Ó Criomhthain is pictured as author holding his book. He is pictured in profile, wearing his iconic hat—a type of hat not worn in other pictures of the islanders included in the text. On the other hand, the title, *The Islandman*, refers to Ó Criomhthain as a representative type, which coincides with Flower's argument that Ó Criomhthain, while optimally skilled for the job, is nonetheless producing a text whose purpose is merely to record and represent the "vanishing mode of life" on the Blasket, not to record and represent himself. Ó

[11] See Harris 1993 for a thoroughly considered analysis of the differences between texts collected from Ó Criomhthain's dictation and texts written by Ó Criomhthain. While Harris' analysis focuses on the use of triadic structures, he demonstrates that Ó Criomhthain was fully capable of realism in his writing, very much in a literate mode, not an oral one.

[12] Ong's further characteristics of orally based thought and expression are: 1) additive rather than subordinative; 2) aggregative rather analytic; 3) redundant or "copious"; 4) conservative or traditionalist; 5) close to the human lifeworld; 6) agonistically-toned; 7) empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced; 8) homeostatic; 9) situational rather than abstract (1982:31-56).

Tuama praises *An tOileánach* in contrast to other Blasket autobiographies for being a "factual autobiography" and not at all an "autobiographical novel" (1995:205). Here is the bias against Ó Criomhthain as an individual and as a subjective author: his text is valued because he merely reports objective facts unaffected by his own position.

By way of contrast, Ó Criomhthain's account locates his genesis as a writer during his youth, and his acquisition of literacy in Irish as occurring before Marstrander came to visit the island. Ó Criomhthain tells a story about teaching himself to read and write, and situates it before the arrival of the visitors. He emphasizes his own skills and accomplishments when he describes his first meeting with Marstrander: "he had observed that the best Irish was here. He asked the King who was the best man to teach him Irish. The king explained to him that I was the man, for I was able to read it and had fine, correct Irish before ever I read it" (O'Crohan 2000:224). In the penultimate chapter, Ó Criomhthain writes, "I have been twenty-seven years hard at work on this language, and it is seventeen years, since the Norseman, Marstrander, came my way" (241). He specifically establishes that his literacy has preceded Marstrander's arrival by ten years. While *The Islandman* is the result of a series of collaborations, Ó Criomhthain makes a sustained bid for his status and role as a writer and author.

John McGahern has argued that Ó Criomhthain's "view of reality is at no time a personal view and it is never at variance with the values of his society as a whole. In fact we find him boasting that never once in a whole lifetime did he break a custom, and custom was the only law of that civilization" (1989:55). It might be more correct to say that Ó Criomhthain sees himself as the ultimate arbitrator of community values, and that if he never breaks a custom, it is because he is the judge. Rather than viewing himself as a typical member of the group he sees himself as the exceptional member of that group. The tendency to equate orality with faceless and undifferentiated community is not sustained by a close reading of *An tOileánach* and *The Islandman*. Ó Criomhthain's bid for agency as the author of the text, even though working in collaboration with others, runs through the length of the text. Moreover, he carefully represents himself as acquiring the skills and technologies of writing as a process of self-development, independent of aid from visiting scholars. Even if this is not entirely accurate or consistent with other accounts of Ó Criomhthain's development as a writer, a critical reading must at least consider his claims of independence.

Conclusion

Most discussions of *An tOileánach* and *The Islandman* end with a meditation on Ó Criomhthain's own oft-quoted conclusion to his book: "I have written minutely of much that we did, for it was my wish that somewhere there should be a memorial of it all, and I have done my best to set down the character of the people about me so that some record of us might live after us, for the like of us will never be again" (244). Frequently read as an icon's elegy for a pre-modern culture, dovetailing with "last of the race" tropes that resonate on both sides of the Atlantic, this conclusion is also Ó Criomhthain's assertion of his own greatness. In words not included in either the first edition of *An tOileánach* or consequently in Flower's translation, he writes: "Rud eile, níl tír ná dúthaigh ná náisiún ná go dtugann duine an chraobh leis tar chách eile.

Ó lasadh an chéad tine insan Oileán so, níor scríbh éinne a bheatha ná a shaol ann. Fágann san an chraobh ag an té a dhein é" (Ó Criomhthain 2002:328).[14] In *The Islandman,* this passage is reduced to: "Since the first fire was kindled in this island none has written of his life and his world. I am proud to set down my story and the story of my neighbours" (O'Crohan 2000:244-45).

Ó Criomhthain takes a great deal of pride both in being the first writer from the island, and in being the exceptional individual representing his community in print. This sense of self-worth and pride is expressed carefully to avoid the appearance of boasting. As he says of his singing: "If there were two better than me, there were three worse" (O'Crohan 2000:108; cf. Ó hÁinle 1993:137). Even while observing some of the conventions of modesty by acknowledging the impossibility of recording his life in isolation from the community in which he lived, he still lays claim to a victory over his peers. But in *The Islandman* (which does not include Ó Criomhthain's claim to victory over his peers) his achievement of being the first author from the island is dropped, and what is left is a more modest statement about his pride in his work as a writer. This serves, in effect, to place Ó Criomhthain back among the crowd from which he has written himself into difference. In short, An Seabhac and Flower's contributions to the shaping of the text present him as a type, a very good example of a type, but still of the same type as all his peers. Reading the conclusion of the text as an active assertion challenges what has become the conventional reading. In this light, "the like of us will never be again" takes on the meaning of a boast: no one has ever been the like, or equal, of the people of the Blasket, and among them Tomás Ó Criomhthain stands out as the first Blasket writer. He has written himself as a writer, asserted his own agency in the text, and laid claim to both the inheritance of the oral tradition and to a new tradition of written literature.

National University of Ireland, Galway

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[14] "Another thing, there isn't a country, district, or nation in which one person doesn't exceed all others in accomplishments. From the lighting of the first fire on this Island, no one has written about his life nor the Island's. That leaves the achievement with the one who has done it" (translation mine).

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Paradigms of Social Aesthetics in Themne Oral Performance

Amadu Wurie Khan

Introduction: The Artistic Variation Imperative

The Themne belong to the Mande-speaking group of West Africa, part of the Bantu group (see Asher and Moseley 1993). They are one of the two largest of the 16 ethnic groups present in Sierra Leone, and constitute about 30 percent of Sierra Leone's total population of 5.4 million. They predominate in the northern region of the country.

Themne social and cultural traditions include "secret" societies,[1] mask devils,[2] and folklore practices and genres like storytelling, dirges, poetry, dances, songs, and folk theatre. As with other ethnic groups in Sierra Leone, most traditional Themne folklore is handed down by means of storytelling. In almost all communities, whether rural or urban, storytelling serves a plethora of functions: social, mythopoetic, pedagogical, recreational, artistic, and aesthetic (see also Sieber 1971, Bauman 1983, Finnegan 1992a and b, Okpewho 1990). The Themne, like other cultures in Sierra Leone and indeed throughout Africa, are a predominantly non-literate society that is gradually being exposed to audiovisual mass media forms of entertainment including the cinema, television, video, radio, and, very recently, mobile phones (see UNESCO 1990, Khan 1997a and b, also Mushengyezi 2003).[3] This exposure has placed greater demands on Themne oral art practitioners to make their material and performance more attractive to their clientele, particularly to the younger generation, as has been observed elsewhere. The latter constitutes the larger part of the Themne population, and, as the school-going age group is exposed to literate media entertainment forms, it is increasingly likely to lose interest in traditional folklore practices, as has been the case with storytelling in post-war technological societies in the West (for a similar observation among the Irish-Gaelic storytelling traditions, see Delargy 1945).

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[1] Secret societies are traditional cultural groups that maintain secrecy in their ritual and initiation practices.

[2] "Mask devil" refers to a masquerade.

[3] Mushengyezi argues that a combination of widespread non-literacy and poverty among Ugandans permits indigenous media to continue to be a viable means of public communication. Though poverty is dominant in Sierra Leone, the use of radio and mobile phone technology is widespread even in remote rural areas and plays a central part in public and interpersonal communication. The same writer infers, however, that the advent of new technology is a potential threat to the use of indigenous media among younger generations of Ugandans.

Compounding this setback to increased oral art appreciation by audiences is the nature of oral art itself, which is subject to diminishing marginal returns since it is constantly being repetitively reproduced and recycled from one generation to another (Avorgbedor 1990, Agovi 1995, Ben-Amos 1984). Repetitive exposure to the same materials or their varieties often leads to monotony and lack of interest on the part of the same audiences. As a consequence, the performance of such materials and their sustained popularity with stable audiences increasingly hinges on the ability of Themne oral artists to vary their material and make it more captivating or marketable to their audiences.

However, mass non-literacy, availability of modern media, an increased youthful population, and a desire to minimize performance monotony are not the only impetus for African oral artists' craftsmanship. As this study argues, aesthetic considerations also play a critical role in their deployment of multimedia to realize creativity and achieve artistic variation. It is in this way that oral artists elaborate and improvise during oral performances, thereby continuing to engage their audiences. Specifically, I will examine the social aesthetic paradigms of sociability, the physical setting of the performance, and the belief system or worldview of the Themne, and consider the ways in which these factors engender artistic variation and creativity. I will also consider the ramifications of social aesthetics and multimedia for the audiences' appreciation and interpretation of the oral performance. My social aesthetic inquiry will not focus on an analysis of story texts *per se*, but on the physical setting and sociocultural conventions of Themne storytelling practices. The focus is on aspects of social aesthetics that impinge on artistic variation and creativity in storytelling and on processes of active audience participation in the delivery and interpretation of oral performances. I hope that such an analysis of the Themne oral artist's ability to exploit the aesthetic resources of the performance setting will lend weight to calls for scholars to pay due attention to the uniqueness of each performance and to capture, transcribe, and translate the "externalities" of a given performance as deployed by the oral artist.[4]

Aesthetics, Timing of Performance, and Sociability

I will begin with the social and sociability function of storytelling, which is a dominant feature of Themne social aesthetics and receptionalism. It both underpins the Themne concept of oral art practice and accounts for the importance accorded to the physical setting of storytelling performances. In this regard I employ the term "receptionalism" as used by John Miles Foley (1986, 1991, 1995) to embody the processes employed by audiences to interpret and appreciate oral performances. It also incorporates what Thomas Dubois (1996) refers to as "native hermeneutics," a term that designates the norms and principles employed by audiences for constructing or arriving at a meaning during a given performance.

I have coined the term "social aesthetics" to refer to the appreciation for, and utilization of, social interaction or socialization within a given sociocultural milieu or tradition. It is coterminous with the enjoyment derived by individuals and communities from sociocultural

[4] Muana 1998a, Barber 2005, Finnegan 2005, Schieffelin 2005, Hunter and Oumarou 1998, and Foley 1986, 1991.

activities such as oral art forms. In this sense, it contrasts with material aesthetics, which addresses the production and appreciation of tangible art forms such as sculpture and carving. Moreover, it differs from verbal aesthetics associated with artistic or poetic language and usually realized through the use of linguistic and extralinguistic resources (see Hunter and Oumarou 1998).

Social aesthetics is essential for the collective participation of both the oral artists and their audiences in the delivery of an oral art form as a performance. This is usually realized through the use of other multimedia material paraphernalia such as musical instruments and costumes. When employed in this way, the material paraphernalia lend support to the sociability and entertainment dimensions, among others, of oral art performances. Inasmuch as material culture complements the social aesthetics of the performance, the concept of social aesthetics as used here derives from sociability mechanisms such as communal entertainment and collective artistry[5] through the use of multimedia and paralinguistic resources (gestures and other body movements), as well as other shared generic conventions of performance. In simple terms, social aesthetics implies the whole gamut of sociocultural conventions, patterns, and practices that embody the appreciation and production of cultural norms and practices, as well as entertainment and social interaction among individuals or communities.

The intrinsic sociability element of Themne storytelling is largely due to the interplay between vocational, climatological, and sociocultural factors. Themneland's economy is mainly agricultural, with crop farming, animal husbandry, and fishing as the three main income-generating activities. Other economies include small trading and small-scale mineral mining. Storytelling, like other folklore performances, serves a recreational and entertainment purpose. The sessions allow people to relax with food and drink, and are held in the evening or at night following a busy day's work on the farm and at sea.[6] For example, an anonymous storyteller in the *Temne Stories* collection underlines this view by reminding the audience-participants from the outset of the social and recreational value of performing the folktale entitled *The Girl Who Chose A Husband On Her Own* (Turay 1989:51):

> We are only gathered here to entertain ourselves.
> So everyone can have the opportunity of a smile.
> If anyone has problems, he will forget about them.

Complementing the vocational exigencies for nighttime storytelling in Themneland is the aesthetic factor. It is the norm, particularly in rural areas, for storytelling to take place in the evening and at night, around a fire, and by moonlight.[7] Against the aesthetic backdrop of

[5] The term is used here in the sense developed by Richard Bauman (1986), who refers to all aspects of participation, such as providing a chorus, filling in missing details, interjections, mimicry, and dancing by both audience and storyteller in delivering and performing a story.

[6] Predominantly in the Themne coastal areas of northwestern Sierra Leone, as has been observed elsewhere (see Bruford 1994; Okpewho 1990, 1992; Finnegan 1970, 1992a and b; Bauman 1983, 1986, 1997).

[7] For similar observations in other cultures, see Okpewho 1990, 1992; Finnegan 1970, 1992a and b; Bruford 1994; Delargy 1945.

moonlight and wood fire, families, neighbors, and community members converge to socialize and perform stories and other related folklore genres such as poetry, riddles, and proverbs.[8] The aesthetic impetus for storytelling and its inherent sociability for the community are encapsulated in the Themne proverb: "When the moon is out, the loner longs for a storytelling performance with their kin."

The Themne consider it unsociable to perform stories in poor light or in complete darkness, and very few instances of storytelling are held under a "dark moon."[9] Performers and audiences who were interviewed claimed that poor light or darkness is unmotivating and uninspiring to their creative impulse and artistry, and instances were observed during fieldwork where performances were called off or abandoned midway through a story due to a shortage of firewood or the moon going behind a cloud for a long period, thus leading to poor light. For example, Kamanda Bongay (henceforth known as Bongay), a well-known Themne storyteller in his community of Mahera, a costal town, constantly resisted pleas from his audience-participants to continue to perform in poor light. Inducements to lure him to start or even to finish a performance begun before the onset of poor light ranged from providing substitutes like hurricane lanterns or a *gbem-gbeh lamp* to offering him an abundant supply of free *omole* and cannabis.[10]

A recurring reason for Bongay's refusal to perform under dark or poor natural light was that it prevented eye contact between artist and audience. He argued that a lack of visibility would hinder the ability of both audience and performer to adequately explore the extralinguistic multimedia resources, especially sensorial ones, crucial for artistic improvisation and appreciation of the performance (see Finnegan 2005). In this culture, therefore, as has been observed elsewhere by Foley (1986, 1991) and others, the active role of the audience is crucial for the realization and reception of the artistic, aesthetic, and interpretative experience of the performance as an oral tradition. Bongay and other storytellers also claimed that despite the proximity between performer and audience, poor light makes it difficult for them to evaluate the performance and for the storyteller to evaluate the audience's reaction to his delivery. Themne folktale performers consider extralingustic improvisation and audience feedback as critical to the aesthetic animation of the performance and to enhancing its collective artistic delivery (see also Yankah 1995; Finnegan 2005).

In addition to the proxemic, spatial, and temporal domains of a socially aesthetic performance, many Themne storytelling audiences explained during interviews that their aversion to performing stories in the dark, without moonlight ambience, resembled an exercise

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[8] For other non-Themne parallels among other Sierra Leonean cultures, see Muana 1998b; Finnegan 1970, 1992a and b.

[9] In Themne parlance, "dark moon" refers to the period in the lunar cycle when the moon is either non-existent or appears late in the night or is not visible.

[10] Bongay was a habitual user of cannabis. *Gbem-gbeh lamp* is a locally made naked-flame paraffin lantern made from recycled tins and cans. *Omole* is a type of down-market, spirit-based alcoholic drink that is locally distilled by crude methods.

"in a school where stories are read and not performed" (Khan 1991-96). This view underlines the artistic philosophy of most professional and amateur storytellers alike: that narrating stories without performing them would subvert their social import. I also observed that audience-participants gave prominence to the mimetic realization of a story and the diegetic dimension over the mere telling of the story.[11] The general consensus was that "dark moon" storytelling would hinder the storytellers' ability to deploy multimedia resources in an innovative manner in order to vary their material. More significantly, they argued that this aberrant practice is likely to endanger the social aesthetic benefits of storytelling.

The social aesthetics of storytelling around a fire and/or by moonlight explains why the dry season is most conducive to storytelling and other verbal art activities among the Themne. As open air or outdoor social events, performances depend on dry weather, which is rare during the alternating rainy season, when rural communities are preoccupied with farm work—agriculture being the main occupation of both storytellers and potential participants. There are therefore comparatively more communal storytelling activities during the dry season.

The break in agricultural activities provides an opportunity for amateur and professional storytellers to while away the time, practice their art, and augment their income. Moreover, at the onset of the dry period, more food and money is accrued from agro-based enterprises. This makes it possible for festivals to take place that are steeped in storytelling and other traditional folklore forms of entertainment. These include family festivals, weddings, initiations, and rites of passage or graduation ceremonies from traditional societies (see Conteh-Morgan and Dixon-Fyle 1999). For example, Denkena—another prominent professional Themne storyteller—is also a commercial rice farmer. His itinerary for storytelling largely covers the period in between farming activities and after the harvest in the months of December through April (for similar practice among the Irish-Gaelic cultures, see Delargy 1945).

In Themneland, storytelling as a folkloric entertainment medium is a key accompaniment to other communal social gatherings.[12] Instances of the connection of the performers' choice of folklore material, content, and style of delivery to the appropriateness of social event or function abound during fieldwork. In particular, I observed Bongay and Denkena varying the themes and style of their delivery in relation to the social occasions that were either at hand or underway in their communities. Thus, in the multiple performance of the folktale entitled *The Girl Who Chose A Husband On Her Own,* I observed Denkena varying the characters, themes, songs, and moral lessons depending on celebrations underway in the communities in which he was performing.[13] In one performance the main character is a young girl in puberty, who after graduating from the *Bondo*[14] chose a husband based purely on good looks rather than on good character. The tale's

[11] As has been observed in other cultures (see Finnegan 1992a and b; Okpewho 1990, 1992; Bauman and Briggs 1990).

[12] As has been observed elsewhere in Scheub 1985; Finnegan 1970; Okpewho 1990.

[13] For a similar observation of songs among Balto-Finnic cultures and their interpretation by audiences, see Dubois 1996.

[14] A female circumcision rite of passage usually characterized by festivity.

thematic focus on deviance not only was foregrounded by the *Bondo* ceremony that was underway in Mahera, but also served as a moral warning to all girls in the audience against indulging in similar action after graduating from the *Bondo*. In fact, Denkena made numerous references to the girl initiates as likely to behave in similar fashion to his main character in the tale. In another performance of the same tale that coincided with the death of a young bride in the same town, Dekena changes the theme of the story to insinuate that the young bride's death might have been caused by her co-wives, who might have resorted to foul play or the casting of an evil spell to bring it about. Again Denkena moralized that the woman's death might have been prevented had she accepted her parents' choice of bridegroom.

Similarly, many of Bongay's oral narratives, including stories, were framed by sociocultural celebrations like masquerades, naming ceremonies, religious celebrations, and even funerals that occurred or were underway in his neighborhood and community in Mahera. As in Denkena's case, many of his stories performed during the *Bondo* and wedding festivals were often couched in the moral values of family life and fidelity (see also Bronner 1992, Ben-Amos 1984, Martin 1990). His performance of *The Shoe Maker and the Thebu,* for instance, was framed in variable ways, so much so that as children we could anticipate his characterization and thematic focus based on what was currently happening in our community. The "Shoe Maker," for example, as protagonist in the tale, could be anyone in the community who had been lucky in having a good fish catch or harvest, or could reflect a number of other current circumstances. We were able to make such connections because we have a shared knowledge of the narrative pathways of the stories.

Sociocultural events are therefore opportune backdrops that are tactfully exploited by the savvy oral artist for remolding and varying their art as well as providing a moral foreground for their narratives' message. I would suggest that the consistency of this pattern and its prevalence in Themneland might also be attributable to social aesthetic considerations. Both stories and sociocultural events are referents for—and linked together by—the aesthetic imperative of oral art performance as well as their interpretation and appreciation.[15]

The above examples serve to shed light on receptionalism in oral performance among the Themne from two perspectives. First, in spite of the performer's varying of characters, themes, songs, and even moral lessons, the audience-participants are able to participate in their interpretation and appreciation. This is made possible because performer and audience-participants share the same hermeneutic norms of Themne performance tradition (see also Dubois 1996). For example, through a process of "attribution" the audience-participants were able to identify the characters within their community who were implicated in the stories as well as interpret and understand the messages or moral lessons being conveyed. Second, it shows that oral performances such as storytelling do not take place in an aesthetic vacuum, but in the context of shared traditional expectations inherent in the performance community (see Foley 1986:215, Dubois 1996).

It is evident from the foregoing discussion that the social aesthetic potential for storytelling can be more resourcefully harnessed in the context of prevailing sociocultural activities as well as climatological and vocational expediencies within the community. Its

[15] For similar observations, see Briggs 1988, Bauman and Briggs 1990.

socializing function provides the impulse for the oral artist and the audience-participants to deploy their linguistic and extralinguistic resources, often embedded in multimedia, in reworking and elaborating their storytelling material. As has been observed in the Irish and Scottish Gaelic cultures, social institutions have largely contributed to the preservation of oral traditions like storytelling in Africa.[16] However, the extent to which considerations for social values and the sociability factor contribute to aesthetics may also be contingent upon the Themne worldview and belief systems, as indeed in any other culture. The next section will explore this relationship and its ramifications for Themne artistic creativity and receptionalism.

The Social Aesthetics of Themne Belief Systems

Storytelling, like other folkloric art forms, is an embodiment of the way people see the world and the belief patterns of the culture in which they exist. The pedagogical value of this medium for transferring knowledge across generations has been exhaustively discussed in the literature (e.g., Degh 1995*,* Avorgbedor 1990, Agovi 1995, Ben-Amos 1984). However, little has been said about the way in which social aesthetics underpins the belief systems and worldview of certain cultures on the one hand, and on the other how it in turn influences artistic variation and audiences' reception of oral performances.

We have seen that the tradition favors nighttime storytelling, and that it is considered unsociable to perform stories in poor light. Most of the audience participants who were interviewed after a story had been abandoned believed that stories in these conditions might be couched in grotesque imagery, causing children to have nightmarish dreams and thereby subverting the social and entertainment benefits to be derived.[17] The aesthetic beauty of the storytelling environment and its convivial atmosphere, among other factors, are generally believed to induce children to sleep through the night. It is the norm, therefore, for parents and other adults to marshal children out into the brilliant moonlight on courtyards and verandas to tell or practice stories and other folklore genres.

In some situations, parents and other storytellers were prevailed upon to tell a story to assuage children's distress emanating from an abrupt end to a performance due to a "dark moon." Where this happened, the storyteller switched from "dark" and gory narratives to light-hearted ones devoid of scary content. In most cases, harmless comical stories like *Bra Spider* or other animal stories popular with children were narrated as alternatives. Bongay, for instance, would often opt to perform less dramatic folklore genres like riddles, proverbs, and anecdotes as a substitute for the more elaborate storytelling performances that demanded detailed extralinguistic resources for their realization. I would argue that the choice of storytelling material by Bongay and other Themne storytellers responded to the demands imposed by social aesthetic considerations for storytelling performances, an observation Linda Dégh (1995) also considers to be a motivational dynamic for artistic creativity in many storytelling cultures. As

[16] See Delargy 1945 on the contributions of the Gaelic *céilidhe* or *áirnean* toward preserving oral traditions in post-war Ireland.

[17] See Bruford 1994 for similar observations on traditions in Victorian Scotland.

has been observed, such a consideration influenced the choice of stories, the thematic content or subject matter, and the method and time of delivery. As the Themne storytellers perform, they are compelled by the social aesthetic imperative to reshape and rework their stories.

Among the Themne the value accorded to the social aesthetics of the performance may help explain why in some parts of Themneland telling stories during the day is taboo.[18] The belief is particularly common in the rural areas where superstition is widespread. It is believed that daytime storytelling portends the death of a family or community member, so adult family members discourage children from telling stories during the day. However, after carrying out interviews with storytellers and their audiences, I believe that social aesthetics may be a subterranean factor underlying this seemingly superstitious belief. Some adults, including parents, hold the view that it is idle and unsociable for children to indulge in daylight storytelling.[19] Those who hold this view also agree that storytelling should therefore be relegated to bedtime, or to hours during the evening. Inherent in this view is the perception that storytelling is an opportunity to while away the time, socialize, and prepare the children for bed.

Nonetheless, there is inconsistency in this belief even among those who hold it across Themneland. It was evident that during the rainy season, when inclement weather made it difficult to have moonlight and wood fires, stories were told during the day. This was an expedient option, especially for children. The inconsistency lends itself to two conclusions: that practicalities can override Themne beliefs, and that social aesthetics and the socializing function of storytelling may also play a critical role in the sanction against daylight storytelling for the community. I would extrapolate from this situation another ramification for an oral performance receptionalist theory: just as the artists vary aspects of their performance as an index of artistic creativity, so may their appreciation and interpretation vary across time and generations. The performance becomes an enactment of cultural values and artistic norms inherent in the performance community. Both social aesthetics and artistic variation are contingent upon the Themne belief system. The latter facilitates the way audience-participants respond to and receive oral performances. Contrary to some scholarly thinking, then, belief systems, social aesthetics, artistic variation, and receptionalism are all mutually inclusive (Foley 1986:215).

What I have illustrated to this point is that the demands of sociability, social values, and cultural beliefs of the Themne provide a subtext for aesthetic appreciation. They also provide the motivational dynamic for the Themne oral performers' artistic variation and creativity. I will now examine how socializing and entertainment motives as well as the aesthetic value system for storytelling are overtly manifested in the physical setting of oral performances across Themneland. This phenomenon illustrates the way in which the aesthetic setting provides opportunities to Themne storytellers and their audience-participants to improvise in their art and infuse originality into their performances.

[18] For Irish Gaelic parallels, see Delargy 1945.

[19] For a discussion of the socializing function of storytelling among children, see Bronner 1992.

The Aesthetics of Setting, Drama, and Contextualization

The aesthetic setting of Themne storytelling around a fire or under moonlight keys the contextualization, along with the dramatic and artistic resources for the performance as a creative art. It is worth pointing out that the forms and artistic significance of contextualization in verbal arts such as storytelling have been amply discussed in the academic literature.[20] Ruth Finnegan (2005) has emphasized the role played by physical setting, timing, and pyrotechnics as critical to appreciation of performance.[21] Patrick Muana's discussion of contextualization cues (1998a) sheds light on the imperative for scholars to use contextualization as an analytical tool in negotiating and interpreting discourse and to understand its significance in negotiating aesthetic principles and social relations in oral performances.

However, the focus here is to explore the way in which the storyteller is motivated by the social aesthetics of the performance setting and how this in turn impinges on the storyteller's ability to improvise and contextualize the performance. The emphasis is therefore not on the interpretation or appreciation of oral performances by scholars, but rather on how the performer enacts a story by exploiting and deploying multimedia elements of the socially aesthetic physical setting of the performance. This dimension is significant because the manner in which the social aesthetics of the performance setting affects contextualization has yet to be thoroughly researched; the ability of the Themne oral artist to exploit the aesthetic resources of his performance setting will give weight to calls for scholars to pay due attention to the uniqueness of each performance and to capture, transcribe, and translate the externalities of a given performance as deployed by the oral artist.[22] This focus, I will argue, will enhance the ability of researchers to adequately contextualize the performance, which in turn is crucial for its interpretation and appreciation, especially when rendered in textual form. I am suggesting that just as the performer contextualizes his performance, so should the scholar who is collecting and analyzing or appreciating that performance do likewise. The discussion that follows will briefly shed light on this phenomenon.

Fieldwork provides a wealth of observed instances where skilled Themne storytellers and audience-participants have exploited the aesthetic resources of the performance environment as stage props to aid the narrative development of their stories. For instance, the external multimedia resources of the storytelling setting—for example, the pyrotechnics and warmth provided by the glowing embers from the bonfire, the radiance of the vegetation lit by the moon and stars, the noises and chirping of birds, and the alfresco air—are some of the social aesthetic strands external to the verbal narrative and commonly available to the storyteller and audience-participants upon which to frame and contextualize stories (see also Finnegan 2005, Hunter and Oumarou 1998).

[20] See Kennedy 1992, Auer and di Luzio 1992, Bauman 1986, Bird and Kendall 1980, Muana 1998b.

[21] I favor the term "pyrotechnics" over Finnegan's "lighting."

[22] See further Muana 1998b, Barber 2005, Finnegan 2005, Schieffelin 2005, Hunter and Oumarou 1998.

Such framing and contextualization may take the form of similes, riddles, and proverbs that employ metaphors evoked by or associated with the aesthetic setting of the performance.[23] Many Themne storytellers and their audience-participants whom I observed used metaphors and similes drawn from the aesthetic social setting of the performance (as has been observed among the Ewe of Ghana by Avorgbedor 1990). Some examples include (Khan 1991-96):

a) The bride was as beautiful as that shining moon.

b) The king or paramount chief or warrior or lion
was as ferocious as these burning embers.

and

c) The owl or other nocturnal bird was silently
watching in the thick of night unnoticed.

d) The eyes of the black mamba snake were winking; *wakhei, wakhei.*

Every time deictic markers ("the," "these," and "that") were deployed in similes or for descriptive purposes in this way by storytellers or audience-participants, they were accompanied by paralinguistic devices (Khan 1998). For instance, example c) above, the portrayal of the owl's preying instinct in regard to other birds, rodents, and reptiles was realized by many storytellers through a spontaneous momentary break of silence in their narration, vividly conveying the stealth upon which the owl's success in tracking and capturing its prey depends. The onomatopoeic sound *wakhei, wakhei* in example d) when performed by Bongay was rendered in synchronicity with the spluttering embers of the storytelling bonfire.[24] He also used dramatic eye movements to accompany the expressive utterance "*wakhei, wakhei*" in order to capture the snake's ferocious intent.

The use of similar multimedia paralinguistic devices in the dramatization of oral narratives by other skilled storytellers was commonplace. They included smiling to capture the moon's brightness, whistling or growling to mimic nocturnal birds and animals, and miming and moving about to reflect the peace and calm of the night (see also Khan 1998, Tannen 1984). As contextualization cues they enhanced the mimetic dimension of the storytelling and social interaction of the performance. The socially aesthetic setting therefore demonstrates two key functions: to animate the performance's sociability (see also Yankah 1995) and to provide multimedia resources to serve as what I would refer to as "variability-enhancers" of the storyteller's creativity. These bring dynamism to the performance and indeed to its artistic creativity and aesthetic appreciation. They are the means by which storytelling and other oral performances have continued to engage diverse audiences and generations. Further, they lend

[23] See also Martin 1990; Nicolaisen 1984, 1990; Gailey 1989.

[24] See Hunter and Oumarou 1998 for a discussion of ideophones as dramatizers in oral performances.

support in the study of oral performances by focusing on the uniqueness of each performance as an experienced work of art (Foley 1986:205; 1995).

A similar observation of the role of sociocultural resources and the environment in the creative process in African art has been made by Mohammed Abusabib in his theory of the "latitude of artistic creativity" (1995). He argues that sociocultural factors like the physical environment provide a situation that is conducive to creativity and largely responsible for the artist's aesthetic drive. Besides identifying the physical setting as an aesthetic motivation for performing, this theory can also explain the role played by cultural beliefs and worldview in the Themne storyteller's artistry. The prominence accorded by the Themne to storytelling as a collective social aesthetic enterprise was evident in the bringing of firewood or dry grass, and other stage props like musical instruments, to performances. As a child, my younger siblings and I used to plead with senior members of the family to chop down wood for us to take to such events. This practice was, and to some extent still is, common across Themeneland.

The contribution to the artistry and aesthetic integrity of the performance by the man-made bonfire setting, as combined with the surrounding natural environment of moonlight and nocturnal wildlife activities, is similar to that made by stage props and lighting in theater performances. The socially aesthetic setting of storytelling therefore contributes pomp, pageantry, and color, which are key artistic tools for elaboration, improvisation, and dramatization during the performance. Consequently, such keys facilitate the performance as a socially collective art form, and underpin the Themne aesthetic appreciation of oral art and natural environment (see also Budd 1996, Kennedy 1992).

Conclusion

Throughout this discussion I have focused on social aesthetics because little attention has been paid to the manner in which it lies behind the reworking of old material and creation of the new, by storytellers and other oral artists, to enhance artistic variation and creativity in oral performances. What abounds in the literature is description of the oral artist's use of verbal aesthetics or expressive media such as linguistic and extralinguistic resources and of the role of material aesthetics in influencing artistic variability.[25] I have therefore coined the term "social aesthetics" to describe and capture the relations and interaction between the storyteller or oral artist and his material, the physical setting of the performance, and the belief systems or worldview of the culture in which the performance is embedded.

My social aesthetic inquiry has focused not on an analysis of story texts *per se*, but on the physical setting and sociocultural conventions of Themne storytelling practices, where aspects of social aesthetics impinge on the artistic variation and creativity. The use of multimedia resources by oral artists during performances serves, among other purposes, as a mechanism for varying their performance and as a means of realizing the social aesthetic potential of the oral performance. Further forms of material aesthetics that influence artistic variation of themes,

[25] On linguistic and extralinguistic resources, see Fine 1984, Childs 1994 and 1998, Finnegan 2005; on material aesthetics, see Ferme 2001, Abusabib 1995, Avorgbedor 1990.

content, and style, as well as providing a mechanism for socialization and collective artistry in African oral art performances, have not been explored here (see further Abusabib 1995, Ferme 2001). In Themne oral art practice, an often-deployed form of material aesthetics is instrumental music. However, it is the socially aesthetic setting—a combination of the man-made bonfire, timing, and the surrounding natural environment of moonlight and nocturnal wildlife activities—that plays a dominant role in the storytellers' craftsmanship. The physical setting and nature also constitute the multimedia resources on which the storyteller routinely draws in order to provide the sonic-plus-acoustic, visual, and kinesic features of a socially aesthetic performance.

I have also shown that the social aesthetic externalities of setting, together with the subterranean factors of sociocultural beliefs and value systems, provide the oral artist with opportunities to inject variety into the creative process. I have argued that this is indicative of the fact that in Themne oral culture textual features are dynamic because they evoke and depend upon the audience-participants' ability to respond to various interpretations of oral performances (see Foley 1986, 1991, 1995). As Foley has argued, this evolving reciprocity is largely responsible for oral performances' continued ability to engage diverse audiences across centuries (1986:205-6). I would therefore postulate that appreciation and interpretation may vary across time and generations, thereby making oral performances more attractive to their audiences.

The multiple resources at the disposal of the performer largely account for the dynamic nature of African oral art practice, as the storyteller tries to innovate in order to attract audiences as well as to appeal to their aesthetic tastes. The overarching relationship between social aesthetics and artistic variation, and its influence on the African oral artist's craftsmanship, may add to calls in the academy for oral performances to be accorded an appreciation equal to that routinely accorded to written texts or literatures. It should also re-prioritize the appreciation and analysis of oral performances from a text-based approach to a focus on the uniqueness of each performance as an experienced work (Foley 1991). In doing so, I will suggest, as others have, that scholars should take into account audience-participants' interpretations of such performances (Dubois 1996:236), since, as we have seen, the performance is an enactment of the artistic and sociocultural values inherent in a given performance community. Furthermore, the audience-participants play an active and dynamic role in the delivery, appreciation, and interpretation of a given performance, all of which may vary across performance culture, space, and time. In an era when there are other modern competing forms of entertainment and socialization media, Themne oral artists continue to exploit these artistic and aesthetic resources, thereby sustaining the interest, participation, and support of their audiences.[26]

University of Edinburgh

[26] This article is dedicated to the memory of Kamanda Bongay, alias *boy-boy*, who was not only an accomplished Themne storyteller but also a philosopher and teacher to many of us who were his audience as well as his students. Also, I am indebted to Dr. John Shaw of the School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh, for motivating and supporting me to produce this article and for his insightful comments in shaping it.

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The Creation of Basque Oral Poetry by Four American *Bertsolaris*

Asier Barandiaran

In this article I analyze Basque oral poetry, or *bertsolaritza*, by four poets who live in the United States. We start with a remarkable fact: all four *bertsolaris* come from the Spanish region of Navarre. They include Jesus "Jess" Goñi, born in Oronoz in 1947; Martin Goikoetxea, born in Gorriti in 1948; Jesus "Jess" Arriada, born in Arizkun in 1935; and Johnny Kurutxet, born in San Francisco in 1946 but raised in Esterenzubi and resident there until the age of 20. The overall situation in the USA has been well described by the researcher Joxe Mallea in several publications (2003, 2005). Within that context this paper specifically examines the production of the American *bertsolaris*.[1] The corpus I will use for this analysis consists of a selection of 237 *bertsos* composed by these four oral poets and recorded and transcribed in the USA.

Jesus "Jess" Goñi, Martin Goikoetxea, Jesus "Jess" Arriada, and Johnny Kurutxet. Photo: Xenpelar Document Center, used by permission.

[1] I focus here on spontaneous oral improvisation. In fact, written *bertsolaritza* is very common and widespread in North America; however, this area requires and deserves special analyses and methodologies. The *bertsos* are a very special topic for Basques in North America, a phenomenon closely related to the survival of the Basque community. Joxe Mallea formulates the connection as follows (2003:274): "Since nowadays very few Basques come to the United States, what will happen to *bertso*-singing after you quit?"

Martin Goikoetxea (on left) and Jesus Goñi performing in Boise, Idaho.
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Jesus Goñi (left), Johnny Kurutxet (middle), and Martin Goikoetxea (right).
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Of course, *bertsolaritza* is a communicative act. The text produced by a *bertsolari* while performing is a dimension of this speech-act, perhaps the most important one. Other aspects (such as kinesis, melodies, and so on) are not considered here. Even so, textual analysis will let us approach this performative act, revealing the main compositional strategies used to create *bertsos*. These strategies reflect each *bertsolari*'s background and artistic repertoire. Moreover, in some cases the text is all that remains from some performances.

Before beginning our examination, we may briefly recall the general situation of the *bertsolaris* in the USA. Joxe Mallea provides a wonderful view of the context: "The poets living in the United States are isolated from the whole *bertsolari* movement, not to mention the heart of the Basque-speaking population, making it extremely difficult for them to keep their inventive edge sharp" (2003:50). One of our goals will be to determine whether this isolation has any discernible influence in the *bertsos* performed by these four poets.

In order to offer a deeper and more pluralistic point of view, this analysis will follow a set of steps closely related to some aspects and elements of *bertsolaritza*. First of all, it takes into account the rhyme, the last sentence, and the verse. I will also talk about the importance of rhetoric, which has often been identified as the most promising framework for understanding *bertsolaritza*. In many quarters rhetoric is understood as a part of pragmatics, or speech analysis; as Dominique Maingueneau explains: "La rhétorique, l'étude de la force persuasive du discours, s'inscrit pleinement dans le domaine que balise à présent la pragmatique" (1990:1).

One conventional theory divides rhetoric into three genres: legal, deliberative, and epideictic. According to this categorization, the epideictic genre could also include persuasion, but only in a special way; it does not seek any special reaction, but rather wants to influence the values and beliefs of the receiver. Persuasion is also visible in dialectics; in this case, it is not intended to reach an agreement, but tries to change the receiver's mind in a certain way. We all know that one of the objectives of *bertsolaris*, maybe the most important one, is to thrill and excite. Thus, it seems that *bertsolaritza* belongs to the epideictic genre, as Joxerra Garzia explains:

> We can state, thus, that it is rhetoric and more specifically its epideictic genre, which is the natural framework for a full understanding of the phenomenon of improvised *bertsolaritza* . . . . We can, therefore, refine our definition of improvised *bertsolaritza* offered at the beginning of this section, stating that *bertsolaritza* is a rhetorical genre of an epideictic, oral, sung and improvised nature (Garzia et al. 2001:181).

In concert with this perspective, I will try to characterize the values and emotions the *bertsolaris* have transmitted in their productions; for that purpose, it is necessary to know what kind of personality, cultural identity, and speech the Basque oral poets prefer.

Formal Aspects on American *Bertsolaritza*

It is interesting to examine the formal aspects of spontaneous *bertsolaritza* in America. Though they do not constitute the essence of *bertsolaritza*, and while they cannot provide the

central clue to understanding this phenomenon, they can help us to comprehend the reasons for the strength and sharpness of this unusual poetry.

Rhyme

Even if some authors employ the word *errima* ("rhyme") in Basque, I would rather use another term: *hoskidetza* ("sound similarity"). This term seems to be more appropriate in the case of *bertsolaritza* because rhyme serves a memorial function in this oral poetry, even if its function is chiefly aesthetic in literature. Once the first rhyming line is heard, the audience recognizes the word or group of words that form the rhyme. As a result, they can try to predict the words that will appear at the end of the lines to follow. This dynamic creates a "play" atmosphere in oral performance and strengthens the relationship between the *bertsolari* and his audience. Actually, it is quite common for the audience to guess the rhyme.

I will focus here on the sound-similarity of the rhyming lines, but will also include some comments about the length of the rhyme as part of my analysis. As for categories of rhyme, Pello Esnal (1994:1242) has argued that the length of the rhyme cannot be determined solely by the similar syllables. If the rhyming lines include the word root, he contends, the rhyme must be considered long (in case it lasts throughout the *bertso*). If rhymes are based on suffixes only (with no rhyming root), they should be considered short.[2]

I will start with the oral production of the *bertsolaris* in the USA. Joxe Mallea portrays the first championship of *bertsolaris* that took place in that country in this way: "The first-ever formal *Bertsolari Txapelketa* (Improvisational Poetry Contest) in the United States took place on April 23, 1988, and it was part of the first NABO *Euskal Kantari Eguna* (NABO Basque Singing Day) as well. The event resulted from the cooperation of several individuals and organizations, chiefly NABO and *Mendiko Euskaldun Cluba* (the Basque Club of Gardnerville)" (2003:60).

First of all, here are some *bertsos* performed in that contest (Mallea 2003:61-62):

Jesus "Jess" Arriada
Arratsalde on orai deneri
hauxe erran nahi dutena
zer gauza ederra hainbertze haurride
hementxe ikusten direna
San Franciscotik nator ni ere
kunplitzera hitz emana
lehendabiziko hauxe eskatzen dut
denei besarkada bana.

Good afternoon now to all;
this is what I want to say:

[2] For this analysis I have followed Esnal's criteria: although I do not wish to disregard other theories, his morphological criteria support more constructive analysis of *bertsos*. At any rate, I will not be placing major emphasis on length when talking about rhyme. For one thing, I know that long rhyme is a new concept that has only recently appeared; for another, I would rather concentrate on the semantic field of the rhyme.

what a wonderful thing, it is right to see so many brethren here.
I too come from San Francisco
to fulfill the promised word.
This is the first thing I ask of you:
an embrace from each and every one of you.

Johnny Kurutxet
Arras triste partitu naiz goiz huntan
han urrunen etxetik
eta orai bihotza daukat nik
arrunt aleger'harturik
honbertze lagun eta
adiskide kausiturik
guzieri musu bana dausuet
bihotzaren erditik.

I was feeling very sad when I left this morning
from my faraway home,
but now my heart is
totally overtaken by happiness
after having met
so many companions and friends.
To all of you I give a kiss
from the bottom of my heart.

Jesus "Jess" Goñi
Euskal Herriko partetik ginan
Amerikarat etorri
hemengo anaiari nahi genduzke
euskeraz'e erakutsi
gaurko egun eder hau dana guk
zor diogu Gardnerville'ri
arratsalde on anai-arrebak
ta danori ongi-etorri.

From the lands of the Basque Country
we came to America;
to our brethren here we would like
to teach the Basque language.
This beautiful day that we enjoy,
we owe it entirely to Gardnerville.
Good afternoon, brothers and sisters,
and welcome to everybody.

Jesus Arriada has rhymed only a single syllable over the four rhyming lines of his greeting verse. It is true that some of the rhyming lines are closer (for instance, the first and the second, *dutena* and *direna*), where the penultimate syllable's vowel is included in the rhyme. On the other hand, Johnny Kurutxet has rhymed only half a syllable by using the ablative and the partitive cases; there is no substantive or verb. In the case of Jesus Goñi, the greeting verse has a peculiar rhyme. The only thing that seems to be the same in all the rhyming lines is the final *-i*; the consonants linked to it are not identical. Moreover, there is a kind of morphophonemic correspondence called *poto* between the first and fourth rhyming lines: *etorri* ("to come") and *ongi-etorri* ("welcome").

Let us analyze some additional examples, two *bertsos* performed by Johnny Kurutxet (Mallea 2003:63):

Denek badakigu
hain segur engoitik
urtean badela
sasoin ederrik
neguaren ahazten
naski ari gaitu indanik
bide bat erroietan
ez dago elurrik.

We all know
[especially] from now on
that in the year
there are beautiful seasons.
We are already
forgetting winter;
there is not a single road in the mountains
covered with snow.

Ikusten dugu denean
zerbait badagola
negu beltza pasaturik
ostatzen ari arbola
urteak joaiten ari
diragun bezala
hobiago ginezke geroz
hobeki izanen gira.

We realize that everything
plays a part [in life];
the dark winter has passed,

the trees have begun to bloom with leaves,
[and] the years continue to roll
as they do for us;
we might be better off later,
we will be better indeed.

The first *bertso* repeats the rhyme in *-ik* and once again covers only half a syllable. In the second *bertso*, the *bertsolari* improves the rhyme and reaches a syllable and a half in *-ola*. It could be also taken as a two-syllable structure, since the first consonant is weak, even if the pronunciation is different.

In traditional *bertsolaritza* one of the most commonly used rhymes is in *-ia*. As illustration, here is a *bertso* performed by Johnny Kurutxet in the 1988 championship in Gardnerville (Mallea 2003:68):

Enaizela badakizue
ni hanbat eskolatia
eta arras gogor zaut hortan
politikan sartzia
gure herri euskal maitian
eskuara da pizten hasia
agian horrekila segitu-
ko du bakia.

You know that I am not
very well educated;
for that reason it is very difficult
for me to embroil myself in politics
in our beloved Basque Country.
The Basque language has begun to revive
and after that, perhaps,
peace will follow.

In this case, the rhyme consists of a syllable and one-half: the last syllable is *-a* and the penultimate uses the *-i* vowel. Once again, this is a very common rhyme for the *bertsolaris*, thanks to phonetic variations from spoken language that multiply the rhyme choice. In fact, standard Basque would not allow words like *bak<u>ia</u>* or *sartz<u>ia</u>*, for which the correct pronunciation would be *bak<u>ea</u>* or *sartz<u>ea</u>*. Criteria for allowable phonetic variation have changed through the history of *bertsolaritza*. Some *bertsolaris* have no problem using nonstandard pronunciations, while others feel they must respect the formal quality of *bertsolaritza* and forgo this kind of alternation.

The following *bertso* by Martin Goikoetxea is an excellent example of a type previously mentioned (Mallea 2003:64):

Negu beltza're kezkatzen a'i du
hain baita beldurgarria
guzia joanik ondorenian
badator udaberria
artzaiak ere maitatzen dute
mendi gaineko punta berdia
artaldeantzako nahiko jana ta
txori kantuna bestia.

The dark winter wants to keep us in suspense;
it is so frightening.
But in the end it goes away
and spring follows.
The shepherds, too, love
the green shoots on the mountain
that provide plentiful food for the sheep,
beside the bonus, the songs of the birds.

According to the first two rhyming lines, it seems that the rhyme is going to be rich and multisyllabic, but the overall sequence does not turn out that way. The first two rhyming lines have two syllables in common (*-rria*), but the last two lines are diminished.

Categorical Rhyme

The experts on *bertsolaritza* and the judges in improvisational poetry contests tend not to like *bertsos* that depend on rhyming words of the same grammatical category. On the other hand, the audience does not require such a formal level of structure in order to enjoy a performance. In general, the audience is always looking for good *bertsos*, but taking into account some particular aspects of a performance: the ability to perform fluently, the capacity to mention a funny, moving, or serious idea, and other elements. Sometimes nonverbal communication becomes important because it helps reveal the character of a *bertsolari* and thus contributes to the success of the performance.

At any rate, a *bertso* that does not vary the grammatical category of its rhymes will not be taken as a good *bertso*, even though *bertsolaris* often improvise that way. Here is an example of such invariance (Mallea 2003:67):

Azkenekuan orai etxekoz
*mintzatzen nuzu hasi**ko***
gaiso emaztia hementxe balitz
*hura naike mintzatu**ko***
aspaldi hontan mintzo zaut beti
*noiz ote nauen ikusi**ko***
gazte ta eder arrosa bezala

*goiz on batian jeiki**ko**.*

Finally, I will begin to talk
about the people who live at my place.
My dear wife, if only she were present here
I would talk to her.
Recently she has been asking
when she will get to see me,
young and beautiful like a rose,
rise [again] one fine morning.

The rhyme presented in this *bertso* derives from the future marker *-ko* at the end of each of the four involved lines.

In the next *bertso*, although the same grammatical suffix is used throughout, the rhyme is richer because it starts with the penultimate syllable. Thus, the lines harmonize in *-s/ziko* rather than merely in *-ko* (Mallea 2003:66-67).

Jesus "Jess" Arriada
Gisa berian orain ni ere
*mintzatzen naizu has**iko***
nola dakigun negu gaixto hau
*alde bat egun utz**iko***
juan den gisan berri onikan
*guk ezpaitugu guk iku**siko***
agian primadera eder batian
*denak girade biz**iko**.*

In the same manner, I too
shall begin speaking to you
by saying that we are aware that cruel winter
will leave us alone today.
As it recedes it is not likely
that we shall see any good news.
Perhaps we shall all live
to enjoy a wonderful springtime.

The same effect is produced by iterative use of the imperfect tense, ending in *-t(z)en*, a common inflection because of the frequency with which poets employ this tense in their performances. Here is a typical instance from Jesus "Jess" Arriada (Mallea 2003:67):

Egia erran udaberrian
esperantza dut nik hartzen

hainbesteraino kanpo ederrak
nola baitzaizkun kanbiatzen
egia esan bihotzetikan
hauxe dut ba esperatzen
zahartu girenok pixka bat agian
hasiko gera berritzen.

I will confess that in spring
my hopes are renewed,
seeing the beautiful outdoors
change to such a degree before our very eyes.
I will tell you what I think in my heart;
this is what I hope for—
that those of us who have grown old
will perhaps begin to rejuvenate.

At most, there will be two grammatical categories constituting the rhyme. For instance, in the following example, again from Arriada, we can find the partitive and ablative cases mixed in the rhyme -*ik* (Mallea 2003:64):

Ez daike izan urtean
*sasoina ederragor**ik*** (partitive)
nola kanpo ta arbola
*lora ederrez beter**ik*** (partitive)
Jinko jaunak emana dauku
*grazia zerut**ik*** (ablative)
estima dezagun hori
*orok bihotzet**ik***. (ablative)

There is no season in the year
that is more beautiful,
[as we see] the fields and the trees
filled with beautiful flowers.
The good lord God has given us
that grace from heaven.
Let us appreciate it,
all of us from our hearts.

In describing modes of rhyme, we cannot forget the *poto*. There is no *bertsolari* that has never sung a *poto*, and it is also present in the USA. Both of the following excerpts come from Arriada (Mallea 2003:70, 74):

Eskualdunak leku guzietan elkarri ikusi ***nahiak***
hartako beraz deitzen gerade danak elkarren ***anaiak***
zenbait handikan hunera jin ginan bizia hobeki ***nahiak***
baina halare ez gaitu ahantziko sekula Euskal ***Herriak****.*

The Basques everywhere love to visit with each other;
that is the reason why all of us call one another brothers.
Some of us came here from there in search of a better life;
nevertheless, the Basque Country will never forget us.

Ni Amerikara jinta hementxe baigira
franko esker asko lanian ederki ai gera
nazione hau maite dut hortan mintzo gira
baina benturaz egun batez berriro Euskal Herrira.

I came to America and I live here,
thank God with plenty of work; we are doing just fine.
I love this country [and] that is what we are talking about,
but perhaps someday I might go back to the Basque Country.

Perhaps the *poto* is more permissible in the USA because American *bertsolaris* do not meet so often and therefore do not have as many opportunities to improve their techniques and rhymes. Thus departures from best practice are not penalized, at least not as much as they are in the old country.

This syndrome involves not only the *poto*, but also poor or inexact rhymes (Mallea 2003:73):

Jesus "Jess" Goñi
Gazterik nintzan ni honerat etorri
Amerika zer zan nahi nula ikusi
zazpi asto pakian ziraten ezarri
urik ezbazen atzera joango naiz urruti.

I came to this country when I was young;
I wanted to see what America was all about.
They gave me a pack of six donkeys;
if it wasn't for the water [the Atlantic Ocean],
I would have gone back long ago.

The only thing that the rhyming words have in common in the previous verse is the *-i* at line-end, which amounts to only half a syllable. The consonants preceding this vowel have nothing in common.

In summary, we can state that the rhyme-sequences of these four *bertsolaris* are often based on the same grammatical categories and do not pay any special attention to the number of

syllables. We might say that this is the predominant style through the twentieth century for "local *bertsolaris*." Their lack of proximity to people and their liveliness may compensate for the lack of an exact rhyme.

The Last Sentence

In regard to the history of *bertsolaritza*, the strategy of the last sentence has a long tradition. However, theories about this topic are quite recent, having emerged only after the 1980s. In this section we will discuss last-sentence strategy in the USA. We start with a contest from the 1988 championship mentioned above. Martin Goikoetxea and Jesus Goñi were required to sing about a very common topic in America, sheep-herding (Mallea 2003:187-88):

Jesus "Jess" Goñi
Gure inguru eder honek
bertso gehio merezi ditu
behin Elkora etorriz geroztik
beharko degu kantatu
artzain etorriko euskaldunak
hemen baigira elkartu
gelditzen geran bakarrak
elkarrei lagundu.

This wonderful ambience
deserves more improvised verses.
After having arrived in Elko,
we must sing poetry.
Those of us Basques who came to herd sheep
have gathered here.
Let the few of us who remain
help each other.

The quality of rhyme and the correctness of the meter aside, it seems that the *bertsolari* wants to specify the topic by using this last sentence. Thus we can say that the nucleus of the message appears at the end of the verse.

The next *bertso*, by Martin Goikoetxea, fails to link the last sentence to the rest of the *bertso*. There is at least no clear union, since the last part does not match the rest of the *bertso* (Mallea 2003:188):

Martin Goikoetxea
Guri're hemen etorri eta
gertatu gaur agertzia
bertsotan hemen hasi gera-ta
zaila degu atertzia

oso gustora tokatu zaigu
guri're hemen biltzia
gure euskerarengatik ere
balio hola ibiltzia.

It so happened that
all of us arrived here today.
We began to sing improvised verses,
and now it is difficult to stop.
It has been a great pleasure
meeting all of us here today.
On behalf of our Basque language
it is worthwhile doing.

His last sentence is not related to the ideas mentioned by Goñi in the previous verse; it does not even talk about sheep-herding. However, taking into account the context, the audience will be generous with the *bertsolari* and communication will go on.

Let us examine the response performed by Jesus Goñi (Mallea 2003:188):

Jesus "Jess" Goñi
Aspaldiko artzain zaharrak
daude hemen etorrita
Amerik'honeri gure izenez
tituluak emanta
Euskal Herria utzi genduen
urrutiraino sartuta
baina halare jarraitzen degu
berton euskera eginda.

Veteran shepherds of old
have gathered here today.
To America our names
We have contributed.
We left the Basque Country,
and we went to a faraway territory.
Nevertheless, we continue
here speaking our language.

Here the *bertsolari* from Oronoz again takes up the topic. He uses the opposition between two concepts, between their homeland and the USA, to create a paradox. The Basque language is of course one of the core attributes of the Basque Country. As a result, Goñi is able to contrast his last sentence to the faraway territory: "here, in the USA, shepherds continue speaking the Basque language," The *bertsolari* knows that the audience will sense the discrepancy, approve of the

idea, and clap at the end of the performance.

The next *bertso* sung by Martin Goikoetxea follows the same idea (Mallea 2003:188):

Martin Goikoetxea
Amerikara etorri gaitik
oraindik gu ez gera nahastu
Ameriketan urte franko guk
eginak ditugu ahaztu
baina euskaldunak oraindik
ahaztu gabeko egunik ez du
ingles pixka bat ikasi arren
euskerarik ez zaut akastu.

Even though we came to America,
we have not intermixed.
We came to America many years ago,
we cannot remember how many,
but the Basques have yet to forget
any one of those days.
Though I learned a little English,
I have not forgotten the Basque language.

In this case, the last sentence takes the form of a negative statement: *Euskerarik ez zaut akastu* ("I have not forgotten the Basque language"). However, the previous sentence is a subordinate concessive that presents the opposition to the main idea.

Opposition is in fact one of the most commonly used strategies in *bertsolaritza*, especially in the last sentence. The following *bertso* from Kurutxet shows its operation clearly (Mallea 2003:208):

Johnny Kurutxet
Aire tristea kantatuko det
suieta tristea da-ta
gure lagunik onena mundu
huntik aldegin duta
Jean Lekunberry baigorriarra
Euskal Herrian sortua
arima zerura joan da
gorputza hemen utzita.

I will sing a sad tune,
because the subject is also sad.
Our best friend
has departed from this world:

Jean Lekumberry, native of Baigorri,
born in the Basque Country.
His soul has gone to heaven,
leaving the body here.

The text of this *bertso* does not represent a major contribution, but if we look at the context in which it was performed we will see that the message did not need to be very moving. In fact, this *bertso* was sung in a Basque restaurant in Gardnerville, Nevada on the 13th of August, 1993, for a highly respected man, the proprietor of the restaurant. The opposition between soul and body is used to announce words of consolation for the kind man who has gone to heaven.

However, the figure of opposition is not the only way to formulate a last sentence and finish a *bertso*. Direct statements are often used for the verse closure (Mallea 2003:209):

Jesus "Jess" Arriada
Pena hartu degu, zu Lekunberry,
falta zira zure xokotik
penagarri da zu joaitia
hola eskualdunen artetik
zenbat ordu goxo pas'ditugu
Lekunberry zurean ganik
egunen batez joain gera gu ere
agur eiten dautzugu hemendik.

We grieve for you, Lekumberry.
We miss [seeing] you in your corner [at the bar].
It is very sad that you are gone
this way from among the Basques.
How many sweet hours have we spent together
in your place, Lekumberry.
Someday we too shall go.
We send you greetings from here.

The last sentence compacts and catalyzes the message, and makes a moving, actually quite prophetic, statement.

In other cases, the last sentence is a colorful idea that ends the *bertso* by trying to make the audience smile (Mallea 2003:210-11):

Jesus "Jess" Arriada
Zer istorio gertatu zaitan
orain erraitia iguala
Gardnevillera etorri bainaiz
baso, zelai, eta malda
baina hunerat etorri eta

gero istorio hau da
berant xamar ni etxera juanda
emaztia mutur zala.

The incident that has happened to me,
I might as well tell it now
because I have come to Gardnerville [to sing]
after passing forests, fields, and hillsides.
But having arrived here,
this is what happened, namely
when I was kind of late returning home
my wife had an unhappy face.

The dramatic potential of the dialogue is also harnessed in some *bertsos* (Mallea 2003:211):

Jesus "Jess" Arriada
Bestan lehen gauz emana baita
betidanik tabernari
hainbertze gustoz gau guzian ni
aritzen naiz beti kantari
baian gau hau ez baizaio
gustatu ene emazteari
"beira senarra, zu ezpaitzira
ez txakurra ez txori."

The first scenario [requisite] in a fiesta
has always been a tavern-keeper.
All night long I was enjoying myself,
always doing the singing part,
but this particular night
was not to my wife's liking:
[she says] "look, husband of mine, you are
neither a dog nor a bird."

Even if the most formal verse requirement, the rhyme, is not so strictly observed in the USA, the last sentence nevertheless seems to be a carefully worked element. *Bertsolaris* know that an extra effort at this last point in the speech will be especially appreciated by the audience. The last sentence can be simply a final comment or can be a categorical and powerful statement that completes the speech. Sometimes a simple opposition in the last sentence, merely the tip of the iceberg, will clarify the speech.

The Verse

It is well known that the *zortziko* is the most common verse in *bertsolaritza*, as illustrated by the corpus we are analyzing. The *zortziko* verse consists of four possible structures or arrangements:

First structure
a)
1 *puntu*
2 *puntu*
3 *puntu*
b)
4 *puntu*

The first three *puntus* address a topic that becomes more and more concrete, but does not reach any special concreteness in the third *puntu*. The fourth *puntu* (or last sentence) serves as a conclusion to the first three. It could be a joyful expression, a complaint, or a cry of exclamation.

Second structure
a)
1 *puntu*
2 *puntu*
b)
3 *puntu*
4 *puntu*

This pattern has two main parts. The division is clear: the first part includes a metaphor for something that is explicitly expressed in the second part.

Third structure
a)
1 *puntu*
2 *puntu*
b)
3 *puntu*: inflection
c)
4 *puntu*: conclusion

Here the inflection paves the way for the last sentence and marks the difference between the first and the second halves.

Fourth structure

1 *puntu*
2 *puntu*
3 *puntu*
4 *puntu*

This pattern can be developed either forward or backward. Its main characteristic is that there is no considerable difference among the *puntus*.

How do the American *bertsolaris* deploy these structures? On available evidence it seems that the third one is the most frequently used. A set of *bertsos* performed in 1995 prove this observation.

For example, although it does not appear to be a good topic for jokes, Goñi laughs at himself while trying to have a laugh with the audience (Mallea 2003:274):

Jesus "Jess" Goñi
Ameriketan gaude bertsulari zaharrak
eta laister akabo gauden bakarrak
Kurutxet'en semiak dauzke'in beharrak
ezbaitu umerik ez Goñi mutilzaharrak.

We are here in America, some old poet-improvisers,
and pretty soon it will be the end of us few.
Kurutxet's son certaninly has a job cut out for him,
because old bachelor Goñi does not have any children.

This *bertso* clearly belongs to the third structure. In fact, the first two *puntus* form a unit; the second *puntu* completes the idea proposed in the first one. Then the following *puntu* presents a new message related to the first two and introduces the last sentence. The role of the last *puntu* is to justify the mention to Kurutxet's son—a funny justification actually, even as it matches perfectly with the rest of the *bertso*.

A *bertso* performed by Martin Goikoetxea seems to develop the third structure (Mallea 2003:275):

Martin Goikoetxea
San Franzisko hontan iduri du gaur
degula euskaldun Haritza
pozik egin nezake nik ere
herri hontan bizitza
gaur gaben hola ikusita
ematen dizuet hitza
holako entzulek diran artean
bizi da bertsolaritza.

What I see here in San Francisco today reminds me

of the Basque oak tree.
I too would gladly make
my living in this town.
After what I saw tonight
I give you my word:
as long as there are listeners like you,
the *bertsolari* trade will endure.

The poet's adherence to the third pattern is evident. Over the first two *puntus* he gives his opinion about San Francisco, especially about the Basque community. The second *puntu* directly says that he would happily make his living in this town. Following the third-*puntu* inflection, the *bertsolari* concludes with a pledge to continue the tradition. It is interesting to note that this last *bertso* was sung during a special event in which *bertsolaritza* was not a known topic; in fact, the Basque Cultural Center in San Francisco had not housed many "*bertso* performances" until that one in 1995. Moreover, it was the first time that four American *bertsolaris* sang together.

The next *bertso* performed by the same singer does not match the third structure. In this event *bertsolaris* were singing without any special topic and the exchange turned to baldness. As the youngest and hairiest, Martin Goikoetxea offered this verse (Mallea 2003:250):

Martin Goikoetxea
Bi bertso hoiek entzundakoan
ezin nezake aguanta
nik ere orain esan nahi nuke
hemen egi bat galanta
neronek ere ikusia det
bi gizona hoien planta
nik ilea nahikua det
bainan talentua falta.

After hearing those two verses,
I can hardly contain myself.
I also would like to state
here and now the plain truth,
because I have seen
the posturing by those two fellows.
I myself have plenty of hair,
but lack talent.

The first three *puntus* do not specifically refer to the *bertsos* performed by the other *bertsolaris*. Nevertheless, they fit in perfectly. The first two are generic, "multi-purpose *puntus*," useful for a variety of topics and situations. The strategy of filling out *bertsos* without saying anything special is called *betelana* ("the fill-in task). The third *puntu* also presents some characteristics of *betelana*. Finally, the last sentence is closely related to the topic; what's more, Goikoetxea is able

to laugh at himself and create a nice opposition in the last *puntu*.

This pattern is the most commonly used for *betelana*, even when *bertsolaris* do not build a *bertso* by starting with this strategy in mind. Most *bertsolaris* prefer to pave the way for the last sentence and to employ the third *puntu* as a union unit. The next *bertso* is a good example of this tendency. The topic prompter asked for a description of the situation in the Basque Country at that time (1988), and here is the answer performed by Jess Arriada (Mallea 2003:68):

Jesus "Jess" Arriada
Euskal Herritik badu buelta bat
handik atera nintzela
ez dut ukatzen bakantzaz beti
hain gustoz juaiten naizela
garbi erten dut ni ateraz gero
kanbio aundiz badela
ez dut uste hortako Euskal Herriak
bat'e atzera in duela.

It has been a long while
since I left the Basque Country.
I will not deny that I always
enjoy returning there for a vacation.
Clearly, I will also admit that
since I left great changes have taken place,
but for that matter I do not believe that the Basque Country
is worse off at all.

In the first *puntu* the *bertsolari* laments that he is far away from his homeland, that he left the Basque Country a long time ago, and, as noted in the second *puntu*, always enjoys returning there for a vacation. Thus we learn that he cannot give any details about the situation in the Basque Country. This line of thought is continued in the third *puntu* as Arriada says that he knows that the Basque Country has changed, although the last sentence explains that the *bertsolari* does not believe that the Basque Country is worse off at all. In other words, the third *puntu* paves the way for the fourth one, providing the inflection that leads to the conclusion.

In summary, it is clear that the *bertsolaris* know about the expressive importance of the last sentence when building their verses. For that purpose they use two main strategies: a) the last sentence is opposed to the message of the first three *puntus*; or b) the last sentence concludes the *bertso* but needs the third *puntu* to pave the way and ease the transition. If *bertsolaritza* has any success in the USA, the one major reason is the strategy of the last sentence, which is managed by most *bertsolaris* in a very skillful way.

Rhetoric and Speech in American *Bertsolaritza*

If we want to analyze the expressive behavior of these *bertsolaris* effectively, we must take into account the criteria of quality identified by rhetorical studies of comunication. Of course, most of the *bertsolaris* know nothing about the principles of formal rhetoric, so we will not be imputing to these oral performers any explicit or conscious intention. Instead, rhetorical figures and characteristics will be understood as arising naturally from the aesthetics of poetic communication and the verbal skills of the *bertsolaris*.

These are several criteria:

a) The *aptum* asks the transmitter to use the elements in a communication properly. It links the communicative situation, the expression, and the contents. In addition, this criterion includes a moral condition. In fact, since the speech is a rhetorical device, the transmitter has to take into account the ethical obligations created by the society and the individual. In other words, the speech is closely related to individual and social ethics; it is in "debt" to beauty and truth. The main objective is still persuasion, but ethics constitute an important dimension. Some scholars make a distinction between the out-*aptum* and the in-*aptum*. The in-*aptum* is the relationship between the elements of the speech. The out-*aptum* is related to the social aspects of the speech, especially to the characteristics concerning orality and improvisation.

b) *Puritas*, or grammatical correctness, is a precondition of any rhetorical speech; in fact, before the so-called *ars bene dicendi, ars recte dicendi* is essential. For theorists like Quintilian, the correct use of the language does not lie only in grammatical rules; exemplary authors must be imitated.

c) *Perspicuitas* refers to the clarity of language and ideology (Spang 2005:106-09). A speech must be clear, and it will be clear if its formulation and its concepts are transparent and understandable. The audience has to be able to decode the message easily, and precisely in the same way the transmitter has coded it. Of course, sometimes the objective of the communication can be an ambiguous message. The transmitter can create a confusing *bertso* on purpose; representing the enigmatic nature of something is a permissible option. In any case, when the intention of the transmitter is not an unclear message, a mistake is called *obscuritas.* In order to clarify a text, redundancy is frequently employed: normally, every message has a lexical, morphological, or syntactical redundancy. Rhetorical figures avoid redundancy, and they also increase expectation.

d) *Ornatus,* or the aesthetic part of the speech, is intended to persuade by means of the beauty of the language. Rhetorical images are not just "decoration"; they amount to different ways to invent the world and to provide information about the transmitter's point of view. The *ornatus* surprises the audience by pleasure, and the process of persuasion is strengthened. The rhetorical images prolong attention among the audience, and sometimes have a special influence on creativity and affect. But these images must be used in harmony with the contents of the speech; otherwise, they may prove counterproductive. The *ornatus* has always been the most prized virtue among the elements of the speech. Many twenty-first century rhetorical manuals are written about the *ornatus*.

In what follows I will focus on *aptum*, *puritas,* and *perspicuitas* within the performances of these four *bertsolaris* in the USA, and to a lesser extent the *ornatus*.

Aptum

We start with a performance that took place at the previously mentioned 1988 event. Johnny Kurutxet had to impersonate Ronald Reagan while Jesus Arriada had to mimic Mikhail Gorbachev, then president of the Soviet Union. Taking into account the criteria, we can observe that this is not a very suitable context. *Bertsolaris* seldom know much about international affairs, nor have they been trained in diplomacy. A speaker has to know a good deal about his topic; but since the performers' knowledge was not greater than other people's, they had to improvise a speech to fulfill their roles as best they could. And what resulted was a small miracle for the audience. It is strange to see two *bertsolaris* who are so deeply rooted in tradition singing about international topics (Mallea 2003:80):

Jesus "Jess" Arriada
Bihotzetikan galde egitera
noazu orain Reagan jauna
hilabete bat barren oraintxe
heldu zaigula eguna
eta serioski orain unian
mintzatu behar deguna
inondik ere nahi nukena da
izan orain zure laguna.

With total frankness, Mr. Reagan,
I am going to ask you a question.
Within a month now
our date will arrive,
and this time it is very serious business
that we must talk about,
but what I would like at all costs now
is to be your friend.

So even if the topic is not suitable for them, *bertsolaris* try to sing about it in a suitable way. In fact, their point of view is linked to human quality, and this mention of human quality is completely unexpected. As a result, it may be said that it is not necessary to be an expert to perform about a complex topic. *Bertsolaris* have to "talk," and what they say matches perfectly with the human aspect.

Let us examine Johnny Kurutxet's answer (Mallea 2003:81):

Johnny Kurutxet
Zuk ene laguna nahi duzu izan?
Nik ez dut besterik pentsatzen;
mundua ere da zaila eta

erraz ari da satisfatzen
gure diferentziak hasi
ditzagun estaltzen
mundu guziko bakia
gure eskuetan da gertatzen.

You want to be my friend?
I could not agree with you more.
The world is a difficult place;
it is being easily satisfied.
Let us begin to bury
our differences;
the peace of the whole world
happens to be in our hands.

This second *bertso* puts international diplomacy aside and focuses on the necessity of collaboration and friendship between the two presidents, seconding Gorbachev's initial proposal for peaceful coexistence. There is no mention here of the social or political, but rather of values that can be generally agreed upon: "the peace of the whole word," for instance. *Bertsolaris* have transformed the topic to a more suitable context. Moreover, the speech has been enriched with a human point of view, the point of view that is shared by the audience. The *bertsolari* takes the so-called *honestum* attitude; in that way he makes the situation more suitable, as a *vir bonus* must do for the audience. The out-*aptum*, the capacity to take into account the social situation, is a *bertsolari*'s stock-in-trade, and he tries to engage it as best he can.

In the same event Jesus Goñi, the *txapeldun* (winner of thechampionship, or *txapela*), was asked to perform. The context of the communication is concrete, and the audience knows it. The *bertsolari* has the opportunity to create any kind of speech. These are his first two *bertsos* (Mallea 2003:83-84):

Jesus "Jess" Goñi
Gaur izandu det egun eder hau
nunbaitetik eskeinita
euskaldun giro zoragarria
Gardnerville'n du bilduta
zuei eskerrak eman behar zaiztet
zuen txaloak nik entzunda
agurtzen det bihotzez
txapela irabazita.

Today, I have had this beautiful day
offered to me from somewhere.
[We had] a wonderful Basque atmosphere
wrapped up into Gardnerville.

I am obligated to thank you
for the applause I heard.
I salute you from my heart
for this beret [that I have won].

Bigarren bertsua kanta behar det
amerikano gazte deneri
entzun dituzten gure ahotik
buruan zaizten ezarri
hemen ez da asko etortzen
ta bertakuk behar ari
ia Amerikan izaten degun
bertze Euskal Herri.

I must sing a second verse
to all the young [Basque-]Americans.
The words you have heard from our mouths,
put them into your head.
Few [Basque] people come here anymore;
therefore those of us who live here must get busy.
Let us see if in America we can have
another Basque Country.

In this case, the *bertsolari* from Oronoz also takes into account his audience and tries to tailor his performance appropriately. He is very respectful. Undoubtedly, the *bertsolari* is making an effort to win the *txapela*, but he recognizes that this communicative situation would not have been possible without the audience. Moreover, the Basque community organizes the event and also gives the performers a chance to live in a familiar ethnic and linguistic environment in the USA. The *bertsolari* has not forgotten to show his gratitude, even if it is obvious. The second *bertso* is another step in the continuing speech. Once again, Jesus Goñi shows his sensitivity to the moment. For instance, the third *puntu* is a summary of Basque life in the USA: "Few [Basque] people come here anymore; / therefore those of us who live here must get busy." In other words, in the last decades not as many Basques have emigrated to the USA and the ones there must make special efforts to mantain their identity. In that sense, he mentions a major ambition, an idea that matches an aspiration implicit in the Basque identity: the dream of building up a Basque Country within the USA.

I have still not mentioned any *bertsos* by Martin Goikoetxea. Let us move to the *Euskal Kantari Eguna* (the Basque Singing Day) in 1991, the first time Martin Goikoetxea was in front of an American audience. Goikoetxea and Jesus Goñi had to sing to the following topic: they are in a small boat in the middle of the ocean; if they stay together in the boat both will die, so one of them must jump into the sea.

If the performance is taken as a rhetorical act, the topic on which it is based has to be analyzed in the same way. Once again, the topic given to the *bertsolaris* does not have a suitable

aptum. *Bertsolaris* are not sailors; they do not know much about the sea. Besides, the situation is extreme, almost strange, and certainly not a daily experience for the audience. On the other hand, the topic is closely related to basic human values, and the *bertsolaris*, aware of that connection, will compose their verses accordingly. Additionally, we should add, topics depicting extraordinary situations are actually quite common. Therefore we can say that the *aptum* is in this case more manageable than some (Mallea 2003:131):

Martin Goikoetxea
Gai ederrez etorri da hemen
guk egiteko hizketa
itsasoaren erdian biok
ontzi batean gaude-ta
kontseju bat nik eskatzen dizut
arriskuaren neurketa
zu itsasora saltatu zaitez
hemendik uraz beteta
nik saltatzerik ez daukat hemen
igari ez dakit eta.

We were given a nice topic here
to discuss, which is that
the two of us are in a boat
in the middle of the sea.
I want to present you with an idea,
because I gather that I am in danger.
You should jump into the sea
because the boat is full of water.
It is impossible for me to jump out
because I cannot swim.

In this first part Goikoetxea has added a pertinent nuance to the situation that will strengthen his *bertso*: he is the one who doesn't know how to swim. Of course, he is the one who started the performance, so he has the chance to specify the situation and facts.

Jesus Goñi continues with the theme of shared human quality, but he adds a pertinent nuance – his opponent has two children (Mallea 2003:131):

Jesus "Jess" Goñi
Gai xelebre samarra degu
txalupa barrun sartuta
honek aitzaki hartzen du orain
igeri ez dakila-ta
ikusten denaz guk biek ere
bizia maite degu-ta

neu saltatzera hortxe nijua,
zu baitzera bi umeen aita.

This is a rather funny subject,
Since here we are in a boat,
and now this fellow starts excusing himself,
saying that he cannot swim.
Well, as it is clear to see,
we both love life; therefore
I must jump in there right now,
for you are the father of two children.

The *bertso* does not explicitly indicate it, but it is true (and the audience knew) that Goikoetxea was married and had children, while Goñi was single. The one who is not married has shown a special respect for the family, so his speech admirably responds to his companion's. He has answered the first *bertso* in a positive, complementary way—acknowledging Goikoetxea's expressed inability to swim and the unexpressed reality of his two children. Moreover, we have to add the usage of the second person and the proximity of the conversation.

As I have tried to explain through these examples, the topic prompts can become an obstacle for *bertsolaris* because they have not been trained to analyze certain topics in a pertinent way. But the difficulty of the situation is an effective incentive to push the *bertsolaris*' skills. Besides, in extemporaneous performances *bertsolaris* can add pertinent nuances to the topic, so they can either enlarge upon the topic or further specify it.

Puritas

There is no extensive research available about this element's place in *bertsolaritza*; in fact, *bertsolaris* are presumed to fulfill requirements of *puritas* correctly. However, we have to qualify this assumption. If we take into account Quintilian's criteria, grammatical correctness is not enough: speakers must imitate exemplary authors or reflect their style (or at least show a similar effort). Just so, when we are talking about correctness in *bertsolaritza*, we cannot reduce its meaning to mere grammatical correctness; we must also include the effective use of language and the metrical shape of the verses.

In order to illustrate these principles, let us look at some examples. As noted above, Martin Goikoetxea and Jesus Goñi were asked to sing to the following topic in Gardnerville in 1991: they are in a small boat in the middle of the ocean; if they stay together in the boat both will die, so one of them has to jump into the sea. Some decades beforehand, two other *bertsolaris*, Xalbador and Uztapide, were asked to sing to a similar topic. If we compare performances, we can easily see that the *puritas* is more commendable in Xalbador and Uztapide's production: better rhyme, better meter, better expression and clarity (they avoid forced and useless structures). Here are the first two *bertsos* sung by Xalbador and Uztapide (Amuriza 2000:34):

Uztapide
Lurretik ehun metrora zaigu
aldamio bat ageri,
bitatik batek saltatu behar,
badira mila komeri
ta, Xalbador, zu eroritzeak
pena ematen dit neri,
bitatikan bat erortzekotan
nahiago det nik erori.

Here we are at 100 meters from the ground
on a scaffolding,
One of us has to jump down,
We've got into a mess.
It would be sorrowful for me, Xalbador,
If you fell down,
So if one of us has to fall
I hope I am the one.

Xalbador
Kasu hunetan nehoiz munduan
gertatu ote da nehor?
Beheragotik ere guziak
nahiz gintazken erorkor.
Ez, Uztapide, nihaur banoa,
otoi etzaitela eror,
berdin zu hantxet hil eta gero
hila litake Xalbador.

I wonder if something like this
Has ever happened in this world,
Although from a lower height
We all are also able to fall.
No, Uztapide, I shall go down,
Please, do not fall
Because after you had died
I would drop dead.

There are no metrical mistakes in the *puntus* and the rhyme quality is good. American *bertsolaris* could try to achieve a similar level, but they have not yet managed to do so (despite other creditable achievements). Therefore, from a rhetorical perspective, they do not sufficiently imitate any exemplary author (or his style), no exemplary rhyme or meter.

In order to demonstrate this difference, we can measure the syllables of a *bertso* sung in

Gardnerville (Mallea 2003:132-33):

> Martin Goikoetxea
> *Barkutik saltatzen bazera zu* (10)
> *nik egingo dizut otoitza* (9)
> *bihotza onarekin jarria* (10, without respecting the break)
> *hemen daukagu bakoitza* (8)
> *orain badakit zuk ere ona* (10)
> *daukazula oso bihotza* (8, with elision)
> *barkutik saltatu zaite eta* (10, without respecting the break and with elision)
> *salba nere heriotza*. (8)
>
> If you jump off the boat,
> I will surely pray for you.
> I will do it with a good heart.
> Here the two of us have a choice.
> Now I know that you too
> have a very good heart.
> Please, jump off and
> save me from death.

This kind of syllabic alteration is very common in American *bertso* production. Some *bertsolaris* (Jesus Goñi occasionally and Johny Kurutxet perhaps more) tend toward this kind of variation from time to time. At any rate, the result is not so obvious or objectionable because the performers adapt the melody to their "unusual" meter as they sing. In other words, they do not normally break any linguistic rules, shortening or lengthening some words or using phonetic alterations to make the rhyme work. Phonetic variations are not understood as mistakes, of course, but it is evident these *bertsolaris* do not employ them coherently because their choice is subordinated to the rhyme. This practice does not obscure comprehension, nor does it darken the communication.

Perspicuitas

These *bertsolaris* do not perform incomprehensible or arcane speeches. This is evident for anyone who knows about the craft, especially in the USA. This is the result of a concrete situation: the *bertsolari*'s speech is received by a Basque audience, a group of receptors who have learned the Basque language by oral transmission (most of them do not know to read or write in their mother tongue); moreover, they do not live in the Basque Country, and they do not know much about the ups and downs of the homeland. Thus, the *bertsolari* has to compose an understandable speech for his audience, at least if he wants to succeed and, actually, that is not very easy in the USA. The *bertsos* are appreciated, but there are not many local fans or experts.

There are topics that require a special knowledge. For instance, in the *Euskal Kantari Eguna* in 1991, the *bertsolaris* were asked to sing about this topic: Kurutxet is an Iraqi soldier,

Goikoetxea is a fish in the sea, Arriada is Saddam Husein, and Goñi is Bush (the father), who at that time was president. The setting was the Gulf War (Mallea 2003:143):

Johnny Kurutxet
Berriz ere hemen tugu
borrokak jendeen arteko
zorigaitzez gerla hasi da
eta nik segitu beharko
Jainko maite argi indazut
egun huntan denendako
nere amak ni e'nau mundura
eman izan sentitzeko.

Once again here we go with
quarrels among the people,
and, unfortunately, war has started,
and I must go on to fight.
Dear God, guide me
in everything that I do today.
My mother did not bring me
into this world to suffer.

The soldier's position is clear: he is sad because of the war and he asks God to guide him because his mother did not bear him in order to suffer. The message is obvious, but we don't know if the audience understood his intention; in fact, most of the listeners were Low Navarrese, but there were some Biscayans too. The word *sentitzeko* means "suffer," but it is expressed in the eastern dialect. For someone from the west, such forms are not readily understood. At Basque picnics, they are quite common and the audience has almost accepted them.

The other *bertsolaris* gave good performances. For example, Jess Arriada reflected perfectly Saddam's fundamentalist speech (he puts God in his favor, he threatens the invaders, he trusts his "side"). Jesus Goñi bases his speech on a curious point: he asks Saddam to shave off his moustache. In fact, his speech represents Saddam's dictatorship and arrogance (his mustache represents his culture and regime), and Bush wants to control his opponent. It is closely related to oral psychodynamics and has direct rhetorical consequences (Mallea 2003:144):

Jesus Goñi
. . .
amor ematen ezpazera nik
kenduko zaizut bigotiak.

If you do not give up on your intentions,
I will cut off your moustache.

A lack of good ideas can force a *bertsolari* to create ambiguous speeches (those that are full of words but say nothing), and I think that Martin Goikoetxea's third *bertso* reflects this case. We have to remember that he was the fish. Consider his third *bertso* (Mallea 2003:147):

Martin Goikoetxea
Hussein honek mundu guzia
hor beti harritutzen du
arrozoi gabe gerra ematera
bestenera mugimendu
behin errean hasi zan hau eta
orain ezin du zuzendu
hobe zenduan Hussein izana
lehenau agindu bazendu.

This fellow Hussein always
manages to surprise the world.
He starts a war without a motive,
and he moves against other countries.
Long ago he began walking down the path of quarrel
and now he cannot straighten himself out.
Hussein, it would have been better
if you had ruled earlier [in another time].

The first two *bertsos* clearly show that Goikoetxea sings from a fish's point of view; in fact, he says there that the war pollutes sea water and he complains about pollution. But his arguments end and with his third *bertso* he decides to give Saddam a telling-off, thus diminishing his reliability as an artist. He also blames the dictator for his outrageous act: "He starts a war without a motive / and he moves against other countries. / Long ago he began walking down the path of quarrel / and now he cannot straighten himself out. / Hussein, it would have been better / if you had ruled earlier [in another time]." We can presume the main idea of the *bertso*, but there are many ambiguities. The fourth *bertso* sung by Goikoetxea comes back to the dirty water, and he adds at the end the strong and direct statement that he wishes for Saddam's death. However, it seems that he speaks quite inappropriately; in fact, he stipulates correct and moral behavior by saying *kristauki ibiltzea* ("You should have behaved like a good Christian"), intimating that maybe that is not a requirement for a Muslim (Mallea 2003:148):

Martin Goikoetxea
Arraia galtzen inoiz etzuten
hor zurekin merezia
hobe zenduen
kristauki ibiltzia.
zure kulpaz gu itsaso zikin
huntan utzirik bizia

zuk ere merezi zenduke hor
nik bezelaxe hiltzia.

The fish never deserved
to be treated like this by you.
You should have behaved
like a good Christian.
Because of your fault,
we have lost our life in this dirty sea.
You, too, deserve
to die here like me.

In the same performance, Jesus Goñik feels his role is over and changes his mind in his fourth and last *bertso*; although he was supposed to be George Bush, he finally says that neither Saddam nor Bush will go to heaven (Mallea 2003:149):

Jesus Goñi
Arrazoia alde bat dezu
Hussein zuk haserratzeko
zure parajin zerorrek nausi
zertara hara juateko
zure oliua agintzalia
mixeriak harritzeko
Bush eta zuk ez dezu izanen
zeruan ez sartzeko.

Hussein, in a way you have motives
to be upset [with the USA].
You have the right to be the boss in your own country,
but why did you go over there [to Kuwait]?
Oil rules you
and afflictions are incredible.
I do not think you and Bush
will manage to enter heaven.

In summary, it seems that the *bertsolaris* have no problem maintaining *perspicuitas*, especially because they know now that they have to perform easily understandable *bertsos*. There are only two possible problems: a) if the *bertsolari* uses phrases from other dialects, the audience may not understand his speech; and b) if he changes his point of view when singing in a specific role, he could mislead the audience.

Many formal rules are unconsciously fulfilled. The *bertsolaris* sing in a fictitious communicative situation, but even when this situation is far away from their everyday lives, their approach to human values is well known to the audience. In fact, they know that they will not

fail the audience with such a speech, and they regularly offer the listeners the set of values they seek in a *bertso*. Sometimes some *bertsolaris* include their opponent's ideas only to overcome them with more basic human perspectives. This represents the climax of the performance, in my opinion. Of course, the transcendence of values can take a different shape when the *bertsolaris* are pulling each other's leg, indulging themselves in a comic battle of wits. In such cases there is no difference between their activities and those of the *bertsolaris* in their homeland.

It is evident that because they do not have as many opportunities to sing together, American *bertsolaris* specify new images or different points of view for each role. In these situations, it could also happen that some speeches do not completely match the topic, or include dialectisms not understood by the general public. However, Basques from the USA greatly appreciate their performances and it is obvious that their communications succeed.

Ornatus

This criterion is closely related to the *elocutio* of a speech and does not refer solely to ornamentation (Spang 2005:109). The rhetorical resources and images analyzed from this perspective cannot be considered merely external. These resources are the way to understand and know about the world. The *ornatus* is intended to be a persuasive resource that uses the language's beauty, in other words the language's *delectare*. For that purpose, the speaker, or in this case the *bertsolari*, uses different rhetorical resources.

However, since we are speaking about an oral genre, let us analyze the main oral tendencies and how they are deployed here. The critic Jon Kortazar (1997:18) identifies several of them: a) formulaic character, b) trinity, and c) "open structure." Every oral genre has these three characteristics, even if they occur at different levels in particular genres. For instance, formulaic character is very common in Basque ballads, Basque tales, and epic songs from various cultures. But in *bertsolaritza* they are called "formulas of the mind," even if more common formulas are also used.

Trinity

Trinity is present in ballads and tales, but less so in *bertsolaritza*, though some examples exemplify oral style (provided by Xenpelar Documentary Center):

Ikusi zuten hainbat kristau on
odolustu zituztela,
ikusi zuten berdingabeko
bekatua zeukatela,
ikusi zuten mundua kontra
jeikiko zitzaietela
eta orduan zabaldu zuten
gorriak erre zutela.

They realized they bled to death

so many good Christians
They realized they had committed
a great sin
They realized everyone in the world
would turn against them
so they decided to say
the communists had burnt the city.

The *bertsolari* Txirrita (1860-1936) improvised this *bertso* that offers a clear example of trinity (provided by the Xenpelar Documentary Center):

Iru reloju, iruna kate,
iru mallakin bakoitza,
buruan berriz iru korona
petxuan iru orratza;
iru doblako amoriyua
tximista bezin zorrotza,
iru tirotan utzi zizuten
zuri senarra illotza,
iru ezpatak zulatzen dute
señora, zure biotza.

Three watches, three chains
each one with a link
inside, three crowns
and three needles in her breast;
a love of three golden coins
as sharp as a flash of lightning,
they shoot your husband to death
with three bullets,
three swords pierce,
my lady, your heart.

However, it cannot be said that trinity is rooted in the structure of the *bertsos*, even if instances are frequent.

Open structure

Bertsolaritza also manifests great "openness." In fact, "open structure" is evident in other genres as well, because the re-creation and transformation of traditional speech-acts happens in the act of transmission, creating many versions of the traditional text. But in *bertsolaritza* the objective is exactly that: each *bertso* has to be "new," it cannot be a copy. A *bertso* is a new creation that arises from a certain communicative situation. Moreover, it is not invented in order

to be transmitted from generation to generation, though some *bertsos* (even improvised ones) have become traditional; they remain in the audience's memory, or they are transcribed and achieve a certain popularity, so that they are conserved in the community memory.

I would supplement this list with four additional rhetorical tendencies: d) repetition, e) opposition and antithesis, f) parallelism, and g) climax.

Repetition

Repetition, opposition, and parallelism are consequences of the oral style and oral psychodynamics. Climax is the consequence of performative creativity over the trajectory from the beginning to the end; in other words, it is the consequence of the increasing compositional and dramatic (or comic) tension. Nevertheless, it is clear that *bertsolaris* have not learned this technique from written, classical rhetoric. At most, they have had the opportunity to listen to other successful *bertsolaris*. They lack explicit rhetorical intention, working as they do with implicit or aesthetic criteria. We cannot forget that the aesthetic objectives often match with an effective dialectic, especially with these particular *bertsolaris*.

These *bertsolaris* have few formulae, because of their small repertoire of proper images. In other words, their *bertsolaritza* has no "productive storehouse" of images that could be used to create small formulas. Some images that refer to homesickness and Basque culture are quite standardized, of course, but they appear to be linked in certain ways (Mallea 2003:169):

Martin Goikoetxea
. . . Errango det ba egi guzia
eta gure arbaso zahar haiek
han egiten zuten bizia
nik beti maitatu izandu det
ni jaio nintzan kabia
Ameriketan indar aundia baina
ez det kanbiatzen nere herria.

I will speak candidly and completely.
Our forefathers of long ago
used to make a living in the Old Country.
I have always loved
the nest where I was born.
In America we are powerful,
but I will not switch my homeland.

This *bertso* has two principal ideas: the standardized metaphor or image, *kabia* (nest), and the opposition at the end of the *bertso*.

The image is well known and does not confer unexpected beauty on the *bertso*; in fact, this image from nature introduces love for his homeland into a natural atmosphere. The word *kabia* ("nest") has a humble and tender connotation, and provides a coherent point of view. But does he

say everything intentionally? Perhaps it is just an aesthetic intuition, not a reflection of conscious style.

Nevertheless, as was mentioned, formulas are not so common in *bertsolaritza*. However, some phrases do recur, and these recurrences constitute a kind of unconscious formula. For instance, Johnny Kurutxet was asked to perform three *bertsos* about springtime. This is a part of the first one (Mallea 2003:63):

Johnny Kurutxet
Denek badakigu
hain segur engoitik
urtean badela
sasoin ederrik . . . .

We all know
[especially] from now on
that in the year are
beautiful seasons . . . .

And this is the third one:

Ez daike izan urtean
sasoina ederragorik . . . .

There is no season in the year
that is more beautiful . . . .

It is obvious that the phrase is repeated, although the second example adds a suffix: *-ago*, which is used in the Basque language to make a comparison.

Some years later, on November 7th, 1992, we find the following in this *bertso* performed by Jess Goñi (Mallea 2003:169):

. . . *Errango det ba egi guzia*
eta gure arbaso zahar haiek
han egiten zuten bizia
nik beti maitatu izandu det
ni jaio nintzan kabia
Ameriketan indar aundia baina
ez det kanbiatzen nere herria.

I will speak candidly and completely.
Our forefathers of long ago
used to make a living in the Old Country.
I have always loved

the nest where I was born.
In America we are powerful,
but I will not switch my homeland.

On that occasion, the *bertsolaris* had the challenge of comparing their love for their homeland with their love for the USA. The verb phrase *Jaio nintzan* ("I was born") forms a subordinate sentence, and complements the word *kabia* ("nest"). On the same day, Goñi sang this *bertso* (Mallea 2003:169):

Gure herri maitagarria
*askorik ez nahi dezun**a***
Amerikara etorri zinan
*lanik egin nahi ez zun**a***
baina halare nik maitatzen det
*amak bularra eman**a***
Amerikako dolar guziak baino
*nahio dut jaio nintzan**a**.*

Our beloved homeland,
the one you, apparently, don't love much.
You came to America
because you didn't want to work.
I, on the other hand, love
the fact that my mother nursed me.
The country where I was born is worth
more than all the dollars in America.

The previous verb now appears nominalized, as a noun, with the article (*–a*). It is a repetition, made by the same *bertsolari* on the same day. These kinds of pet expressions are normal and perhaps necessary for this kind of *bertsolari*.

The following are examples of other pet expressions that recur in our corpus:

Pentsatzen ("thinking"): 7 times
Pentsaketan ("thinking"): 2 times
Pentsatu ("to think"): 11 times

The words are useful for rhyme patterns, but less so for the structure or the relationship between the ideas. Extemporaneous performance is an oral reflection based on a communicative situation. Thus the meaning of these words leads us to the essential act of *bertsolaritza*. The *bertsolari* thinks about everything around him, and "chews over" his thoughts by singing. These words show how the *bertsolari* expresses his conclusions (Mallea 2003:275):

Johnny Kurutxet
Gauza hortaz pentsatzen oraintxe hastia . . .

What a thing to start thinking about right now!

. . . nik ere oraintxe geroari
behar baitut ba pentsatu . . .

. . . for I, too, must look ahead
and think of the future . . .

Zer pentsatu badet gehia nik
hori dena entzun eta . . .

I have to think it through further
after listening to all your stories . . .

Antithesis

Antithesis does not show any special value. But there are similar features in the *bertsos* of other *bertsolaris*. More generally, as Walter Ong reminds us (1990), one of the characteristics or psychodynamics of oral productions is that they contain agonistic nuances. Opposition in this poetic tradition is often expressed by an adversative sentence that uses the conjunction "but." The main clause presents important ellipses and the audience can easily understand them. Here is an initial statement: *Ameriketan indar aundia* ("In America great strength") [*Ameriketan indar handia daukagu euskaldunok / Ameriketan indar handia izatera ailegatu gara euskaldunok / Ameriketan bizi-kalitate –material– erosoa izatera iritsi gara euskaldunok* ("Basques have great strength in America, Basques have gotten great strength in America")]. This statement has the following antithesis: *. . . baina / ez det kanbiatzen nere herria* ("but I won't exchange my country"). In other words, "I won't sell my cultural and national identity, I don't want to cut my roots, I know the country that remains in my heart," Thus real-world welfare versus the heart creates an antithesis in the last sentence.

In this case, antithesis is expressed by grammatical elements. In other cases it is expressed by juxtaposition; in such instances there are always two semantically opposed elements (Mallea 2003:41):

Jesus "Jess" Goñi
Xalbador maite, kantatu nahi 'zut
egun ahal badet inola
mundu huntatik joan zinan baina
gelditu zaigu zure odola
zu zinan bertsolari aundia
baita poeta bertzela

gu gera hemen adar kaxkar batzuek
zu zinan gure arbola.

Dear Xalbador,
I want to sing to you
today the best way I can.
You left this world but
your blood remains with us.
You were a great *bertsolari*
as well as a poet.
We are just insignificant branches,
you were our tree.

Jesus Goñi not only opposes *gu* ("we") and *zu* ("you"), but also maintains a very traditional tendency in this *bertso* improvised against Xalbador. The end of the *bertso*, the last sentence, is both a statement in its own right and a significant semantic opposition: *adar kaxkar batzuek* ("some weak branches") versus *arbola* ("tree"). In other words, on the one hand he mentions unnecessary things, useless elements; on the other hand, he summons a symbolic image, a source of life (especially in Basque culture)—the tree. The cultural connotations are clear. First, there is the tree of Gernika, the symbol of the Basque sovereignty. It is also related to agriculture and traditional lifestyles, as well as the forests often associated with Basque identity. Finally, there is the more categorical antithesis between the "forests" and the "city" (civilization).

The *bertsolari* has many resources for creating a climax at the end of his *bertso*. He can compose a graphic phrase or a funny sentence. The following *bertso* was performed by Jess Goñi, who is a doctor. According to the topic prompter, his assignment is to ask the other *bertsolari* to give up drinking wine (Mallea 2003:100):

Ofiziua dotorra daukat
eriaren sendatzeko
eta goizian hemen dator bat
ez dala ongi sentitzeko
medizinik onena, aizu, laguna,
zer dagon gaur zuretako
aza nahikua jan zazu eta
basua ez ukitzeko.

My occupation is that of a doctor,
in order to heal the sick,
and this morning this one fellow came in
because he did not feel well.
Listen my friend, I will tell you today
what is the best medicine for you.
Eat plenty of cabbage,

and do not touch the bottle.

The last image is surprising. The recommendation to eat plenty of cabbage is extremely graphic: although it is certainly a common food, gourmets do not like it a lot. The situation clearly shows that the *bertsolari* looks for an amusing idea, finds it, and uses it to compose a powerful last sentence.

Climax

In *bertsolaritza*, climax is a strategy that is mainly related to the last sentence. In fact, the improviser is always searching for the climax, but normally aims to create it at the very end of the *bertso*. Here are some *bertsos* performed by Jess Arriada in 1976 for illustration (Mallea 2003:39):

Lan tipi bati lotzeko orain
baderaukat alegrantzi
haurtxo maiteak hartuko al duze
agurian aski pazientzi
Euskal Herria gora dezagun
hau ez degu behar ahantzi
zeren mundu hunek ezpaitu nehon
holako zazpi probintzi.

I am about to start a little chore,
[and] I do it happily.
My beloved children, I hope you
have enough patience with an old man;
let us hail the Basque Country.
We should not forget it,
because nowhere in this world are there
seven provinces quite like them.

This is a simple *bertso* that leads to the last sentence: *zeren mundu honek ezpaitu nehon / holako zazpi probintzi* ("because nowhere in this world are there / seven provinces quite like them"). The *bertsolari* knows that the audience will agree with him. The performance is unique and composed especially for that moment, so this climax seems forthright and suitable.

The previous seven *bertsos* were offered to the seven provinces of the Basque Country. However, Jess Arriada performed this *bertso* to end the event (Mallea 2003:40):

Azkenekoa denak agurtuz
despeditutzen naizela
gauza ederrok ikustean negar
jautsiren baitzaut berela

anaitasuna edo batasun
hunek jarraiki gaitzala
aita ama batek euskaldun guziak
egin bagintu bezela.

On the last verse I want to salute
and say farewell to all.
When I see these beautiful things,
tears come to me very quickly.
With brotherhood or unity
we must continue,
as if one Basque father and mother
had given us all birth.

The latter section is again the compositional focus, but here it is not just the last sentence but also the previous *puntu*; the closure is more articulated, more open, thanks to the last comparison—an exhortation to the audience for unity. The speech gains suitable cohesion at the end of the *bertso*, and the poet asks for a certain "cohesion" with the audience at the same moment.

Conclusion

When analyzing the oral production of the *bertsolaris* in the United States, I have imposed some limits; in fact, an integral analysis requires the context and a view of the performances. Analysis of the text in this context could be very useful in order to understand deeply this aesthetic and communicative situation. However, I think that I am well acquainted with the general context because I have been there, I have seen how the *bertsolari* live, and I have interviewed both them and their fans. My general knowledge of the Basque culture has also helped in this regard. And thanks to the information collected by Joxe Mallea (2003, 2005), I have learned a lot about the performances and uncovered very useful information.

In this article I have carried out a formal analysis that emphasized three aspects: the rhyme (or sound similarity), the last sentence, and the verse. We have seen that *bertsolaris* fulfill the rules of rhyme, but do not take into account its grammatical value. Nor do they pay strict attention to metrics. From the first part of the twentieth century (and a large part of the second half), it was a very common *bertsolaris* for poets in the Basque Country use flexible metrics, and the improvisers in the USA still maintain this practice, even at the beginning of the twenty-first century. It seems that this tendency from the homeland has been frozen in America. As for the last sentence, the praxis of the *bertsolaris* clearly shows that all *bertsos* are built in anticipation of the last idea, primarily because it expresses the core meaning of the *bertso*, and in some cases is crucial for the syntactic structure of the whole *bertso*. Most of the sentences are statements (affirmative or negative) or semantic antitheses (concessive clauses or juxtaposition by adversative conjunctions, for instance). The whole *bertso* is constructed according to the last sentence, even if sometimes the next-to-last *puntu* seems to be a "necessary support" for the

bertso. In that case the last two *puntus* become an indivisible element, expressing and constituting a kind of duality.

From a rhetorical point of view, these four *bertsolaris*' virtues correspond very closely to the virtues of *bertsolaris* in the Basque Country. I have taken into account different criteria in order to analyze the rhetorical value of their speech. According to the so-called *aptum*, we can say that the situations or the topics encountered by the *bertsolaris* are not the most suitable for them, so they present the so-called *vir bonus*. This attitude is welcomed by the audience, but lack of training and preparation are obstacles in the communicative situation. In accordance with the criterion *puritas*, comprehension is not obstructed, but many *bertsos* demonstrate mistakes in the metrical structure, even if the melody helps to sort out the rhythm. Anyway, this shortcoming keeps the *bertsolari* from reaching greater aesthetic levels. Taking into account *perspicuitas*, I must mention that the *bertsolaris* often have problems with certain topics. *Ornatus* is present in the antithesis and climax, the principal resources for these four *bertsolaris*. Repetition and formulas also occur, even if they are few.

In general, these *bertsolaris* maintain some tendencies that have since disappeared from the "European" Basque Country. Because of the impossibility of working on the performances by singing together, they have not completely developed certain skills. But most of the time they carry out successful communications and valuable rhetorical activities, thanks to their talents and intuition. The *bertsolaris* underline the necessity to institute a *bertso-eskola* (a school for *bertsolaris*, a workshop to improve their skills) in the United States, as in the Basque Country; otherwise, they do not see a promising future for this transplanted oral tradition. They say they are prepared to use new technologies for that purpose, for example. Although that initiative is up to Basques who are resident in the United States, their European colleagues should continue to help them with materials and experiences, as they have always done.

University of Navarre

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Are We "Misreading" Paul?: Oral Phenomena and Their Implication for the Exegesis of Paul's Letters

Sam Tsang

Introduction

A critical approach toward oral rhetorical qualities and styles can be traced as far back as Quintilian,[1] if not before. Inquiry into the orality of Homer dates as far back as Josephus, but the work of Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord stands out in particular. Parry and Lord studied South Slavic poetry in an attempt to answer the Homeric question that addresses the authorship of the major Greek epics.[2] Their research has alerted modern readers that the ancients did not receive a written message in the same way the modern readers do.[3] These theories are absolutely essential foundations for any Pauline letter.[4] Like the Greek epics, letters were verbally mediated, as the discussion below will indicate. A brief survey of both non-biblical and biblical scholarship on this matter will reveal varying insights, as well as implications for an improvement of rhetorical studies and general exegesis of Pauline letters. At the very least, the exegetical assumption of the interpreter must accommodate orality in Paul's society.

Theories

As early as 1930, Martin Buber, along with his colleague Franz Rosenzweig, began to think about the "spoken" instead of the "written" Bible in their biblical translation.[5] In a desire to

[1] See, for example, *Inst.* 2.1-17.

[2] Diachronically, Parry and Lord took a poetic phenomenon they observed in a certain part of the world

[2] Diachronically, Parry and Lord took a poetic phenomenon they observed in a certain part of the world from this century and applied this model to Homeric studies.

[3] There are obviously differences between the Homeric texts and Paul. The context of Homeric reception was closer to the modern theater setting than Paul's liturgical setting. Nevertheless, both works were delivered orally and received aurally. The two were also different in compositional process and rhetorical purposes.

[4] Paul's letters to the churches take up roughly one-quarter of the New Testament. Due to their dominance in the corpus of the New Testament, many important doctrines and ethics have been formed by reading these letters, and their influence has extended well beyond the first-century world.

[5] I do not mention the mountain of scholarship on oral sources in biblical scholarship because of the lack of

improve Luther's translation, they argued that neither theology nor politics should be the guiding principle in biblical translation. Rather, the aesthetic sense, or the "rhyme" and "rhythm" of the words themselves, should inform the final translation. Such a proper aural sense in translation should "speak" to the human heart, as it did thousands of years ago in the biblical world (Buber and Rosenzweig 1994:215-18, 76). As part of their translation strategy, they sought to excavate the "sensory and concrete" rather than the lexical meaning in the Hebrew Bible (179-81). Buber recorded Rosenzweig's stark (perhaps too stark for some) comment before their joint translation effort: "Only when it is translated back into orality does it suit my stomach" (211). In spite of Buber and Rosenzweig's strong declaration, biblical scholars paid little attention to orality theories in their interpretive process until the latter part of the twentieth century.

Among non-biblical scholars, Walter J. Ong's observation on the psychodynamics of orality has continued to shape the older model. Regarding the importance of sound and silence, he gives a helpful description of the audible nature of speech. As Ong puts it, "in a primary oral culture, to solve effectively the problem of retaining and retrieving carefully articulated thought, you have to do your thinking in mnemonic patterns, shaped for oral recurrence. Your thought must come into being in heavily rhythmic, balanced patterns in repetitions or antitheses, in assonance and alliterations" (1982:34).[6] Ong makes a final observation that oral cultures are "practical" rather than "theoretical" (*idem*).[7]

Among biblical scholars, those of the Uppsala School were pioneers in this field by noting the diachronic development of culture through folklore studies and by maintaining that diachronic gap between ancient and modern cultures.[8] This school of thought formulated a different set of queries within the biblical text. One particularly useful and interesting work on the Hebrew Bible is Susan Niditch's *Oral World and Written Word*, in which she combines the aforementioned theories from scholars studying folklore and literacy in order to interpret the Bible (1996:117-30). She has special interest in how folklore is compared with the Bible, not in terms of religious or moral authority but in terms of the characteristics of orality. Although her work does not equate the Bible with folklore, she focuses first on the various oral patterns in the Hebrew Bible, which in turn reveals different types of compositional styles. From different texts, she finds different models of composition.[9] Niditch's work is beneficial primarily because she

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space here. Source criticism of the Synoptic Gospels deals not so much with message reception as with the source, while the present study deals with message reception. For an example of orality useful for source study, see Henderson 1992:283-306.

[6] Rosenberg finds similar assonance and alliterations in modern African- American sermons. He also notes the same research results in Lord's work on the South Slavic meter (1990:145).

[7] Scribner and Cole find this formulation of the concrete and the abstract problematic in their application of these ideas to the Librarian educational system (1981:14). The problem with Ong's observations is that they simply cannot be directly transferred to the application of Scribner and Cole.

[8] See Engnell 1969; Nielsen 1954; Nyberg 1935.

[9] First, there is the Parry-Lord model of recorded performance. Second, there is the model of dictated work intended for reading aloud, which also fits perfectly for the letters in the New Testament as well. Third, there is the

takes orality scholar Ruth Finnegan's (1988) pluralistic model seriously and formulates her own work accordingly.

One significant contribution to the recent scholarship on the letters of Paul is C. W. Davis' *Oral Biblical Criticism* (1999), which applies a long-overdue oral theoretical application to Pauline literature. By making use of research on orality in non-biblical literature, Davis applies his theory to Paul's letter to the Philippians. In his methodology, Davis combines orality, modern linguistics, and classical rhetorical studies to create what he calls "oral biblical criticism" (21). There are three steps in his discourse analysis: classical criticism, biblical rhetorical criticism, and linguistic studies.[10] First, he analyzes the author's rhetorical style. Second, he identifies and analyzes the rhetorical units using oral characteristics. Third and finally, he evaluates the method of progression from unit to unit. Davis uses the data gathered in the first step on oral characteristics to illuminate both the second and third steps. Even though he calls his method oral biblical criticism, orality is not the overarching framework but is instead only a part of his rhetorical analysis. Nevertheless, his work is the first to fully apply a methodology based on orality to a Pauline text.

Another serious study on orality in Paul is J. Harvey's *Listening to the Text* (1998). Harvey's work is different in nature from Davis', though both promote further discussions of Paul's orality in terms of parallelism, chiasmus, and *inclusio*. In other words, traditional structural exegesis takes on the "new clothing" of studies in orality. While Davis deals in great depth with Paul's understanding of Philippian culture, Harvey broadly covers the whole of Pauline corpus. In so doing, Harvey performs a great service for all studies of orality in Paul and ultimately provides a primer for all Pauline scholars. Akio Ito, in an important article on Roman culture, distinguishes between Paul's deeper theological thoughts as a whole versus his rhetorical flow (2003:240).[11] Orality should be the methodological umbrella over rhetorical analysis where the audience's first hearing dictates the meaning and interpretation instead of a holistic study of a Pauline theology.

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model of writing that imitated speech. The third model basically resembles the first except for the fact that the written process comes first, before the performance. Fourth, there is the literary model of writing meant for the literate. Such a study definitively denies any unified theory of textual transmission in an oral world. This sophisticated and diversified approach yields four models of textual transmission with both orality and literacy in mind. Silent reading was not evident until the writing of Cyril of Jerusalem's *Procatechesis* 14 and Augustine's *Confession* 6.3; 8.12. There is little evidence of such a practice exist until 350 AD (Slusser 1992:499). Surely it is not hard to argue that all those who were literate had the ability to read silently as early as the fifth and fourth century BCE (for example, Euripides' *Hippolytus,* 116-27; Plutarch's *On the Fortune of Alexander,* 340A; Pseudo-Aristotle's *Problems,* 18. 1, 7). Still how many can read in the first place? See also Gilliard 1993:689-94.

[10] Davis (1999:55, 63) provides a synopsis of his methodology. His linguistic theory is based on A. Radford's model of phonology (the sound), morphology ("the smallest possible language unit with semantic content"), syntactics (sentence constructions), and semantics (meaning of words, phrases, and sentences).

[11] I am not sure Ito's distinction can be realistically discerned. Paul wrote all his letters to address specific situations and problems within the church, compounded with the added complexity of the audience's backgrounds. In a sense, these letters are all "rhetorical." How the interpreter should tease out the deeper theology and what criteria should be used remains an open to question.

Oral Phenomenon

Following this brief survey of studies of oral tradition in Pauline scholarship, I must provide a theoretical discussion to summarize this study's theoretical base. In discussing ancient writings, it is very important to establish some differences between audience reception then and today. Thus the following discussion focuses on the socio-cultural context of Pauline society before the literary context, especially in regard to letter writing. This sort of discussion is important both in terms of Paul's rhetorical strategy and of literary communication in general. There are five social and literary factors that demand attention in this kind of oral communication: the role of rhetoric, the role of memory, the relationship between letter writing and speech, the practice of reading letters publicly, and euphonics.

In some ancient civilizations, literacy was not generally considered necessary for one to be a functional member of society as it often is today. Some societies granted little or no elevated status to the literate.[12] Letter writing thus became a profession, and even slaves were sometimes taught to read and write in order to perform certain duties.[13] Any discussion must allow literacy to be acknowledged as a certain reality that often superseded the class structure of Greco-Roman society (Bowman 1991:123).

Besides indicating certain realities of literacy in Paul's society, the educational system of classical society points to other developments related to orality. One is its rhetoric. With many obstacles to literacy, the functional medium of oral communication took center stage in Greco-Roman society. At this point, it is important to see the development of oral communication as it is connected to the Sophists. Due to the fact that society was generally oral, for example, the Sophists took this phenomenon very seriously in their pedagogy. Since Paul's audience, indirectly or directly, inherited the sophistic tradition, it is equally important to see how the Sophists used oral communication to their advantage.[14] As education developed, so did competition.[15] Even with the availability of writing, oral communication remained central.[16] One

[12] I thank my colleague Margaret E. Lee for her contributions in many informal communications during the years 2005 and 2006 towards this important point.

[13] Literacy did not necessarily empower ancient readers in the way of their modern counterparts. This is in contradiction to scholars such as W. V. Harris (1989:334), who sees literacy as part of the empowerment of the upper class—even his own data does not necessarily lead to that conclusion. Horsfall (1991:60) builds from this point, takes Harris to task, and proposes literacy at all levels, however sparse. The real issue, however, is whether literacy was necessary for Paul's audience, especially among the emerging middle-class. For Horsfall, literacy was nearly a necessity for advancement. However, his confidence seems to be founded on partial evidence because his definition of "literacy" seems quite different from that of Harris. If his definition does not differ from Harris' as much as it appears to, however, then the general assumption of widespread literacy is both unfounded and unreasonable. Even Horsfall, who is the sharpest of Harris' critics, agrees with this general assumption. Literacy, of course, should not be the sole indication of class. See Robbins 1994:80 and Harris 1989:197.

[14] This prompts scholars such as Johan S. Vos (2007:29-52) to read Paul from a Sophist's point of view.

[15] Structured education, which allowed one to earn a living, likely began with the Sophists. For more information, see McDougall 2006.

purely logistical issue is pointed out by Small, who observes that, "keeping track of where multiple references are within blocks of text written in continuous script would be no easy matter" (1997:167). The sound, not the concordance survey (as in a modern exegetical process), of words dominated such a society. Even though knowledge was recorded in writing, the transmission and composition of works were still mediated through the spoken word. Knowledge was useless without verbal eloquence because people respected and trusted spoken words (Isocrates' *Ep*. 1.2-3). As is the case in many cultures, spoken words were a means to empowerment in ways that written words were not (Harris 1989:208).[17] While Greek education evolved into a more Isocratic or practical model, the pragmatic Romans took practicality to a higher level.[18] Everything ranging from the speed, passion, and diction to the volume of speech can be found in rhetorical handbooks of the era (Bonner 1977:73).[19] The practical concerns of the day forced many of the educated to pursue rhetoric instead of philosophy (Ward 1994:97).[20] For instance, the legal profession, which was politically and financially profitable, was essentially a private enterprise (Bonner 1977:66).[21] Consequently, the tendency to favor the study of rhetoric over history and even philosophy became the norm (*Inst*. 10. 31).

Although strong memory certainly does not belong exclusively to oral society, and the modern brain likely has the same physiological makeup as its ancient counterpart, memory in Greco-Roman society, for example, was trained far more vigorously than today. In fact, the

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[16] See Plato's *Prot*. 313d-315a and *Grg*. 447c-448a. It is Plato's tendency to despise and caricature the Sophists, but it is logical to see the need to "sell" one's oratorical competence. The same Corinthian mentality plagued Paul in 1 Corinthians. In fact, even though Quintilian observed that written and spoken words were so closely related as to be practically inseparable, he still concluded that writing was the tool to better oral delivery (*Inst*. 10.1. 2-3; 10.3.1). See also Bonner 1977:32.

[17] Harris uses the example of the "herald" (a common office under consuls and praetors) to prove his point. Though ancient Rome was known for generating written works, the herald's role is a significant indicator of a society in which political administration was carried out by oral means.

[18] Rhetorical training probably did not become established until as late as 169 BC, but it gained popularity very quickly (Stanley F. Bonner [1977:65] quotes the Ennius fragment for this date). In the process of conquest, the Romans were able to enslave and make use of many educated Greeks, especially after the third Macedonian War (23).

[19] In the classroom, the practice of declamation became commonplace. Such practices were to prepare the student to encounter real-life situations (*Inst*. 2. 1-4). The emphasis on poetics and reading aloud continued (*Inst*. 1.8.1-2).

[20] Ward (1994) points out the fact that the "performance" of Paul's opponents was so impressive that they swayed some of the Corinthians to their side. The rhetorical competition was fierce indeed. Though the comparison of a synagogue to a spiritual theater by Ward is a bit farfetched, the oral circumstances of the service does allow for some parallels. However, his further description of the Christian more resembles a mixture between the charismatic denomination and the Parry-Lord performance than the first century synagogue.

[21] Though the *Lex Cincia* of 204 BC legislated the ban of legal fees, the popularity of the legal profession trespassed the prohibition.

ability to memorize words was an essential trait in such a society.[22] But, lest we view ancient societies as drastically different from today, we must remind ourselves that memory is the first-line storage of information even in modern society.

The dynamics of memory affect how an audience receives any piece of performed work in two ways: via literary composition or reception, and via educational process. First, the compositional style or performance of any literature must complement the memory of the audience. The Greeks, followed by the Romans, had a certain method of memorization. Rhetoricians probably used the same pattern to help the audience understand speeches. Scholars often argue that literacy automatically diminishes memory. Such is not the case. As early as the Greeks, literary works became more complex, wording and phraseology became increasingly varied. This shift caused the need for memory to increase rather than decrease (Small 1997:22-23). People trained their memory more for oral performance of written works. For example, the meter, or more basically, the sound of the composition, could easily help a piece be more memorable (*Rh* 3. 1409b; Small 1997:75).[23] In ancient letter writing, attention span was surely related to the short-term memory of the audience, which brought up the issue of letter length. According to Demetrius (or the tradition attributed to him), the letter writer had to keep the length of the letter within control and not turn it into a treatise (*Dem*. 228).[24] Since Demetrius' dictum also addresses audience, one can assume that he was referring not only to papyri length but also attention span. Sophisticated argument and elaborate ornamentation in the style of Plato and Thucydides hinder rather than help (*Dem*. 228, 232-33). Most audiences, perhaps with the exception of the fully educated aristocrats and their slaves, could not appreciate this type of writing (*Dem*. 234). Demetrius, sensitive to the audience, summarizes good letter writing as simple eloquence (*Dem*. 235). Furthermore, it seems that children learned as far back as Aristotle to take dictation before learning to read; this directly affected how the sounds of words were received (Dean 1996:54; Small 1997:84-98).[25] Writing at this time, then, primarily served to record sounds rather than meaning.

Examination of the Hebrew culture in which Paul lived further highlights the importance of memory. Liturgical literature such as Psalms 119 exploited acrostic form. The alphabetical pattern helped the faithful memorize a large amount of material for public worship. Certain

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[22] In their study of Vai culture, Scribner and Cole (1981:233) show that literacy does not thwart memory. Rather, the essential obstacle of literacy to memory is the changed learning habit. If people continue to learn by sound with the help of sight (reading), their memory may improve in some cases. However, if they only rely on their new literacy and use the written word as the basis for learning, their memory likely suffers somewhat. The authors thus conclude that "literacy makes some difference to some skills in some context" (1981:234).

[23] Quintilian also talked about the importance of words sounding pleasing to the ear (*Inst*. 1.5.4).

[24] This study is not the place to debate the important issue of how the final form of *On Style* came together. Let it suffice to say that the possibility of multiple authors is very real. Thus, this study uses the name "Demetrius" to denote the final form or the final name under which the text was published.

[25] The memory training invented by Simonides in accordance with Quintilian's writing was developed in order to memorize in terms of "scenes" or imagery (*Inst*. 11. 2. 17). Such imagery was often tied to a location. In Greek, the geographical association was called "topoi," while in Latin it was termed "loci." Words therefore became metaphors. Aristotle explored numerical and other patterns that had beginnings and endings in combination with image association of the earlier invention (*Mem*. 452a12-25; *Top*. 163b17-33).

regular combinations created by wordplay could stimulate the audience's memory. Orality and memory, along with aural reception, were built into a written text. From the vantage point of aural reception, neither orality nor memory diminished or enhanced the written work's literary quality. Another ancient example is the Roman requirement of memorization of the legal Twelve Tables by heart. Some scholars may regard such a practice as an indication of literacy (*de Leg.* 2.59). Nevertheless, the conclusion that memorization of certain social codes is equivalent to literacy is far from certain. What this regulation does show is that memorization was valued by this society for its practical usefulness. Without neglecting the scientific and literary scholarship, the Greek emphasis on memory training and eloquence continued into the Roman era, thus demonstrating the strong Greek rhetorical influence within Roman society.[26] In education, the emphasis on memory in Greco-Roman culture was similar to that of the Hebrew culture in which Paul lived (c.f. Josh. 1:8; Prov. 1:1-7; 3:1; 7:1ff; 31:1-9; Eccl. 1:1ff; Josephus' *Vit*. 8ff, etc.).[27] Such a parallel in memory training further reinforces the connection between orality and memory.

Since this study focuses only on the aural reception and oral performance of Paul's letters, it is important to see how letter writing was closely related to everyday conversation.[28] If letter writing were in some way a representation of a living voice, then the audience would have received the words differently than a modern day reader does. The first people to note the relationship between oral communication and letter writing were the ancient rhetorical scholars.[29] For Cicero, emotional expression, which communicates true feeling, must have had an effect on the reception of the letter (*Fam*. 2.4.1). Hence, there is no reason to assert with F. G. Kenyon that Cicero was necessarily more of a man of the letter than an orator (Gamble 1997:79). Cicero was well versed in both because there was little distinction between the two. In his letter to Atticus, Cicero described letter writing as *quasi loquerer*, a kind of conversation (*Att*. 9.10.1).

Demetrius made the relationship between conversation and letter writing even more clear by recording a particular teaching by Artemon, the editor of Aristotle's *Letters*. He recorded that letter-writing should be "in the same way as a dialogue" (*Dem*. 223). However, Demetrius himself went against conflating letters with speech by advocating a more careful construction of letters (*Dem*. 224, 226). Speech, in the conversational sense, was to Demetrius more suited for the theater than letter writing (*Dem*. 226). He made the distinction between oration and conversation elsewhere, showing that the two were related in their oral nature but different in their deliveries (*Dem*. 225). To put the issue another way, to what degree can writing mimic

[26] See Quintillian, 1.1.36; 2.5.3.

[27] Rajak (1983:32) gives an example of a possible memorization feat by Josephus. If her contention is true, Josephus had incredible memory of Old Testament scriptures, without much access to manuscripts. This might also explain why Paul's Old Testament quotes were sometimes less than exact.

[28] Schubert (1939), O'Brien (1977), and White (1978) also contribute to understanding the parts and the whole of Paul's letter. White's study, from a sample of 660 papyri, proposes to examine the functions of the opening, closing, and the body of a letter (1978:283-319).

[29] Malherbe's *Ancient Epistolary Theorists* (1988) provides an excellent collection of sources for ancient epistolary theories in their original language as well as in translation. Much of my discussion on epistolary theories will draw its sources from this notable book.

speech but still remain intelligible? While letter writing handbooks probably had no more influence on letter writing than they do today, it is important to note that Demetrius and others like him probably made some observations on written letters before formulating their rules.

Compared with Cicero and Artemon, Demetrius' conception of letter writing and speech had some differences as well as similarities. Demetrius seems to be much more interested in theories rather than the practice of letter writing. Apparently, for people like Demetrius, who were completely conscious of a long tradition of letter writing, the theories were as important as the practice. Demetrius' commentator and translator, W. Rhys Roberts (*Dem*. 222-235), considered Demetrius' verses on letter writing among the best of his overall work on style (1996:276). Like Cicero, Demetrius regarded writing as half a conversation (*Dem*. 223). Thus writing was not an end in itself but served other social functions.[30] Unlike Artemon, Demetrius took more care with style than merely imitating a conversation (*Dem*. 224, 226).

The issue at hand is two-fold. First, how oral was ancient letter writing? Was it purely or partially conversational? Second, how did the presentation impact the audience? Did it represent the real author or merely the ideas the author wished to communicate? In reviewing many of the theorists in the Greco-Roman world, the perspectives on letter writing were far from uniform. For example, Seneca favored a conversational or plain-speaking style of writing (*Ep*. 75.1) and appreciated others for doing so (*Ep*. 40.1). For him, honesty without exaggeration was the best policy.

In Paul's time, to read a letter aloud in public likely required a much higher degree of comprehension by the reader than today. The Christian scribes wrote fewer lines to a page with fewer letters to a line and paid stronger attention to breathing marks than in contemporary literature. This attention to oral detail highlights the difficulty of public reading itself.[31] The fact that people then learned words in almost exactly the same way as people do today hindered rather than helped comprehension in the reading process (Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Comp*, 25; Small 1997:23-4). The breathing marks and the lack of sentence breaks further stress the importance of pronunciation. Psychologists have made similar studies by re-creating the format of ancient writings in English. They have found that the effect of continuous capital letters without break causes the reader to read more slowly and carefully (Small 1997:19; Crowder and Wagner 1992:13-14). Apparently, reading as a skill is somewhat different from speech making, according to the personal example of Pliny the Younger, who alleged that he was a better extempore speaker than a book reader (*Ep*. 9.34.1-2). Either, the public readers were able to read at a good pace by their mastery of the language, or they had to look over the Pauline texts several times before public performances. Both required an advanced degree of literacy. Otherwise, public reading could be a real struggle for the readers and the audience.

In order to speak of the aural reception of an oral message, one has to take seriously the listeners' point of view. This is where the study of euphonics comes in. Whether or not the

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[30] Harris (1989:26-27) presents a well-structured list of the functions of writing.

[31] H. Gamble (1997:74) notes that E. G. Turner was the first one to discern this phenomenon. See also Turner (1977:84-87) who commented on the Chester Beatty Papyri. See also Gamble (1997:229-30) and Small (1997:13).

audience was consciously judgmental, Paul's letters would affect the listeners differently depending on the sound of the written words. Both the Greeks and the Romans were aware of the sound of words; indeed, they wrote treatises on the topic. Since this study considers the audience's perspective, it is important to see how insights from euphonics influenced the original audience. Not every theory of euphonics formulated by ancient intellectuals considers the audience in the same way.[32] To be sure, euphony was an important value in rhetorical formulation. The disagreement might have instead surrounded what was considered euphonic. Therefore, only a general discussion of overarching principles formed by ancient Greco-Roman scholars best serves the purpose of this study.

Among Greek writers, Dionysius of Halicarnassus had much to say about euphonics in poetry and prose (*Comp*. 10, 20).[33] Looking at a combination of alphabetical sounds, he proposed certain criteria for what combinations worked better aurally than others.[34] Curiously, the same sort of idea existed among Latin writers.[35] As a multilingual society, the Romans needed to take euphonics seriously. As one understands the various realities of ancient writing, the better question to ask may have to do with whether Paul's letters were truly oral and public.

In addressing the public reading of Paul's letters, confronting the problem of the Greco-Roman multilingual reality is unavoidable. Despite their conquest, the Romans did not discourage the diversity of languages in the Empire. The vastness of their Empire could not have unified language without the aid of modern media. Based on inscriptions in different dialects, Harris (1989:176-77, 193) accurately assumes a multilingual, multicultural, Roman society. Epigraphic languages outside of Italy included Greek, Latin, Getic, Lycaonian, Punic, Libyan, Gaelic, and countless others which were lost due to the natural erosion of papyri and other writing materials. Some local dialects were transliterated into Greek and Latin alphabets, thereby stressing the sounds rather than the forms of the words (Malakoff 1992:519-26).[36] This great

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[32] This is not to stress the great gulf between "intellectuals" and "commoners." After all, much of what the modern era considers classical literature was performed in public where many in the ancient lower class had equal access to these works. See Downing (2000) for an informed discussion of the alleged class differences in literature artificially and mistakenly created by modern interpreters.

[33] Though he noted the ears needing a sense of beauty as much as the eye, Dionysius distinguished between the two senses (*Comp*. 10). This highlighted the aural aspect of writing, as writing was for the ear in his society, and his work was intended for both poets and orators (*Comp*. 20). Later writers such as Quintilian considered his analyses within the tradition of good rhetoric (*Inst*. 3.1.16; 9.3.89; 9.4.88).

[34] Dionysius based his observations and qualifications on Homer, Herodotus, and Demosthenes (*Comp*. 12). Paul's audience was probably at least familiar with the Homeric epics, as these stories were a regular theatrical mainstay.

[35] Among Latin writers, Aulus Gellius wrote about the teaching of Valerius Probus, a prominent Roman grammarian in the second half of the first century CE (*NA* 13.21).

[36] A similar study on the African language Twi and English was done in the same collection of essays (Opoku 1992:175-89). In modern studies of children raised in bilingual families, the translation process is part of the child's developed ability. The common pitfall of syntactical and grammatical confusion found in some adults who acquire a second language does not happen in children. Having seen the great mixture of ethnic groups in Asia, for example, it is reasonable to assume that there were people raised as fluent bilinguals who could conduct perfect

diversity suggests that not everyone could read Greek but might have understood only the spoken forms (Gamble 1997:230).[37] Even if someone did not understand Greek, which was an unlikely scenario, church members could have practiced the logical steps of simultaneous translation long before this late evidence.[38] Having briefly touched on how a multilingual congregation could have understood a Greek letter, it is now beneficial to examine the evidence of orality in Paul's letters.

Orality in Paul's Letters

When reading Paul's letters, one may notice hints of oral composition that suggest he composed his letters by a combination of oral and written processes. Certainly, Paul himself saw his written words as having an oral representation by saying in Galatians 4:20, "How I wish I could be with you and change my tone." Many of his letters suggest the context of public reading. Compared with the papyri, Paul's letters are relatively long.[39] Some of Cicero's longer

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translation without misrepresenting the meaning of Paul's words. Altarriba (1992:157-174) proves from multiple language research of bilinguals—ranging from speakers of Spanish, English, Dutch, and French to non-European language speakers like Korean—that fluent bilinguals translate by common concepts between two languages. In other words, the bilingual speaker finds the semantic concept from the one language and replaces it with a word that shares the same semantic range from another language. Although many still vigorously debate this point by taking the bilingual phenomenon as the sum of two distinctly separate languages, evidence seems to favor the singular semantic universe which is greater than the sum of the two distinct languages. Most of the studies done on this work have been based on post-colonial societies. Paul's audience was such a society, with various ethnic groups under a centralized Roman colonial rule.

[37] The officially known evidence for bilingual translation from Greek to Syriac comes from late fourth-century Jerusalem. In churches where bilingualism is both a linguistic and cultural issue today, simultaneous translation is a natural step. No written procedure is necessary to deal with this problem. Therefore, no "evidence" will have been found of translation having taken place for future researchers.

[38] With the discussion of sounds, there is still the problem of someone not understanding either Aramaic or Greek. In the case of Paul's multi-lingual audience, how could a person who understood no Greek derive any meaning from hearing Greek sounds? The problem was not as great as it first appears. From what his letters indicated about his mission, Paul tended to stay on the major Roman trade routes. Churches founded along these routes would naturally have been familiar with Greek. As for the circulatory letters, they could have easily been translated and copied into other dialects before their distribution to the more rural areas. If the sound gave any sense or meaning to written words, anyone familiar with the sense can easily explain the idea in his or her own dialect with little difficulty. An excellent example of sound being exactly the sense and meaning of the word is "onomatopeia" or "mimesis" (see Stanford 1967:99-121 for a useful discussion of this topic). For example, the word "murmur" literally sounds like someone making annoying complaints. For the translator, s/he could explain the *sense* rather than the *sound* of the assonance. Quintilian noted that with people who became literate through thorough rhetorical training, the practice of translation from Greek to Latin was not uncommon (*Inst*. 10.5.2-3). There is even a discussion on "dynamic equivalence" in translation considered (*Inst*. 10.5.3), and translations ranged from the more literate sort to that of paraphrase (*Inst*. 10.5.4-10). As long as people in the congregation had literary training, they were qualified to transmit and read Paul's relatively simple letters.

[39] In fact, they resemble the treatise form that Demetrius found so unhelpful (*Dem*. 228). For example, if one can make comparisons between Paul, Cicero, and other writers like Pliny the Younger, all of whom were prolific letter writers, there is a marked difference in average letter length between them. Most of the letters by

letters are not too terribly lengthy compared to an average Pauline letter.[40] The same is true of the works by Pliny the Younger.

Indications of Orality

Two lines of evidence clearly indicate spoken words in the delivery of Paul's letters: the first point at which the social convention of public reading is illustrated within Pauline letters is in 1 Thessalonians 5:27. Paul's saying in 1 Thessalonians 5:27 seems to indicate that he intended his letter to be read aloud to the church (Dewey 1995:40-49).[41] The ecclesiastical function of these letters directly points to public reading. Since the second century, the synagogue, for example, evidently practiced regulated public reading in liturgy (Gamble 1997:209-11). Since people wrote in continuous scripts (alphabets and words with no breaks in between), public reading became an interpretive exercise in itself. The manner of reading would create meaning and emphasis for the audience. That is perhaps why Latin was sometimes written in separate wordings (Small 1997:20-12).[42] In fact, word layout strongly affects the reading process. Experiments with bilingual speakers of English and Hebrew who were originally Hebrew speakers illuminate the issue (Small 1997:19-20). Participants in this exercise read aloud an English text and an unpointed Hebrew text. The result was that the readers were able to read the English text in a much faster manner. Written presentation certainly affects the reader.

Second, Paul's way of dealing with problems and conflicts within the church was to let his letter speak for him through his emissaries, if he could not resolve the situation in person (1 Cor. 16:10-11). In Greco-Roman times, emissaries were often members of the letter writer's household who were bound for the destination of the letter (*Att*. 8.14; *PCol*. 3.6.15).[43] Since the content of the letter could be contaminated, trust was an important factor (*QFr*. 3.8.2; 3.9.6). Even though a trusted friend could also distort meanings (*Inst*. 11.1.37), it was still better for people who knew Paul to read for him. Since trust was often the problem when it came to delivery and representing a letter (*Att*. 4.15.4), emissaries made up of those recognized by Paul

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Cicero and Pliny the Younger approach the length of Paul's shortest letter (his letter to Philemon), though Pliny wrote some relatively long letters as well. However long Pliny's letters may have been, they are nowhere the length of Paul's letter to the Romans.

[40] Two longer examples from Cicero are his letters to his brother Quintus *QFr*. 1.1 and 3.1. In his longer letters, Cicero discussed his concerns in brief as opposed to Paul's drawn-out discussions, explanations, and careful nuances.

[41] Gamble (1997:208-31) gives a thorough history of early public reading mostly from the second century. *Anagnôsis* and its cognate was traced back prior to the LXX to Pauline era as a technical word for reading in public, especially in an ecclesiastical context (Arndt and Gingrich 1979:52).

[42] Concerning this circumstance, Seneca the Younger remarked that the pace and style of reading between Greek and Latin might have been due to Latin word separation in written words (*Ep*. 40. 11-12).

[43] *PCol*. is taken from the papyri samples from White (1986:43).

and the Christian community came to be qualified Pauline representatives (2 Cor. 8:16; Ward 1994:102-4; Ziesler 1991:3).[44]

Based on the comparison of Pauline data and social convention of secretarial help, the communication process from writing to delivery probably included the following seven steps: First, Paul dictated to the secretary after having worked out the scheme of the letter either in his head or on wax tablets (*Inst*. 10.3.31-33).[45] Second, after the completion of the dictation, Paul would in turn check on the work of his secretary to correct any kind of error.[46] At this stage, the secretary possibly helped with grammatical nuances. Then, Paul would sign his own letter with a few summary remarks. Third, a close Pauline associate would deliver the letter as an emissary. Fourth, a church official would receive the letter and would arrange to have either himself or someone in the church read the letter aloud publicly. Such a duty depended on the skill of the public reader. Fifth, the big day came when the letter was read in public. Sixth, after this process, the letter would either be analyzed by the literate official or be copied into another roll for other churches (in the case of the circular letter). The copies could be either in Greek or interlinear with other local dialects, including Latin. And finally, the letter was sent to another church for reference, if it was indeed a circular letter (Col. 4:16).[47]

After exploring the social convention evident in Paul's letters, it is important to focus on the orality of Paul's literary work. In so doing, it is important to explore some of the parallel techniques recorded in many oral cultures, which are also found in Paul's writings. Some techniques Paul used were alliterations, repetitions (Gal. 1:5-7, 11, 13; 2:16-21, etc.), and paranomasia, or word play (i.e. putting words of the same sound or the same words in close proximity to each other). Margaret E. Lee (formerly Margaret E. Dean [1996:55]) quite correctly notes that Paul had introduced many of his arguments by deliberate repetition of important words and concepts. Tolmie's (2005:251) recent work shows a substantial amount of word play in Galatians alone. Paranomasia was extremely important for emphasizing certain concepts and for

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[44] Also see passages like Galatians 6:11, 17; 2 Corinthians 10:10; and 11:6.

[45] The degree of involvement by the secretary would probably depend on Paul's familiarity with Greek grammar and his view of the subject matter. Just as it does not take someone with a higher education to know how to write "Dear Sir/Madame" in modern times, Paul must have had the most basic exposure to knowledge of Greco-Roman letters. This does not suggest that Paul was familiar with or made use of all the epistolary techniques accumulated in his cultural surroundings, but he did not need such knowledge to write a coherent letter to his audience who stood within the Greco-Roman tradition. Josephus, on the other hand, stayed in Jerusalem's and Galilee's Jewish circle, so he was slightly restricted as to what he could say at the beginning of his writing (*AJ*. 1. 7; 20. 263). However, the final version seems to be in good enough Greek to be considered a sound literary work. The multilingual culture of Palestine and its surrounding area would typify many different areas of the Roman Empire. On this subject, see especially Rajak (1983:230-32), specifically on the possibility of Josephus being competent in Hebrew and Aramaic (*AJ* 1. 34; 3. 151-178).

[46] Richards (1988:45, 55) gives examples of why proofreading for grammar (*Fam*. 16.17.1) and content (*QFr*. 3.9.8; *POxy*. 1487) is important.

[47] This is not the place to debate whether or not Paul wrote Colossians. At the very least, the letter shows a prominent tradition of circular letters in the early church.

queuing the audience to focus on certain concepts in Paul's letters. In fact, interpretation of repeated patterns does not undermine but enhances philological research. Sounds add a new dimension to philology. In Paul's other letters, one can find the practice of paronomasia, or word play. In 1 Corinthians 16:22a, the love of the Lord is mentioned along with a curse (1 Cor. 16: 22a). The same Greek curse word *anathema* was used in 1 Corinthians 12:3. The love of the Corinthians seemed to be focused on either human beings (1 Cor. 1:12), their personal preferences (1 Cor:5-11), or on their own gifts (1 Cor:12-14), thus bringing upon themselves the danger of a curse. The mention of the transliterated Aramaic formula *maranatha* seems to be a Eucharistic formula echoing the chaos of 1 Corinthians 11:17-22 and the hope of 1 Corinthians 11:26.[48] If the modern interpreter considers the oral characteristic of this particular formula and refers back to the Greek word *anathema* almost all the same letters except for one were used to spell out both words.[49] Furthermore, Paul's usage of the LXX spelling *anathema* instead of the usual non-biblical Greek *anathêma* possibly hinted at the covenantal context of the Old Testament holy war (Kern 1998:224).[50] This further matches the new covenant contained within Paul's eucharistic ideal. This kind of link is provided by the context of sound patterns, thereby linking the blessing of the second Aramaic word to the curse of the first which in turn changes the nature of the second Aramaic word.[51] This second Aramaic formula echoes the oral practice of the early church liturgy. Therefore, the second Aramaic word functions as both a blessing and a curse—a blessing for the obedient and a curse for the rebellious. In this case, the sound gives the sense of the meaning.[52] The last verse 1 Corinthians 16:24 turns from a stern tone to a merciful one that transitions well to the final chapter of 1 Corinthians. One may again suspect that Paul finished this greeting with his own hand in the length of four sentences. 1 Corinthians 16:21, which seems to function as a part of a greater motif of blessing and cursing in the Corinthian situation, clearly indicates another trait similar to Galatians 6:11: Paul's own signature.

Finally, based on the above assessment of Paul's letters, one may find Ruth Finnegan's categories of audience helpful (1980:217-33, 416). First, the audience could have been part of the performance itself, which could be further subdivided into degrees of involvement. Second, the audience was functionally demarcated from the author (Paul's audience resembled this second kind). While scholars often attempt to arrive at a monolithic theory on orality, humanity

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[48] How else would a group of Greek-speaking gentiles know the Aramaic transliteration, unless it was a Eucharistic formula?

[49] Gluck 1970:72-75 calls this an associative pun, though his examples are from the Hebrew Bible (for example Lev. 26:41; Deut. 10:16; Jer. 4:4; 9:25; Ezek. 44:7, 9, etc.).

[50] The two spellings had overlapping and similar semantic range. Was the choice for the LXX spelling deliberate? Did Paul write this in relation to the oral delivery with a view of further visual examination of the meaning?

[51] For the common Hebrew examples of linking sound patterns, see McCreesh (1991:51-63).

[52] Dean (1998:88) concludes that the ancients may have used auditory rather than purely logical connections. Her own exegetical examples of Paul's repetitions sufficiently prove her point.

is simply too complex for any single "correct" theory or model. Thus, it is unhelpful for any case study to be forced into a model. For the most part, the models are usually correct in the specific situation, which they attempt to describe. For interpreters of Paul, Finnegan's presupposition of the coexistence of literate and illiterate fits Paul's society perfectly (Foley 1986:18). As with any case of literary analysis, context is the key. In conclusion, it is far more fitting to classify Paul's letters as written letters meant for public delivery or discourses rather than as purely literary letters.

Implications

The above discussion supports several implications. First, while writing can have a more lasting value, speech can only have power when the speaker makes sounds. This raises a separate but not an entirely different issue. Even if it is fine to talk about orality, the idea of aurality also must be considered. Furthermore, the speaker not only pronounces sounds but the hearer also hears them (Ong 1982:39-40). Any interpreter must examine the whole informational transaction.

Second, social context should include literacy in relation to orality, education, and social structure. When scholars discuss Greco-Roman literacy, their presuppositions often come into play.[53] Observations made on ancient data range from those who assert high to very low degrees of literacy in Paul's society.[54] Paul's society of course had a low literacy rate compared to modern "first world" countries.[55] Unlike today, one did not need to read to function in society. Rather, the different social functions of literacy and orality should be the central issue of any hermeneutical endeavor for specific literature.

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[53] See for example, the discussion on the impossibility of formulating Pompeii's literacy rate in Franklin, Jr. (1991:80-81). Hopkins (1991:135) uses simple statistics in material evidence from archeological finds only in comparing Greek and Egyptian demotics. The approach of transferring linguistic phenomena in a specific region to many other geographical and social situations is too reductive.

[54] Carol M. Cipolla (1969:38-39), for example, theorizes that literacy was a contribution from Hellenism. In fact, literacy existed in varying degrees from much older eras. It likely existed since the days of Cadmus around 1300 BC, if the Roman legend has any accuracy. Many such views are personal opinions, without the precision and nuance necessary to understand the complex social dynamics of Greco-Roman literacy. Though there is really no demonstrable data of the low estimate on Greco-Roman literacy, there exist parallels in similar conditions in some communities today.

[55] Harris (1989:22-26) presents data from 1871 Italy to 1960 Morocco to preface his study of the Greco-Roman world. Some of the known parallels with today's tribal situations are as follows: the availability of printing technology, the availability of public education, the economic demands on the family, economic record keeping, and the evidence of professional scribes (see Aristotle's *Pol*. 8.3.1338a15-17; Diodorus 7.13). Harris concludes that the literacy rate in the Roman Empire was less than ten percent. Even if Herodotus' (8.22) record has frequently been used as the proof of ancient literacy, the famous historian himself wrote about characters that dictated for something to be copied and then in turn read out loud to the audience. Such a strange irony should alert anyone with too quick a claim of ancient literacy. Kenyon (1932:35-37) assumes simplistically that Roman occupation was the main cause of Egyptian literacy. He further applied this notion to all of the Empire. The assumption is that the amount of written material discovered in a certain period is a direct indication of mass literacy in that period.

Third, Paul's society was thoroughly rhetorical, with great emphasis on the "spoken" word. Memory and spoken words were intertwined, which demands the modern interpreter gain a true understanding of the symbolic universe of memory along with written and/or spoken words. As in ancient Hebrew culture, Roman society relied on memory much more thoroughly than many modern societies. For instance, repeated sounds, as well as culturally repeated patterns, can conjure ideas. Using a modern example of speech can make this point even more clearly. If one were to make a speech and memorize the pattern based on numerical points, the audience should recognize that after point number two comes point number three. Upon hearing "one, two," the listener does not think about "nine" but expects a "three."

Fourth, the length of Paul's sentences matters in terms of how effectively he communicated in an oral environment. Where, then, does this leave the listeners of Paul's letters in relation to sentence length and oral characteristics? The reader cannot determine oral characteristics on sentence length alone because Paul could have taken a pause before he finished a formal grammatical sentence unit. There were places where Paul used long formulae in addition to his main sentences. The sentence length, then, can be balanced by breaking up phrases in Paul's sentences in the exegetical process in order to better appreciate the spoken delivery of the letters.

Fifth, orality and rhetoric were closely linked. Naturally, the social function of orality in the ancient society contributed to linking the oral and rhetorical in some sort of relationship. In his letters, Cicero noted that writing in his society was meant primarily for the ear and not the eye (*Fam*. 2.4.1). Rhetorical strategy must have taken oral delivery into consideration. Therefore, long and complicated studies of discourse analysis with many ring patterns and elaborate chiasmus would have to adjust to the idea of original aural reception. Such elaborate efforts in rhetorical studies are largely the product of modern printed texts for a literate reader. Any effective claim of chiasm had to be within a few verses, in order for the text to be effective in communication.

So, in conclusion, are we "misreading" Paul? The answer, of course, depends on what we mean by "reading."[56]

Overseas Theological Seminary, USA

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[56] This article is a revised version of an earlier publication, "Are We 'Misreading' Paul?" in *Jien Dao,* 26 (2006):25-54.

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AJ.	Josephus' *Antiquitates Judaicae*
Att.	Cicero's *Epistulae ad Atticum*
Comp.	*de Compositione Verborum* by Dionysius of Halicarnassus
Dem.	Demetrius' *de Elocutione*
Ep.	*Epistulae* by Pliny the Younger, Seneca or Isocrates
Fam.	Cicero's *Epistulae ad Familiares*
Inst.	Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
PCol.	*Columbia Papyri*
POxy	*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*
Pol.	Aristotle's *Politica*
QFr	Cicero's *Epistulae ad Quintum Fratrem*
Rh.	Aristotle's *Rhetorica*
Vit.	Josephus' *Vita*

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Storytellers of Children's Literature and their Ideological Construction of the Audience

David Poveda, Marta Morgade, and Bruno Alonso

Introduction

In recent decades there has been renewed social and academic interest in organized storytelling and storytellers in contemporary industrialized societies. Folklorists, storytellers, and other commentators speak of a "revival" of storytelling as manifested in the growing number of storytelling events in different social fields. For example, storytelling is valued as *cultural form*, maintained through festivals, professional organizations, and public funding schemes for the arts. It is also consumed as *entertainment*, in stand-up comedy, storytelling cafés and pubs, or formal recitals. Finally, it is a field with *professional applications* in areas such as therapy, education, or business (Stone 1998; Wilson 2005; Sobol 2008). As a result, there is a line of theoretical and applied scholarship that has attempted to examine this revitalization. This scholarship has been carried out, on one hand, by constructing a coherent portrait of contemporary storytelling in different national and regional contexts, such as Canada (Stone 1998), the United States (Sobol 2008), or Britain and Ireland (Wilson 2005; Harvey 1989); on the other hand, this has been done by developing conceptual tools to assess and train in contemporary storytelling practices (Ryan 2008; De Marinis 1987).

In parallel with these developments, since the 1970s linguistic anthropology has moved to performance-oriented forms of narrative analysis (Bauman 1986; Hymes 1981; Kapchan 1995; Finnegan 1992). This paradigm shift, associated with the development of the ethnography of communication, focuses its attention on the production and presentation of narratives as emergent and socially constructed events. From this perspective, full-fledged verbal performances are seen as one end of a continuum of discursive practices in which speech is keyed in special ways (Bauman 1977; Sherzer 2002; see also Wilson 2005). Precisely because speech practices are construed along a continuum, the analytical tools developed to examine the most elaborate forms of verbal art can be applied to a variety of narrative events and linguistic formats. This has allowed ethnographers of communication to legitimately move their attention from formal narratives and storytelling in oral "traditional" societies (e.g., Hymes 1981) to the peripheral "folk traditions" of industrial societies (e.g., Bauman 1986; Harvey 1989) and, finally, to storytelling and narratives in a variety of informal and institutional contexts in contemporary urban settings. In this last development, storytelling to children inside and outside schools has received particular attention (Juzwick and Sherry 2007; Poveda 2003; Casla et al. 2008) and has been an important resource in the revitalization of storytelling (Wilson 2005).

Despite this accumulated scholarship, not all potential research questions have received equal attention. When studies focus on storytellers (the only area we will comment on in this paper), certain themes have been consistently explored while others have been neglected. Contemporary storytellers' biographies, identities, and professional trajectories have been the focus of several works (Harvey 1989; Stone 1998; Sobol 2008), but their own theoretical constructions about storytelling and performance as literary events have not received equal interest. This is unfortunate since, as Ruth Finnegan (1992) has pointed out, within the anthropologically and ethnographically based approach to verbal art as subscribed to by many of the authors cited above, issues of local aesthetics and thought "call for specific treatment in that, although in the past usually subordinated to the collection and analysis of textual material, the subject is now starting to be discussed in its own right" (131). Further, there is a potential relationship between storytellers' aesthetics and thoughts and their own (varied) professional, social, and formative trajectories that needs to be empirically and rigorously explored in order to provide a more complete picture of contemporary narrators than is currently available in the literature. In one of the few studies on the topic, Fiona Collins (1996), a professional storyteller and researcher, explored British storytellers' views on how children work with stories. She gathered her data by mailing questionnaires to other storytellers, and her study did not seem to have any clear theoretical conceptualization, so the results hardly stand up to the linguistic anthropological agenda set out by Finnegan and others.

In contrast, the relationship between text, author, and reader/audience (and the meaning itself of these categories) has been a central theme of contemporary literary theory and criticism. Concepts in literary theory have been developed for written texts, but, as Finnegan (2005) argues, a broader definition of literature would make these theories relevant to performance studies. Similarly, Michel Foucault (1996) argued that both oral and written texts can be examined within the language-work-literature matrix and conceptualized as literary artifacts; thus, from this perspective, literary theory can also be applied to the study of oral performances. More important for the purposes of this paper, since there is a lack of anthropological studies focused on storytellers' local ideologies about their audiences, we will take the categories developed in literary criticism as the starting point of our analysis of the empirical materials we collected.

One strong move in literary theory, especially in works that have been more accessible and better received among educators and children's literature professionals, is *reader-response theory* as developed by Louise Rosenblatt (1978). For her, the aesthetic and distinctive experience of a literary text is produced by the reader's individual, active appropriation of the text, and interpretations of the text are thus as varied as are its readers with their unique personal histories. For educators, this framework has important practical implications: by stressing how readers matter in literary analysis, students and children as recipients of literature have been given particular consideration. Yet, this focus on students takes place within well-developed theories and institutional arrangements about children and childhood in formal education. For example, expectations in relation to how children respond to literature are constrained by how children's development is defined in the psychological theories that are dominant in educational practice and teacher training. Further, collective experiences with literature and books in school take place within the age-matching arrangements that are common in formal education. This in

turn defines how audiences and their dispositions are defined. More generally, in the case of children's literature as a specific field of literary production, the construction of the audience/reader has overlapped directly with how childhood has been constructed at very different (but intertwined) levels. This includes dominant discourses about human development in a given historical period, such as German Romanticism and its view of children as spontaneous, innocent, and untutored (Warner 1994:188); particular theoretical traditions, such as how psychoanalysis has interpreted fairy tales (Bettelheim 1981); or even how emblematic authors construct and represent their potential readers (e.g., Roahl Dahl, to cite a well-known example).

Contemporary developments in professional training in storytelling and drama have also placed the teller's relationship with the audience in a privileged position. Here discussions gravitate around the type of intimacy or distance that should be sought with the audience and even how this relationship should be used as a criterion to assess the genuine nature of the storytelling event. Further, an intimacy/naturalness-distance/theatricality continuum has been used to identify variations across storytelling traditions in different regional contexts, such as the United States and Britain (Wilson 2005), or has been associated with storyteller's personal and professional trajectories (Ryan 2008). More generally, Marco De Marinis (1987) shows how an important part of contemporary dramaturgical productions, training, and theorizing gravitates around what is required socioculturally and psychologically from the spectator for a productive and engaging reception of the performance.

Finally, focus on the recipients of literature has allowed literary criticism to re-examine the history of literary production and theorizing in relation to how the recipient was constructed. These works build on the classic distinction between written *literature* and *drama* and their respective receptive figures (reader and audience), but despite the divisions there are some common themes. In a review of literary criticism, Robert De Maria (1978) shows how four major figures of English-speaking literary theory (Dryden, Johnson, Coleridge and Frye) have very different constructions of the ideal reader. These characterizations vary along a number of dimensions. One axis refers to the reader's sociohistorical grounding, which varies from Johnson's reader who has no particular interests, does not inhabit a provincial time or place, and is a citizen in an ideal capital untouched by temporary modes or fads to Coleridge's view of the reader's experience as something deeply psychological, personal, and particular (464). A second element is how readers' competencies are collectively assessed. Here both Dryden and Coleridge make a distinction between types of groups of readers, ranging from a large mass of "mob readers" or "middle sort of readers" to a small minority of cultivated and judicious readers who are better equipped to appreciate and disentangle literary works (465). These last distinctions are much more explicit in historical analyses of drama. Since theatrical performances are public events, forms of socio-intellectual stratification that may exist in any given society are usually highly visible in terms of who consumes theater (or different types of theater) and how this consumption takes place. These divisions are incorporated into playwrights', and/or actors', theorizing about their audiences. There is surprising crosscultural and historical consistency in the type of variables that are considered relevant in these theories. For example, Jacob Raz (1976) discusses how Zeami, a fifteenth-century Japanese dramatist, developed an extraordinarily elaborate theory of the audience organized around elements such as social status,

critical ability, mood at time of performance, and place of performance, and did so largely to take into account the differences that were involved in performing for nobility or for commoners. In a completely different context, Michael Neill (1978:342) discusses how, in the seventeenth century, Caroline English theater began making distinctions between "court and city taste" and later changed to suit the needs of a selected and informed play-going public who eventually promoted their tastes and preferences through patronage of "private" theaters and performances.

To recapitulate, developments in literary theory, the resurgence of storytelling as a visible and organized social activity, and the agenda set out by an anthropologically based analysis of verbal art converge in our central research question, which examines how practicing storytellers construct their audiences. We draw on a set of semi-structured interviews with Spanish storytellers who work with children and explore their discourses and informal theorizing about children as literary storytelling audiences. In particular, we focus on the connections between two themes:

I. *The personal and professional trajectories of storytellers.* Through the interviews we trace the social fields (e.g., formal teacher training, drama/fine arts, amateur interests, and so forth) that may have had a significant effect on how they confine their discourses about children and childhood.

II. *The organization of storytellers' informal theories about children as storytelling audiences*. Drawing on some of the dimensions that the literature reviewed above suggests may be relevant, we examine storytellers' theories in relation to aspects such as the role of age as an organizational element, the ideal characteristics of the storytelling setting, children's background and knowledge, and the social climate of the narrative event.

These questions are developed under successive headings and discussed globally in the conclusions. As we explain in the method section, the analysis is qualitative and primarily inductive. Yet the paper will also address as a research question the effect of experience and training in formal educational settings on storyteller's discourses—taking into consideration that these storytellers work primarily outside of school settings. Specifically, we hypothesize that substantial contact with the formal educational system and its apparatuses (training schemes, theories, and so on), at any point of storyteller's personal-professional trajectories, will provide the most clearly identifiable and articulated categories for a discussion of children as storytelling audiences.

Method

The data in this paper consist of ten semi-structured interviews conducted with twelve professional and amateur narrators[1] who work in Madrid (Spain) and who were participants in a

[1] We will use the terms "storyteller" (a common term in English-language research) and "narrator" as interchangeable synonyms to refer to the participants in this study. They are respective translations of *cuentacuentos* and *narrador,* the two terms most often used by the interviewees and in the Spanish-language research on the topic.

larger project on literature socialization and storytelling for children in three urban informal educational contexts: a library, a children's bookstore, and a public park. As part of the larger study, their performance in one of these settings was video-recorded and an interview was conducted as a follow-up to the recorded performance. Interviews lasted about 90 minutes and took place in the first half of 2005. The interviews were conducted by David Poveda and centered around three themes: the storytellers' personal and professional trajectories; their current experiences and involvement in storytelling or other activities related with children's literature; and, finally, a commentary on the recorded performance.

This corpus of interviews is analyzed around two topics: patterns in storytellers' work trajectories and the organization of their informal theories about children as storytelling audiences. There are two important methodological observations to make in relation to how the results should be interpreted. First, because this study is based on a small number of participants, any patterning and grouping of these storytellers and their ideologies should be considered tentative. Second, storytellers were contacted as part of a study that did not have "the storytelling community" as its initial focus. Unlike other studies explicitly focused on storytellers, the narrators examined here were not contacted through their own professional organizations or networks or because they represented a particular storytelling movement (regional, stylistic, thematic, professional, and so on)—which does not preclude these connections being revealed after the fact. They were contacted because they told stories in one of three settings that were examined in detail as sites for children's contact with literature. Thus, the "common link" between the storytellers (how and why they work with children) was partially imposed on the participants by the logic of the study.

Having said this, it is important to stress what these storytellers do represent. Based on our observations before, during, and after the time of the study, the participants in our research are a good sample of the type of narrators who occupy the major out-of-school storytelling spaces (such as libraries, bookstores, shopping malls, parks, or hospitals) available to children in a large Spanish metropolitan area such as Madrid. The variability among our participants in relation to formative trajectories, expertise, and storytelling styles is representative of the diversity that is found in these storytelling spaces. This variability also provides a good basis to explore the research questions that we have outlined in the introduction regarding how Spanish storytellers who perform for children construct their child audiences, and the role that contact with formal educational discourses plays in these constructions.

The Personal and Professional Trajectories of Storytellers for Children in Madrid

The sample of storytellers interviewed for this study represents a varied group of professional and amateur storytellers who perform for children and adults in Madrid and other regions of Spain. If the sample is taken as representative of the Madrid (or Spanish) storytelling community—something that should be done with caution—there are several differences from the way storytelling communities are described in other contexts that should be pointed out. In contrast to the United States and England (Wilson 2005; Sobol 2008), it does not seem possible to identify a "historical narrative" across storytellers that points toward a critical formative

period in a (possible) Spanish storytelling revival—for example, associated with crucial periods in Spain's recent social history such as the Spanish political "transition" of the 1970s or the renaissance of Spanish contemporary culture in the early 1980s. While participants agree that currently there is broader interest and that there are more professional opportunities in oral storytelling, their incorporation into the "storytelling movement" is defined by their own idiosyncratic personal-professional trajectories. Also, in contrast to Canada or Britain (Stone 1998; Wilson 2005), there do not seem to be clearly defined and bounded "storytelling streams," such as oral tradition, education, theater, therapy, business, and so on, with which storytellers identify. Rather, these storytellers working in Madrid often perform in a variety of settings, with varied audiences and with multiple intentions, and define their current practices and choices by a combination of personal preferences and emergent (happenstance) opportunities. In Madrid, there seem to be a number of overlapping and loosely defined "storytelling circuits" in which these storytellers participate, such as regional libraries, local libraries, denominational schools, pedagogically innovative schools, early education centers, storytelling cafes, cultural events, promotional events sponsored by publishing companies, and others. Yet it is not common for any of the storytellers to specialize in one of these circuits and none of these circuits is sufficiently consolidated to be independently self-supporting for these narrators. Finally, almost all participants report collaborations (either in the past or currently) with other storytellers, cite other colleagues whom they have met through their work or training, have explicit and traceable connections between them, and speak of certain formalized networking activities (e.g., web-pages and forums, storytelling festivals, and so on). Yet it is not possible to identify through these interviews clearly formed "intentional storytelling communities" (Stone 1998) or established professional associations (Sobol 2008) in Spain—even though, interestingly, several interviewees speak of "intruders" in storytelling activities and make claims to certain necessary professional requirements to become a competent narrator.

It is an open question whether this scenario indicates that Spanish storytelling is in an "early formative period" or has become a stable profession. Perhaps these tentative observations would be very different if access to storytellers had followed other research paths more common in folklore studies of storytellers (such as through their own professional-personal networks) or if the primary focus of investigation was not storytellers working with children. These are questions that only further research can resolve. What can be said from the interviews is that Spanish storytellers who work with children are a versatile group of narrators who perform in a variety of settings and who arrived at storytelling through different personal-professional paths. More importantly, all participants produce a coherent personal narrative to explain how they "ended up" in this line of work. Table 1 provides a descriptive summary of each narrator, showing professional background, current spectrum of storytelling work, and the personal-professional connections that exist among them.

Table 1: Summary of Storytellers' Trajectories

Name[2]	***Background***	***Current work***	***Personal-Professional connections***
Pepe Pérez	Degree in primary education teaching. Worked in after-school support programs and in experimental pedagogical groups. Trained in storytelling through workshops.	*Schools, libraries, parental associations, municipal cultural events, hospitals, regular section in a regional television program. Performs for all ages (infants, children, adolescents, adults) but is trying to avoid nighttime performances in adult storytelling cafés.*	Based in Seville. Travels to Madrid occasionally to perform.
Mónica Garrido	Degree in biology. Training as a sociocultural animator. Extensive volunteer work in out-of-school programs. Trained in storytelling through courses and workshops.	*Schools, libraries, commercial centers through publishing house events. Performs primarily for school-aged children, trying to avoid adult storytelling cafés.*	
Renuka	Unknown academic background. Trained in storytelling through workshops.	*Part-time volunteer and semi-professional storyteller. Regular voluntary activity in a hospital, schools, children's bookstores, municipal libraries, and adult storytelling cafés. Performs for all ages.*	Mother (Renuka) and daughter (Clara). They have participated in the same workshops. They perform as a duo for adults (and also individually), and plan to do so for children. Interviewed together.
Clara	Degree in performing arts. Trained in storytelling during her studies and in later workshops.	*Schools, municipal libraries, children's bookstores, and adult storytelling cafés. Performs for all ages.*	
Sheila and Daniel	Worked in a family-owned factory in Argentina that eventually closed. Self-trained puppeteers. Became full time street and travelling artists. Moved to Spain some years later.	*Regular performances in Madrid parks. Occasional hired events in schools, birthdays, commercial centers. They perform only for children.*	Married couple who work together and began their career in Argentina. Currently they have a daughter and son who are also street-performing puppeteers. Interviewed together.
José Fontana	Trained as a puppeteer through workshops in Argentina. Used street-puppet performances as a means of support during several	*Regular performances in Madrid Retiro park. Occasional hired events such as birthdays. Only performs for children.*	Friendly relationship with Daniel and Sheila, given their common national background and that they

[2] Following current conventions in folklore studies, we will use participants' actual names, those by which they introduced themselves and by which they are referred to among colleagues; these may be different from the particular "characterized nicknames" they may use for some performances or when they work with other colleagues.

	years of "bohemian travel." Trained as a teacher, worked in rural schools. Became a puppeteer in a formal company with international tours and arrived in Europe.		share the same working space (the street-performing avenue of Retiro park in Madrid).
Esther	Trained and worked as an occupational therapist. Studied illustration through workshops and became a published illustrator and author of children's literature. Currently owner, with other partners, of a children's bookstore.	*Storytelling events and other workshops in her bookstore. Only done for children or for adults interested in children's literature.*	Esther and Violeta Monreal refer to each other as author-illustrator(s) of children's literature. Violeta Monreal has occasional sessions in Esther's bookstore.
Violeta Monreal	Degree in fine arts. Worked in design for several years. Became an illustrator of children's books and educational materials, later also an author. Well known for her illustration techniques.	*Storytelling events about her work in schools, bookstores, and libraries. Performs only for children.*	
Mercedes Carrión	Degrees in drama-performing arts from Lima and Budapest. Extensive international career as a performing artist, narrator, magician, and educator in the performing arts. Pioneer in organizing workshops for storytellers in Madrid.	*Schools, libraries, cultural centers. She coordinates a program for children in the library system of a city in the Madrid metropolitan area. She currently performs primarily for children.*	Alicia Merino and Rafael Ordoñez have been students in workshops conducted by Mercedes Carrión and they explicitly recognize her formative impact.
Alicia Merino	Degree in journalism, worked for several years in journalism. Trained in storytelling through workshops and later through a degree in drama-performing arts.	*Libraries, schools, cultural centers and events. Works with musicians and in theater-like productions. She primarily performs for children but also for adults.*	
Rafael Ordóñez	Unknown academic background. Works as a state employee in a clerical position. Trained as a storyteller through workshops. Is also a published author of children's literature.	*Libraries, schools, cultural centers, children's bookstores in storytelling events about his work and about other stories. Stand-up comedy and storytelling in cafés. Performs for all ages.*	

These individual trajectories can be grouped into a limited set of paths into storytelling. Potentially, these paths indicate the patterns for becoming a storyteller for children in Madrid or Spain. Among the participating narrators there seem to be four converging routes:

1) *Storytelling through work in non-formal education and literacy promotion programs*: One group of narrators—Mónica Garrido and Pepe Pérez—became storytellers for children through

their involvement in informal/non-formal educational programs for children and youth. Their initial training concentrated on alternative educational programs, either as an outgrowth of formal teacher training or directly through training as a non-formal educator. Both of these storytellers concentrate their work in publicly funded institutions and programs (such as libraries, schools, cultural centers) that usually have an active role in the type of literacy promotion measures that are designed for children and youth in Spain (Clemente 2004). Currently, they are able to work full-time as storytellers and "literacy promoters" (*animadores de la lectura*) and engage in privately funded events (e.g., publishing events in commercial centers) only out of economic necessity. They are trying to avoid nighttime performances in cafés for adults since it does not fit their current interests or lifestyles (Pepe Pérez mentions health reasons and Mónica Garrido had an infant son at the time of the interview).

2) *Storytelling through drama and the performing arts*: A second group of participants entered storytelling for children through advanced training in drama studies. Mercedes Carrión, Alicia Merino, and Clara have completed training in drama and other performing arts and are full-time professional narrators at different stages in their careers. Renuka (Clara's mother) is an amateur and volunteer narrator but has participated in workshops similar to those of her daughter. For all these participants, narrating for children is one part of a varied set of storytelling activities across contexts and age groups and may be more or less prominent in their current activities depending on emerging professional opportunities and interests. For example, Mercedes Carrión (the more senior narrator among the participants) is currently fully involved in publicly funded literacy promotion programs while Alicia, Clara, and Renuka perform in various settings. Alicia works in theatrical productions and performances with musicians and actors, and Renuka and Clara are developing a repertory for adult storytelling cafés alongside their work with children.

3) *Storytelling through involvement in children's literature*: A third group of participants engage in performances for children as part of their professional involvement in the world of children's literature, either as author, illustrator, or bookseller. Violeta Monreal and Esther fit clearly into this category. They have established careers as authors/illustrators of children's literature and concentrate their work in contexts that are part of the "world of publishing" (bookstores, promotional events, collaborations with commercial publishers, book fairs, and so forth). Storytelling sessions for these participants highlight much more clearly their individual "authorship": Violeta presents only her own stories and attempts to turn her sessions into demonstrations of her creative process, while Esther tells stories in her bookstore, selecting the themes and books that she wishes to promote commercially.

4) *Storytelling by becoming a puppeteer*: A final group is composed of the puppeteers who participated in this study. The three puppeteers interviewed—Sheila, Daniel, and José—have very different professional life histories from the rest of the narrators in the study but show some remarkable similarities as a subgroup.[3] They work only with puppets for children and entered

[3] In fact, it is debatable whether puppeteers should be considered part of the contemporary "storytelling scene"—certainly Daniel, Sheila and José do not see themselves as part of it. However, they fit within the design of

this profession mostly through an artisan-like self-taught process. Although throughout their careers they have performed in various settings and countries, including theaters and festivals, their main work takes place primarily in Retiro Park,[4] and they have elaborate discourses about being "street artists" and about their contribution to this park as a public cultural space. Finally, in their interviews these three participants (and only these three) spontaneously connected their work with puppets with their own spirituality—Daniel and Sheila are practicing Catholics and José explained that he is also a Reiki master.

These four trajectories should be seen as open and flexible schematizations and not as closed categories designed to label all Madrid storytellers working with children, since even within the sample there are narrators who cannot be fitted into any of the above patterns. Rafael Ordóñez, who holds a full-time position as a state employee, considers himself a narrator who tells stories as a hobby even though he has a busy working agenda, performing as often as two or three times a week. His training stems from drama (through workshops conducted by Mercedes Carrión), and he regularly performs for adults, although he is also an award-winning author of children's literature and is frequently invited to libraries and bookstores to talk about his work and other stories. In short, he would seem to have elements of the first three strands we have described, but these are combined in such a way that this narrator could not be fitted into any of the available categories.

In sum, the participants in this study became storytellers through different personal paths, yet there are also some general patterns that can be tentatively identified. For the goal of this study, one relevant feature of these trajectories is the role that formal education plays in them. For some participants, storytelling grew out of—or was incorporated into—their training as teachers. Others come with different professional and academic backgrounds but work closely with schools or formal educational programs. Finally, still other narrators do not have any official relationship with formal schooling through either their training or habitual storytelling work, although most do perform in schools occasionally. This observation helps answer one of the initial research questions regarding the "effect" that contact with the devices of formal schooling has on narrators' discursive constructions (that is, ideologies) of the audience.

Storytellers' Ideological Construction of the Audience: The Role of Formal Education and Other Sources of Influence

In this section we explore four dimensions of narrators' discourses: (a) preferences for or indifference to an age-homogeneous audience; (b) the role of children's background and

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the original study since they work in an out-of-school setting that makes available to children literature and literary discourse. Also, puppet performances (by other artists) are occasionally present in some of the contexts that have been mentioned so far, such as libraries, bookstores, cultural centers, or schools.

[4] Retiro Park (*Parque del Retiro*) is the historical emblematic public park of the city of Madrid—similar to Central Park in New York. It is located in the center of the city, and is a privileged leisure place for inhabitants and visitors to the city. During the weekends it is well known for the amount and variety of "spontaneous" events and performances that take place in the park throughout the day.

competencies in their appreciation of stories; (c) formality/distance vs. informality/intimacy as ideal conditions of the storytelling setting; and (d) the role and meaning of children's participation during a storytelling session. Contact with the formal educational system, in its various forms, seems to play a structuring role in the first two dimensions ("age" and "background"), while the other two ("participation" and "idealized conditions") appear to be connected with other factors of their professional trajectories. However, as we will also see, these dimensions are deeply intertwined in storytellers' discourses and we separate them here only for analytical purposes.

Age as a Structuring Dimension of the Audience

Narrators working in close contact with the educational system, telling stories frequently in schools or participating in publicly funded literacy promotion programs, show an explicit preference for age-homogeneous audiences, organized in similar terms as an age-graded school-year system. Storytellers whose main narrative work does not take place in schools do not show this preference and may even find advantages in the diversity offered by an age-heterogeneous group, which is characteristic of audiences outside school settings. In this dimension, an initial degree in teaching is not as important as extensive professional experience in schools, which may or may not be a follow-up to a degree in teaching. The most telling instances of such differences are the contrasting views of Violeta Monreal and Rafael Ordóñez, two authors of children's literature with backgrounds unrelated to education.

Violeta Monreal works extensively in schools and even defines her role in somewhat "instructional" terms—as helping children and students develop a particular aesthetic vision that formal education does not promote. She also has a very clear position on what should be the disposition and organization of her audience:[5]

> You could say I have perfect environments. For me the bookstore ((where she performed and was recorded)) is the least perfect environment that I can have, the one I have least control over what I want to do (...) I always ask for children of more or less the same age. They should never be lying around the floor, never, never, never (...) They should be sitting on a chair, they should be comfortable, they should not be too many. If they are seven years old then they should be about seven to eight, but not maybe a three-year-old and an eight-year-old because what you tell a three-year-old is not the same as what you tell an eight-year-old (...) Through arrangements made by publishers, I sometimes can control this a lot because it's in a classroom in which all this is arranged and children's ages are controlled.
>
> Yo tengo, digamos, ambientes perfectos, lo de la librería ((donde actuó y fue grabada)) para mí es el ambiente menos perfecto que puedo yo tener, menos controlable, para lo que yo quiero hacer (...) siempre pido que sean homogéneos los niños, nunca que estén tirados en el suelo, nunca,

[5] Violeta Monreal, interview, March 2005**.** The interviews took place in Spanish. They have been transcribed with conventional orthography so that they can be easily read. The few symbols that have been used draw from conventions found in Conversation Analysis and are as follows: (...): edited segment, usually false starts, hesitations, etc.; (()): commentary; and -: interruption or continuous turn without a pause.

> nunca, nunca (...) que estén colocados en una silla, que estén cómodos, que no sean muchos, que si son de siete años pues que tengan siete-ocho años pero que no haya uno de tres y un niño de ocho porque lo que se dice a los niños de tres no es lo mismo que lo que se dice a los de ocho (...) Por mediación de las editoriales a veces controlo eso mucho porque es un aula en el que a lo mejor eso se canaliza y se controla la edad de los críos.

In contrast, Rafael Ordóñez, who narrates mainly outside schools for adults and children and has a playful orientation toward storytelling, has a much more open vision for how the audience should be organized. He even finds performing for an age-heterogeneous audience attractive:[6]

> I try to "play" with parents, put in something for the children and something for the parents so (...) that it will be a show for all ages, sometimes I achieve this and sometimes I don't.
> *INT: So you don't mind too much if there are children of all ages and or things like that?*
> Well no, the ideal is uniformity, but it is also a bit boring. When I go to a school and they put me in a class for "seven-year-olds," all the kids are seven years old, that is ideal because you more or less know their reaction, their level. But when you go to a bookstore, a library, a party, there are three-year-olds and twelve-year-olds (...) and that [situation] demands that you try harder to make it enjoyable for everyone. So let's say that from the point of view of effort, I prefer the same age but I like it when it's varied because it's more fun.

> Yo intento hacerles guiños a los padres, meterle alguna cosa a los niños y alguna cosa que al padre que esté (...) que el espectáculo sea para todas las edades que a veces lo consigo y a veces no.
> *ENT: ¿así que tampoco te importa mucho que haya niños de todas las edades y ese tipo de cosas?*
> No hombre, lo ideal es la uniformidad pero también es un poco aburrido, cuando voy a un colegio y me meten en una clase "niños de siete años" todos los niños de siete años, eso es ideal porque sabes más o menos su reacción, sabes en que nivel están pero cuando vas a una librería, una biblioteca, una fiesta, hay niños de tres años y niños de doce (...) y ahí sí que exige más intentar que les guste a todos, es más difícil, o sea que digamos que desde el punto de vista económico de esfuerzo prefiero la misma edad pero me gusta que sea variado porque es más divertido.

Children's Background and Upbringing as an Audience

Another set of ideas that seems to be related to contact with formal education centers around how storytellers construct expectations about proper behavior on the part of their audiences. In this case there are two elements that make this connection especially complex and rich. First, these expectations, and especially criticisms about how they are not met, are made most explicit when discussing storytelling in libraries. Libraries represent the most institutionally formalized context in this study, and storytelling work in such a context is often part of socio-educational policies and projects (about "cultural and literacy promotion") that are shared with the formal educational system. Second, the logical organization of narrators' criticisms shares

[6] Rafael Ordóñez, interview, May 2005.

many features with well-identified discourses among professionals in the Spanish educational system in which strong explanatory attributions are made about families and parents (Franzé 2008)—while the effect of other potential variables such as the setting (e.g., school, library) or professionals' actions (e.g., by teachers, storytellers) is not articulated. In some cases, this connection may have its origin in the storyteller's background and training, but this is not always the case.

Pepe Pérez has a degree in teaching and has been involved for many years in literacy promotion programs and teachers' continuing education, and discusses at length his experience with different audiences. One part of his assessment has to do with regional differences and his ability to connect and engage with children from different cities in Spain or even different neighborhoods in large cities such as Madrid or Seville. However, another part of his discourse has to do with how children should behave in particular settings, such as libraries:[7]

> When a session goes well the audience was good and you were good. If it goes very very very well it's because the audience was exceptional and you were good (...) and when it goes poorly it's that you were horrible and the audience had some problems and we all make excuses (...) that if they were eating "cheetos." Today ((in a library session)) I saw a kid eat "cheetos."
> *INT: I saw it because I was in front, but I thought it was something the mother did so that the kid did not start making a fuss* (...)
> Obviously if you go to the theater you can't eat "cheetos." We had a storytellers' meeting in Cádiz and someone pinpointed this very well. He/she gave a very graphic example that shows it well, if you go to a football match and someone jumps onto the field, the whole match is stopped (...) So, it should be something like that. You are telling a story and suddenly a child crosses the stage, or this or that. Or a kid comes and starts to touch something that you have prepared, theoretically you should stop (...) The problem is that it's a delicate issue, it's very difficult to tell a father or a mother "your kid is a pain" (...) I have a twelve-year-old son and he has come with me to storytelling events; I have taken him to storytelling events, I have taken him to museums. And if I see that he is doing something then I tell him (...) ((talking about the morning session in the library)) I had two or three who never stopped buzzing around my feet, and I have reduced mobility. I can step on one of them with my shoe, I can hurt him, I can fall (...) That kid's parent, where is he? If you see that he is there, then call him. I think we have to teach the kids to listen, I think we are not taught to listen.

> Cuando sale una sesión bien es que el público ha sido bueno y tú has estado bien. Si sale muy muy muy bien es que el público ha sido excepcional y tú has estado bien (...) y cuando sale mal es que tú has estado horrible y el público ha habido algunos problemas y todos ponemos excusas (...) que si han comido gusanitos. Yo hoy ((una sesión en una biblioteca)) he visto a un niño comer gusanitos.
> *ENT: Yo lo he visto porque estaba al frente pero yo lo tomé como una actitud de la madre para que el niño no empezara a incordiar* (...)

[7] Pepe Pérez, interview, January 2005.

> Está claro que si tú vas al teatro no se puede comer gusanitos. Hicimos un encuentro en Cádiz de narradores y alguien puso el dedo en la llaga, algo importante. Dijo un ejemplo muy gráfico que se ve bien. Tú vas a un partido de fútbol y si se mete un espontáneo se para todo el partido de fútbol (...) Entonces debería ser algo así, estás contando y de repente se cruza un niño o esto o lo otro o se mete un niño y se pone a tocarte algo de lo que tú tienes, en teoría habría que pararlo (...) Lo que pasa es que es muy delicado, es tan delicado decirle a un padre o a una madre "su hijo es un incordio" (...) Yo tengo un hijo de doce años y conmigo ha venido a contadas; lo he llevado a contadas, lo he llevado a museos. Entonces si veo que está haciendo algo pues se lo digo (...) ((hablando de la sesión de la mañana)) Yo es que tenía a dos o tres que no paraban de andurrear a mis pies y mi movilidad es bastante reducida, que pisar a alguno con mi zapato, que le hago daño, me puedo caer (...) El padre de ese niño ¿dónde está? Si estás viendo que está ahí pues lo llamas. Yo creo que hay que educar a escuchar, creo que no estamos educados a escuchar.

Alicia Merino's trajectory stems from the performing arts, but she shares these same views about how families and children are making use of libraries currently:[8]

> Lately this is happening in libraries, they are being used as play centers. The mommies go to give their kids their snacks and they start to talk, a total commotion. I remember a couple of years ago I went crazy (...) You notice that you start developing resources to maintain the attention of so many people during an hour, and you can see what kind of resources we have, a person (...) You are a person talking [telling a story] and I realized that I was throwing confetti, dancing, and playing a drum in a library. So I stop and think "what am I doing?" and you realize that you are just forcing the situation, somehow disrespecting it and devaluing what telling a story is, it's a story and that's all (...) Often the conditions are not favorable (...) it's not librarians' fault, they often go crazy. But since the parents are taxpayers and it is free, they just leave the kid there, and they start to talk, to come in and out. Somehow we are not transmitting to children the quality, the importance, the nature of what storytelling could be.

> En las bibliotecas últimamente está pasando eso, que lo toman como ludotecas, entonces van a ir las mamás para dar de merendar al niño y se ponen a charlar, que es un guirigay total. Yo recuerdo que hace dos años, o una cosa así, me volví loca (...) Vas viendo que desarrollas recursos para mantener una hora a tanta gente, y ya ves tú los recursos que tenemos, es una persona (...) eres una persona hablando y yo me di cuenta que estaba tirando confeti, bailando y tocando el tambor en una biblioteca. Y ya me paro y "¿esto qué es?" y te das cuenta de que estás forzando la situación pero de alguna manera perdiéndole el respeto y desvirtuando lo que es contar un cuento, un cuento y ya está (...) Muchas veces no se dan las condiciones adecuadas (...) no es cuestión de las bibliotecarias que muchas veces se vuelven locas ellas, pero como los papás son contribuyentes y eso es gratis pues te dejan ahí al chaval y se ponen a charlar, a entrar a salir. De alguna manera no se traslada al niño ni la calidad, ni la importancia, ni la naturaleza de lo que puede ser.

[8] Alicia Merino, interview, February 2005

These descriptions of how children and families behave in libraries may also relate to broader debates currently taking place about the changing meanings and practices associated with libraries (Cassany 2006). However, they also seem to be part of a general conception regarding how literature should be appropriated and how parents should transmit it to their children. Pepe Pérez and Alicia Merino, working in libraries and public educational programs, want to promote this vision and would like to see more parents embracing it. In contrast, Esther, as a bookstore owner, attempts to directly target families who as customers share her "sensibilities" and provides a portrait of children and their families ("clients") for whom purchasing books is part of a cultural lifestyle:[9]

> I think this kind of "thing" ((her bookstore and her programs)) attracts people who already have a certain sensibility. Our clients are people who want their children to love books, to get into books; they appreciate the initiative, so they take care of us. We have many clients who take care of us (...) They are the ones who make their children [attend the event], when they see an activity, maybe they bring friends who have children, and they are the ones who explain the library inside the bookstore thing (...) They have a certain respect [for stories and storytelling], and I think it's because of the type of client that we attract.
>
> Yo creo que este tipo de historia ((su librería y sus programas)) atrae a gente con una sensibilidad ya determinada. Nuestros clientes son gente que quieren que sus hijos amen al libro, que tengan una afición al libro y agradecen la iniciativa, con lo cual te cuidan. Tenemos muchos clientes que nos cuidan (...) Son ellos los que hacen que el niño, cuando ven una dinámica, a lo mejor traen a unos amigos con un niño y son ellos los que explican muchas veces lo de la biblioteca dentro de las librería (...) Hay un respeto y yo creo que es por el tipo de cliente que atraemos.

In other words, these extracts suggest that storytellers lean towards a "cultivated" view of the audience, similar to the one defended by some of the literary theorists and dramatists discussed in the introduction. Children are expected to show certain behavioral dispositions and sensibilities during storytelling events, and these dispositions are culturally transmitted through the family. However, this view is not found among puppeteers. As José Fontana explains, puppeteers believe that appreciating and participating in a puppet performance draws on very primary human capacities and motivations that younger children can display but that are present throughout one's life:[10]

> There are even parents who say "Even I enjoyed it" (...) And really that is also a myth, in the sense that everyone likes puppets because they move things that are very primary. For me puppets come into contact with something that is very primitive in human beings, which is magical thinking and we do not lose that. Adults think they have lost it, but really they have just deposited it in other things.

[9] Esther, interview, March 2005.

[10] José Fontana, interview, March 2005.

> Hay padres que incluso me dicen "me ha gustado hasta a mí" (...) y en realidad eso también responde a un mito, en el sentido de que los títeres les gusta a todos porque mueven cosas que son muy primarias. Los títeres para mí entran en contacto con algo muy primitivo del ser humano que es el pensamiento mágico y eso no lo perdemos, el adulto cree que lo ha perdido pero en realidad lo deposita en otras cosas.

Ideal Storytelling Climate and Relationship with the Audience

Most storytellers consider the ideal conditions for storytelling as a practical problem. Most narrators perform in a variety of settings that can be very different in their physical and social arrangements. These elements are largely beyond their control, so they consider it a part of their professional skills to have resources to adapt to a variety of storytelling conditions. Also, several storytellers mention working with a characterized narrator (Casla et al. 2008)—e.g., a storytelling witch, a fairy—as one key resource to focus children's attention and create a defined storytelling space. Yet when they are pushed to elaborate on an ideal setting, there are some differences among narrators. In this case the combination of professional experience and training in drama/performing arts leads to favoring performances in a more formal and theatrical key, while a more amateur and less professionalized background favors a view of storytelling as an intimate narrative event. Mercedes Carrión, who has the most extensive professional experience and elaborate training in performing arts among the participants, shows this preference for auditorium-like performances, although when talking about the literacy promotion program she runs in a library, the relationship with the children is described in different terms:[11]

> If I think about it from the viewpoint of my personal satisfaction (...) I always liked show business, I love to act, I love to be on stage, I like auditoriums very much; but let's say that this is from a very self-centered point of view ((laughter)) my diva part ((laughter)) (...) In stage-like spaces you can do things that often you can't do in smaller spaces.

> Si lo pienso desde un punto de vista muy para mi satisfacción personal (...) que a mi siempre me gustó el mundo del espectáculo, me encanta actuar, me encanta estar en escenario, a mi me gustan mucho los auditorios, pero digamos sería desde un punto de vista muy egocéntrico ((risas)) mi parte de diva ((risas)) (...) en los espacios de escenario puedes hacer cosas que muchas veces no puedes hacer en espacios más pequeños.

In contrast, Clara, who also has training in acting but is in a much earlier stage of her career, considers intimacy and warmth as ideal conditions for storytelling:[12]

[11] Mercedes Carrión, interview, April 2005.

[12] Clara, interview, April 2005.

> For a storyteller it is always much simpler, much more natural, [to be in] an intimate space, because stories are something intimate. It's (...) more poetic, more romantic, something, I don't know, something more intimate (...) The storyteller does not need to raise his/her voice, and then the only thing you need is a fire in the middle (...) and we have the perfect storytelling.
>
> Para un cuentacuentos siempre es muchísimo más sencillo, muchísimo más natural el ámbito recogido, porque el cuento es algo íntimo, entonces es (...) más poético, más romántico pues, no sé, algo más recogido (...) que el cuentacuentos no necesita levantar muchísimo la voz y ya pues lo único que falta es la hoguera en medio (...) y ya tenemos la contada perfecta.

The Value of Participation from the Audience

Regarding participation, there seem to be some consistent themes among storytellers. They all value participation and seek to create performances where children can respond and provide feedback to the storyteller during the narrative event. However, participation needs to be managed so it takes place within certain parameters. Too little participation, which is different from "silent attention" (cf. Martin 1996), is interpreted as disengagement and results in lifeless narrative events. Too much participation, especially from particularly disruptive children, can sabotage a performance and obstruct the unfolding of a story. Again, the professional kit of an experienced storyteller includes resources to manage children's participation and especially to restrain the more exuberant children. Mónica Garrido, who often works in large library auditoriums, mentions some of the strategies that have to be deployed to constrain participation:[13]

> *INT: And can the children participate too much?*
> Yes! "My daddy has a dog . . ." "One day I went . . ." and that's good because that means that you made contact with them, they listen to you and they want to be heard (...) You are telling them interesting things and they tell you things that are interesting, for them of course. But what do you care [if the child tells you] "I woke up in the morning and I had breakfast" (...) They can participate too much (...) When, for instance, you ask "and what animals were there?" Well "a dog, a wolf, this, that . . ." Very strange animals are mentioned just as long as you can say one, then well you have to [say] "Ok, enough, enough, enough," you have to stop because if not, you can't continue the story.
>
> *ENT: ¿Y los niños pueden llegar a participar demasiado?*
> ¡Sí! "Pues mi papá tiene un perro . . ." "Pues yo fui un día . . ." y está muy bien porque eso es que has contactado con ellos igual que ellos te escuchan a ti ellos quieren ser escuchados (...) tú les estás contando cosas interesantes y ellos te cuentan cosas que son interesantes, para ellos claro, pero a ti qué más te da "me levanté por la mañana y había desayunado . . ." (...) pueden participar demasiado (...) cuando tú preguntas pues "¿y qué animales había?" pues "un perro, un lobo, un no se qué, un no sé cual . . ." acaban saliendo animales muy raros que con tal de decir que tú,

[13] Mónica Garrido, interview, March 2005.

> entonces pues tú tienes que "bueno ya, ya, ya," tienes que parar porque si no, [no] puedes seguir contando el cuento.

Finally, there is a key difference between how participation bears on performances by oral narrators and puppeteers. While for the former group participation is something that is valued and fostered within certain limits, it remains an optional element in their performances. With the exception of particular situations where participation is central (e.g., bringing a child from the audience to the stage to collaborate in the telling of a story), a storytelling event could go on without any input from the audience. Lack of participation or audience reaction would make for a poor and unsuccessful performance, especially for storytellers who have a less theatrical orientation and like to improvise, but this non-responsiveness would not compromise the structure of the story. In contrast, audience participation is built into the structure of puppet shows, since response from the children is part of the story script and the narrative could not continue (or would do so in a very unnatural way) if this response were absent—in fact, puppeteers sometimes continue their plays as if these responses had taken place even when they have not (Casla et al. 2008). As Daniel and Sheila explain:[14]

> *INT: When you design the play do you think about moments so that the children participate and?-*
> S: -Yes, of course (...) yes, because for children it comes naturally to participate, it's what they want-
> D: -When you work a lot with puppets you know, more or less, how puppets work (...) Someone who is not a puppeteer can't make a play for puppets because he/she would take away that sense of the absurd that puppets have (...) There are many authors that I have read that are pretty to read, Valle Inclán has plays for puppets, but how can you do this with puppets? It would be something, a terrible bore!
>
> *ENT: ¿Cuando pensáis la obra pensáis momentos para que los niños respondan y?-*
> S: -Sí, claro (...) sí porque los chicos les nace naturalmente participar, es lo que quieren-
> D: -Es que ya cuando trabajas mucho con los títeres sabes, más o menos, como va el tema de los títeres (...) Alguien que no es titiritero no puede hacer una obra para títeres porque le quitaría el sentido ese del disparate que tiene el títere (...) Hay muchos autores que yo he leído que parecen más bonitos para leer, Valle Inclán tiene obras para títeres, pero esto, ¿cómo se puede hacer en títeres? sería una cosa, ¡un tostón horrible!

In summary, the storytellers we interviewed hold a variety of beliefs and informal theories about the children they entertain. Yet, this range of discourse does not appear to be randomly organized. Unsurprisingly, the narrator's professional background and the types of habitually performed narrative materials and settings help configure his or her beliefs and theories. We have traced contact with the formal educational system, either through initial training or continued storytelling experience, as one source of influence, while other aspects of storytellers' ideologies seem to be related to the contexts in which they work or their training in

[14] Daniel and Sheila, interview, May 2005.

other backgrounds. In the conclusion we examine these findings in relation to some of the theoretical problems that opened the paper.

Conclusion

The first conclusion to be drawn is that, in light of the richness of the materials we have presented, it seems clear that empirically investigating storytellers' ideologies is a worthwhile effort and responds to the research agenda set out by Finnegan (1992). Narrators have articulated beliefs, informal theories, or ideologies (terms that we have used more or less interchangeably throughout the paper) about different aspects of their work that they easily verbalize in semi-structured interviews. Participants did not seem to improvise their answers on the spot nor did they consider the questions we posed irrelevant for their work. Rather, they seemed to manifest a number of strongly felt beliefs about their work and often illustrated their statements with specific instances of storytelling. Drawing on French sociologist Ágnes Heller (1994), these beliefs are part of storytellers' practical daily knowledge, which they use to organize and interpret their professional work. The participants' practical daily knowledge is constructed through formal learning experiences and their personal histories, which take place within particular sociohistorical conditions. There are aspects of each of these layers in the interview fragments we have provided and in the organization of the analytical categories with which we worked.

Consequently, we believe that there is a place for research that specifically examines storytellers' discourses and ideologies about performance separately from their performance work. This does not mean that parallel studies of performances cannot be conducted—we have also examined aspects of these participants' performances (Casla et al. 2008; Poveda et al. 2008) or eventually triangulated to answer other research questions. As stated, the research questions we posed in this paper focus on the ideological constructions of the audience and attempt to trace different social fields that may play a role in their formation. Further, the results suggest that in the case of storytellers working with children it may be particularly important to explore their ideologies because they may have distinctive effects on the organization of storytelling events. It is plausible to think that these narrators have some control over the *design* (Kress and van Leeuwen 2001) of the storytelling sessions in which they participate (such as the requests Violeta Monreal makes through publishers when organizing her storytelling events). Since storytellers' input will be based on their own needs, preferences, and beliefs, it seems that ideologies about their audiences can, at the very least, play a role in the initial conditions and organization of the storytelling event, and these conditions will partly define the type of literary experiences children may have during that event.

In relation to the findings, the paper specifically set out to examine the role of formal education (defined very broadly along several of its apparatuses) as a source of influence on narrators' ideologies. This influence was most visible in relation to how age-homogeneity in the audience was valued and more indirectly in how children's dispositions during formal storytelling events are construed. Other aspects of storytellers' ideologies, such as how audience participation or ideal settings are defined, seemed to connect to other spheres of their experience. In short, there are some convergences between dominant ideologies in formal education and in

those of storytellers who work with children, but there also divergences. All the narrators were chosen for this study because, as part of their work, they perform for children; but not all are in contact with the educational system or have a background in teaching. Under these conditions other ideologies not articulated by formal schooling can develop. This variance is what allows storytelling, especially outside schools, to emerge as a particular socialization context for children not reducible to other domains (such as "the family" or "schooling").

The data also shows remarkable convergences between storytellers' beliefs and well-articulated positions in literary criticism—most notably in relation to the characteristics of a "cultivated" audience. Narrators develop their work within particular literary traditions, which they actively espouse and promote, and in their informal theorizing they reproduce problems and questions similar to those posed in academic literary theory. This may not be a terribly surprising discovery given how these fields have been converging in recent decades. It is likely that these storytellers have come into contact with some version of literary theorizing through their "formal" training (in the workshops, seminars, courses, and so forth that all participants have attended at some point), so it is reasonable to think that they have incorporated literary-theoretical notions into their thinking. Yet it should be noticed that, in contrast to other accounts of storytellers' trajectories, none of the participants has a background in the humanities (e.g., linguistics, languages, literary studies, folklore).

Finally, there are some methodological observations to be made for this and future studies. As explained in the method section, the sample of participants is small and was selected with a very particular focus, so the findings should be read with caution until they can be confirmed with a more extensive study. Yet, despite our arguments above in favor of a specific treatment for ideological constructions, further research should gather different types of information. Ideologies are not only visible in decontextualized verbalizations during a formal interview; they are also displayed in performances, their preparation, and their after-effects. Future studies should attempt to triangulate these different sources of data within a more global ethnography of contemporary storytellers who perform for children.

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Performative Loci of the Imperial Edicts in Nara Japan, 749-70

Ross Bender

> The *naiki* presented the text to the Minister, the Minister submitted it to the Emperor. This being over, the Minister selected a capable man to read it, who received it and went back to his proper place. The Prince Imperial rose in the Eastern side of his seat and faced the West. Then everybody present from the princes downward rose and did likewise. The *senmyō no taifu* (herald) went to his appointed place and read the *senmyō*. Its contents were…. Then he said: Everybody obey this. The Prince Imperial first of all said "Aye." Then everybody from the princes downward said likewise "Aye." The Prince Imperial made obeisance. Then everybody present from the princes downward did the same. This was repeated as many times as *senmyō* were read. The ceremonial was always the same (*Jōganshiki*, c. 871; trans. Snellen 1934:166).

This description of the reading of an Imperial edict (*senmyō*) from the *Jōganshiki*, a late ninth-century compendium of court procedures, provides an image of the formal declamation of the Emperor's words in an orderly, routinized setting. The nobility are seated in their appointed places, the ritual is predetermined, and indeed, as the text notes: "The ceremonial was always the same."

But this illustration is deceptively static and misleading. The contemporary performative context of imperial edicts may in fact be accurately reflected in this late ninth-century handbook of court ritual, but the *senmyō* texts that we know from the official court histories, the *Rikkokushi* (*Six National Histories*, Sakamoto 1991) date back to the end of the seventh century. The official history *Shoku Nihongi* (*Chronicles of Japan, Continued*, Aoki et al. 1989-98) is the *locus classicus* for these texts and covers the years 697-791. The actual historical circumstances of these 62 *senmyō*, written in a peculiar form of Old Japanese, and some 900 other royal decrees inscribed in the Chinese of the chronicle, illuminate far more vivid and dynamic settings for imperial proclamations than is suggested by later sources such as the *Jōganshiki*.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the performative *loci* of the imperial edicts during the reign of the "Last Empress," Kōken-Shōtoku (r. 749-70)—their historical setting, geographical locale, and sometimes even the audiences for these royal pronouncements. This is the era in which fully half of the *senmyō* were recorded in *Shoku Nihongi*, and during which the production of the edicts inscribed in Chinese were also at their peak. The court annals of this period depict the reign of a powerful woman in a tumultuous epoch, as the Last Empress staved off challenges to her power from her royal cousins, and, in the famous dénouement of her reign,

attempted to hand the throne to a Buddhist priest, not of imperial lineage, who may or may not have been her lover.

Imperial Edicts—*Senmyō*, *Choku*, and *Shō*

The *senmyō* were introduced to the world of Western scholarship in Sir George Sansom's pioneering but unfinished translation, "The Imperial Edicts in the *Shoku Nihongi*" (1924). Since that time what little attention has been paid to them in the West has often taken the terms "*senmyō*" and "imperial edicts" as synonymous.[1] This ignores the fact that *Shoku Nihongi* also contains a much larger number of imperial edicts called "*choku*" and "*shō*." These latter are inscribed in the Chinese of the body of the chronicle. The *senmyō*, however, are written in a unique form of "Old Japanese" or "Western Old Japanese" (Miller 1967:34; Vovin 2005:15) that was famously deciphered in a lengthy commentary by the eminent eighteenth-century philologist Motoori Norinaga (Ōno S. 1971:185-482).

It was the linguistic peculiarity of the *senmyō*, akin to that of the *Kojiki* (*Records of Ancient Matters,* 712) and *Man'yōshū* (*Ten Thousand Leaves Collection,* c. 757), which accounted for Norinaga's special interest. As a Japanese nationalist, he had very little concern for the Chinese text itself. Norinaga's interpretations of the Old Japanese *senmyō* have been so influential as to form the foundation for the study of these texts to the present day. His disdain for the Chinese was also responsible for the relative neglect of *Shoku Nihongi*. A complete five-volume collated and annotated version was not completed in Japan until the turn of the century.[2] With the project has come a great new interest in the text, with at least three translations into modern Japanese having been completed in the last two decades of the twentieth century.

The Chinese of the chronicle is that of the Sui and early Tang dynasties. This was famously identified by Bernhard Karlgren (1940:3) as the language spoken in Changan, the capital, in the sixth and early seventh centuries CE, which he termed "Ancient Chinese." More recent Sinologists have spoken of it as "Middle Chinese" (Pulleyblank 1984; Baxter 1992). *Shoku Nihongi* was the second in a series of the Chinese-style *Six National Histories* (*Rikkokushi*) that purported to record Japanese history from the Age of the Gods until 887 AD. It was compiled in two recensions and presented to Emperor Kammu in 794 and 797 by a committee of court nobles and historians. *Shoku Nihongi* does not contain the mythological accounts of its predecessor, *Nihongi* (or *Nihon Shoki*), and has been judged by Japanese and Western historians to be in large part a factual chronicle (Sakamoto 1991:20-21; Snellen 1937:158-64). However, textual and form criticism is proceeding apace, and there are numerous

[1] There is a complete German translation by Herbert Zachert (1950), and a partial English translation in a dissertation by John Kenneth Linn (1950). There are English translations of individual *senmyō* to illustrate a Buddhist or Confucian emphasis (e.g. de Bary et al. 2001:114-15; Piggott 2003:56). See Bender 1979:149-51 for a survey of the *senmyō* prefaces.

[2] References in this paper to *Shoku Nihongi* [*SN*] refer to volumes 1-5 of the Shin Nihon Koten Bungaku Taikei edition, vols. 12-16, edited by Aoki Kazuo et al. (1989-98). Snellen (1937) translated the annals for the years 697-715 into English.

questions about Emperor Kanmu's influence on the received version of the text, particularly for the reign of Kōken/Shōtoku (Nakanishi 2002:206-07).

The peculiarity of Old Japanese (*jōko nihongo*) is its orthography. Simply put, the *senmyō* are written in a combination of Chinese characters used semantically and phonetically, where the phonetic graphs are written in a smaller script and used primarily to denote verb endings and particles. (This style is sometimes referred to as "*Man'yogana*," or the graphic style of the *Man'yōshū*, the eighth-century poetry anthology.) Some of the *senmyō* are prefaced in a grand archaic style, as evidenced in this translation by Sansom (1924:10): "Hearken all ye assembled August Children, Princes, Nobles, Officials and People of the Realm-under-Heaven to the Word which he speaks even as the Word of the Sovereign that is a manifest God ruling over the Great Land of Many Islands."

The term *senmyō* itself is a two-character compound meaning "to proclaim the command"—hence "imperial edict." The Chinese characters "*choku*" and "*shō*" are each single graphs with the same meaning. In his study, Norinaga glossed all three of these terms as "*mikotonori*"—roughly, the "proclamation of the Emperor's word." The term "*mikotonori*" may be analyzed as the honorific particle "*mi*" ("exalted"), the noun "*koto*" ("word"), and the verb stem of "*noru*" (to declare") (Martin 1987:478, 737).

While the distinction in content among the three forms remains unclear and insufficiently studied, both the *choku* and the *shō* during the years 749-70 dealt with a broad array of administrative matters. The *senmyō* are viewed by Japanese historians as a subset of the *shō*. Although it is tempting to believe that the *senmyō* were oral proclamations due to their peculiar Old Japanese language, while the Chinese forms were simply inscribed in the chronicle, we shall see that this distinction is not at all unambiguous. In fact, much of the difficulty in working with texts as formal as the court chronicle is to try to discern what was oral and what was written from the content and the contexts. The *senmyō* certainly sometimes read as marvelous ancient oratory, whereas the other edicts strike us as bland bureaucratic prose. But in their context of performance the distinction becomes more blurred.

Orality, Literacy, Text, Ritual, and Performance

In her 1992 overview of the orality/literacy discussion to date, Rosalind Thomas very usefully distinguishes between theories of the general or "autonomous" effects of literacy, and those that attempt to study its actual historical path (15-28). To summarize very crudely, the former are theories that account for the effects of the introduction of writing as a mechanistic change in mentality—for example, the idea that the Greek adoption and adaptation of the alphabet was responsible for the development of rationality, philosophy, and ultimately science. Included in this stream of interpretation are anthropological studies of modern societies and psychological studies of the function of memory in the human brain. Historical studies on the other hand, she argues, have the potential to be more nuanced and to describe a whole range of oralities and literacies as a society changes.

One lacuna immediately noticeable in the orality/literacy discourse of the last century is the striking absence of historical studies of the development of East Asian scripts and, more to

the point here, of the Japanese transition from an oral to a literate culture in its adoption of Chinese writing. This situation is partly due to the fact that Western knowledge of Asian script and history is still so relatively recent, and that the "Oriental" is still so exotic. A great deal of Western ink has been spilled in the discussion over whether the graphs historically employed in writing Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese were in some sense pictographs that conveyed meaning directly in a way impossible with alphabetic systems. This debate has aptly been summarized and critiqued by David B. Lurie in his recent article on the "Ideographic Myth" (2006).

While later oral and performative traditions in East Asia have been widely explored in the pages of this journal and elsewhere, the formation of Chinese script and its adoption by Japan has not. In recent studies of writing in early China, this issue has begun to appear under the rubric of "text and ritual." Thus Martin Kern, in his collection of essays titled *Text and Ritual in Early China* (2005), explicitly asks "What are the specific functions of the written text? How should we imagine the relation between oral and written textual practices? What are the social contexts of texts?" (ix). Michael Nylan, in the lead essay of the same volume, uses the concept of "text, ritual and the culture of public display" (2005:3-49). These and other chapters concern themselves with the performative contexts of ancient texts, the ritual matrix in which texts were composed and displayed. Kern's earlier monograph, *The Stele Inscriptions of Ch'in Shih Huang: Text and Ritual in Early Chinese Imperial Representation* (2000), described the great imperial progresses of the "First Emperor," the extraordinarily grand and conspicuous processions to the frontiers of the new empire, and the texts that were inscribed on stone monuments to proclaim the authority of the new monarch. It is significant that Mark Edward Lewis, in his monumental study *Writing and Authority in Early China,* unequivocally excuses himself from the debate at the outset (1999:1): "This book is about the uses of writing to command assent and obedience in early China. It does not deal explicitly with the opposition between the written and the oral, nor does it attempt to assess the changing forms or degree of literacy. Instead it examines the types of writing employed in state and society to generate and exercise power." Thus the orality/literacy meme is foregrounded even in Lewis' emphatic rejection of its hermeneutical application.

Turning to ancient Japan, we find an explosion of new interest in the origins of the Japanese writing system and in the linguistic analysis of Old Japanese. These studies in English include histories of the Japanese writing system and the Japanese book (Habein 1984; Seeley 1991; Kornicki 1998) as well as two dissertations on the origin of the *kana* system and Japanese writing as a whole (Case 2000; Lurie 2001). In a 1994 article Victor Mair made the provocative suggestion that Buddhism and the translation of Buddhist texts into Chinese was directly responsible for the making of the national vernacular in Japan as well as the rest of East Asia. Recent linguistic investigations of the grammar and phonetics of Old Japanese have been undertaken by John R. Bentley (2001), Marc Miyake (2003), and Alexander Vovin (2005), and an attempt has been made at the reconstruction of Proto-Japanese (Frellesvig and Whitman 2008).[3]

[3] The *senmyō* are utilized as source material for Old Japanese by Vovin (2005:1, 15) and Frellesvig and Whitman (2008:197).

It was in the late seventh and early eighth centuries that, in Havelock's phrase (1986), the muse of Japan was beginning to write. The Nara period saw the production of the mythohistories *Kojiki* and *Nihonshoki* (712 and 720, respectively), the poetry collections *Kaifusō* and *Man'yōshū* (c. 751 and 757), as well as the local gazetteers, the *Fudoki*. The official eighth-century history *Shoku Nihongi*, as we have seen, was compiled at the very end of the 700s. Unfortunately, due to the trajectory of Western historiography, the eighth century is in the West the least well-known of Japanese historical epochs. While ongoing archaeological research has illuminated a great deal of early Japanese history and to some extent the Nara period itself, serious historical investigation of the eighth century has not been undertaken: until very recently there was not a single monograph-length treatment of Nara history in English (Ooms 2008).[4]

However, studies of ancient Japan by literature specialists have begun to probe the meaning of the ritual and performance contexts of early Japanese documents. Gary L. Ebersole, in his 1989 study *Ritual Poetry and the Politics of Death in Early Japan*, attempted to locate poetry from the *Man'yōshū* in its performative setting, particularly in the ritual of temporary enshrinement before final burial of emperors and high officials, known as *mogari no miya*. He drew explicitly on the orality/literacy debate for his methodology of "imaginative re-creation" of the ritual background of oral poetry (18):

> Paradoxically, perhaps, the only access to the oral stage of early Japan is through written texts that have survived. These texts, however, were not intended to serve as ethnographic monographs, and the oral poems incorporated within them are frequently preserved out of their generative and performative loci and, moreover, sometimes in altered form. Nevertheless, because the earliest texts, including the *Kojiki*, the *Nihonshoki*, and the M*an'yōshū*, come out of Japan's transition from a primarily oral culture to a literate one, at least among the intelligentsia and in the court, they preserve enough evidence of the oral aspects of the culture to permit certain generalizations. The textual evidence, however, must be supplemented and interpreted in light of what scholars have learned about orality since the pioneering work of Milman Parry in the 1920's.

Two of Ebersole's points deserve special emphasis here. First, the eighth-century texts (*Kojiki*, *Nihonshoki*, and *Man'yōshū*) are rightly identified as embodying the start of the transition from a primarily oral culture to a literate one. Second, the generative and performative loci are not self-evident from the texts themselves; the textual evidence must be supplemented by theories of orality. It seems to me noteworthy that Ebersole is here stating that the texts do not speak for themselves. While they preserve extremely important data concerning the transition from an oral to a literate culture, the texts require significant hermeneutical work to recover them as "performative" texts. This recovery is for Ebersole a literary project. My criticism concerns the possibility of recovering the "performative loci" of ancient texts without "reimagining" them. I would argue for this possibility.

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[4] The Nara period is defined as the years 710-84, when the primary capital was at Nara, or *Heijō-kyō*.

In a more recent study, David Bialock (2007) has undertaken to retrieve the meaning of ancient Japanese texts as a prologue to his investigation of the performative aspects of the medieval epic *Heike Monogatari*. His study of "Eccentric Spaces" and "Hidden Histories" constitutes a very far-reaching and sophisticated preamble to his interpretation of the *Heike* itself. However, his attempts in early chapters to "recover the Daoist text" of royal authority seem to me to suffer from much the same hermeneutical constraints as those affecting Ebersole's study. Bialock's methodological presuppositions are key to his entire study, and deserve quotation here at length (9):

> In focusing on *representation* and *performance* rather than a narrative of "fact" and "events," I am interested in the ways power and authority are mediated through a variety of symbolic practices that cut across the false barrier that has been erected between "documents," which are held to transmit "facts" and reliable "evidence," and "literature," which is treated as an epiphenomenon. This latter practice has tended to enforce a sharp separation between literature (*bungaku*) on the one hand and history (*rekishi*) on the other, which has removed texts from their embeddedness in an ensemble of cultural practices, including ritual and ceremonial, and transformed them into abstractions in a discourse *about* rather than *of* the periods in question. By returning texts like *Nihon Shoki* and *Man'yōshū* to their performative function (i.e., their embeddedness in an ensemble of cultural practices), we can better grasp their role in either enforcing or contesting specific ideologies of royal authority, irrespective of their historicity and factual accuracy.

Bialock seems to me rather premature in wishing to blur the distinction between literature and history. I contend that the imperial edicts of *Shoku Nihongi* are precisely performative texts embedded in a historical chronicle, and that these re-scripts must be investigated at least initially as historical rather than literary documents. Here I would assert that literature is indeed an "epiphenomenon"—the exhumation of the edicts from the historical chronicles is the primary task—one that has not yet been performed by Western scholars for the Nara period—and the interpretation of texts as literature is secondary. Although Bialock presents a great deal of fascinating evidence from *Nihon Shoki* for his project of recovery of the Daoist text, my point is that he almost completely neglects *Shoku Nihongi*. As a result, his evidence for the Nara period comprises primarily quotations from the *Kaifusō*, an eighth-century collection of Chinese poetry, and the *Man'yōshū*.

A telling illustration of his methodology is his use of what he terms a "Daoist" text from the *Engi Shiki*, a tenth-century compendium of court procedures like that of the *Jōganshiki*.[5] Bialock observes that "the *Shoku-nihongi* account does not record the magical formula chanted by the Fubito-be, but the text as well as details regarding its ritual performance have been preserved in the *Engi-shiki*" (95-96). In other words, he is using as his evidence an early tenth-century text, while he admits that the contemporaneous chronicle is silent.

Finally, the significance of performance in traditional Japanese poetry was discussed recently in the pages of this journal by Haruo Shirane (2005), who views performance as the "direct interaction between the performer and audience," emphasizing the critical aesthetic

[5] See the quotation that prefaces this article.

response by the audience (217). Fundamentally, of course, the performance of an imperial edict is a command, the only appropriate, or even possible, response to which is unquestioning obedience. Nevertheless, even in this lack of formal dialogic structure there is sometimes implicit a type of reciprocity, especially in the case of imperial bestowal of gifts. Certainly the locus and often even the specific audience for imperial re-scripts can be identified. Thus I identify the genre of imperial edict as a performative genre, to be classified along with other such utterances in ancient Japan.

To summarize, the discourse concerning the transition from oral cultures to literate cultures has begun to surface in discussions of early China and ancient Japan. The question of the performative spaces created by ancient utterances, whether royal ritual, poetry, prayer, or imperial pronouncements, must certainly be viewed as a central concern in the analysis of archaic documents. However, I would argue that disciplinary boundaries, however outmoded they may seem, are still of cardinal significance in this emerging debate. Furthermore, the classification of ancient genres has yet to be sufficiently articulated. As Gertrude Stein famously asked, "What is poetry and if you know what poetry is what is prose?" (1935:209). Her question is as relevant to the eighth century as it was to the twentieth.[6]

This study of the imperial edicts of a twenty-year period in eighth-century Japan focuses on this genre as it is embedded in an official historical chronicle, the *Shoku Nihongi*. The decrees are examined in their mundane contexts—they are not poetry, although some of the *senmyō* are inscribed in high-flown rhetorical language. The mostly rather prosaic edicts are exhibited in their performative context, which is the everyday functioning of the royal court—in the palace, in mansions of the high nobility, in temples favored by the emperors, in royal progresses through hastily erected temporary palaces. Only after a great deal of similar and perhaps somewhat tedious excavations by historians working in parallel to the literature specialists will the groundwork be adequately laid for theoretical overviews of the reimagined and hidden spaces that are so significant to scholars such as Ebersole and Bialock.

The Court of the "Last Empress"

The Nara period was an era of remarkable cultural growth as Japan adopted the Chinese writing system and Chinese forms of government and religion, but it was also politically a very turbulent time. The eighth century was bracketed by a shift of the capital to Nara at the beginning (710) and to Nagaoka (784) and then Kyoto (794) at the end. The century began with the subjugation of indigenous peoples, the Hayato, in Kyushu and closed amid a decades-long series of wars against the Emishi, another group of "barbarians" in the northeast. Nara Japan was subjected to a lethal epidemic starting in 735 that apparently wiped out a third of the populace and, according to William Wayne Farris (1985:64-69; 2006:264), depressed the level of population for the rest of the century and well into early medieval times.

[6] In *Man'yōshū to Kodaishi,* Naoki Kōjirō (2000) suggests ways to employ the poetry collection as a historical document. As a historian, he privileges *Shoku Nihongi* as the basic source for Nara history. However, in one example he traces the poet Ōtomo Yakamochi's attendance at banquets as a way of evaluating Yakamochi's degree of collusion in Naramaro's conspiracy (167-75).

Nara's court experienced almost continuous intense challenges to the newly formed state, including the events leading to the suicide of Prince Nagaya in 729 and the revolt of Hirotsugu in 740. A major succession dispute followed the Emperor Shōmu's death in 756, ensuing in the suppression of Tachibana Naramaro's conspiracy in 757. The enthronement, dethronement, exile, and assassination of the "Deposed Emperor" Junnin were closely linked to the major rebellion of Fujiwara Nakamaro in 764. With the affair of the Buddhist priest Dōkyō and the death of his supposed paramour, the Empress Shōtoku, in 770, an archaic pattern of female rulership came to an end (Bender 1979). For the years from 592 to 770 women were the paramount rulers more than half the time—six females beginning with Suiko are named as *Tennō* in the official chronicles. (*Tennō* is usually and anachronistically translated as "Emperor" or "Empress," signifying the paramount ruler, whether male or female.)

The "Last Empress,"[7] styled Kōken during the first part of her reign and Shōtoku during the latter, was in fact not the very last Empress, as two women sat on the Chrysanthemum Throne during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when actual power had passed to the military ruler, the Shogun. But the six ancient Empresses, or *Tennō*, were arguably rulers quite as powerful as the males. This was a pattern of rulership different from that in China, where despite the presence of many powerful women at court over the centuries there was only ever one titular Empress, the Empress Wu Ze Dian (r. 690-705). The six Japanese female *Tennō* were rulers in their own right, not merely the wives of rulers.

Kōken/Shōtoku, the ruler whose edicts for the period 749-70 are the subject of this study, was in fact never married. She was appointed to the office of Crown Prince by her father Shōmu in 738 and formally acceded to the throne as Kōken Tennō in 749. Although her early years were spent in the shadow of her father, the Retired Emperor, and his queen, Kōmyō, the evidence is that she was very much in control of court politics, fighting off challenges from her royal cousins Tachibana Naramaro and Fujiwara Nakamaro. During the brief interregnum of the unfortunate Junnin, whom she set up and then deposed (and who was not formally added to the list of monarchs by court historians until the nineteenth century), she continued to issue occasional re-scripts and may be seen as the power behind his titular throne.

The production of edicts—*senmyō*, *choku*, and *shō*—reached a climax during the reign of Kōken/Shōtoku. Half the *senmyō* and about a third of the *choku* and *shō* recorded in the 95 years covered by *Shoku Nihongi* date to this roughly twenty-year period. As we will see, a good number of these imperial pronouncements were issued in response to the tumultuous events of the time. Many more, however, concern commonplace issues of governance.

Performative Loci

Hayakawa Shōhachi, in one of the essays in his collection entitled *Shoku Nihongi* (1993:9-18), underscores the importance of visualizing the ceremonial contexts of many entries

[7] *Saigo no Jotei* (Takinami 1998); Joan R. Piggott (2003) more precisely terms her "the last classical female sovereign."

in the chronicle, and of understanding that edicts were originally delivered orally by a herald speaking for the emperor. He discusses two edicts, from the years 698 and 702, the first of which bestows court titles upon provincial officials and the second on high Buddhist clergy. In each case he paints a picture of the various officials standing in ranks facing north toward the emperor, who faces south.

He notes that even in the case of edicts recorded in Chinese, it is not possible to judge whether in fact they were delivered orally, like the *senmyō* that he assumes to have been spoken. But in either case he stresses that it is necessary first to have some grasp of the ceremonial setting. In this essay, and also in much greater detail in his 1997 opus, Hayakawa discusses the process by which oral transmission (*kōtō dentatsu*) became "documentized" (*monjoka*). In the latter book (18-21) he parses the *senmyō* pronounced upon Emperor Shōmu's accession in 724. While the body of this magisterial work is devoted to a thoroughgoing study of the process by which oral documents were written down, beginning with an examination of the transmission of commands up and down through levels of the bureaucracy, I would here simply like to pursue in a preliminary way Hayakawa's insight that it was ceremony (*gishiki*) that comprised the fundamental context for the imperial re-scripts of the eighth century. It is this insight that suggests to me that the performative loci of all the edicts must be examined in detail, and that both the sites and the texts must eventually be understood in the overall process of movement from oral transmission to documentization.

The remainder of this essay will be devoted to four sites where edicts inscribed in *Shoku Nihongi* were delivered during the years 749-70: major royal palaces, Buddhist temples, mansions of the high nobility, and temporary palaces during a royal progress. While not all of the roughly 300 imperial pronouncements can be scrutinized here, these loci illuminate the scope of the command and control that the Last Empress exercised over her realm, and the types of governance issues she addressed in the course of her reign.

Palaces

Outlines of the Heijō Palace in Nara have been established by postwar archaeological investigation, and the visitor today can stroll in the huge park-like site where the Last Empress dwelled and where the myriad high officials and the common people worked. In fact, portions of the palace, notably the *Suzakumon* (south gate), have been rebuilt, and in 2010, on the 1300th anniversary of the founding of Nara, a reconstruction of major palace buildings will be unveiled.

The largest of these structures was called the Daigokuden; it occupied the central site in the northern end of the palace enclosure, which in turn was sited at the northern end of the ancient city of Nara. From this throne room the emperor would face south toward the other palace buildings and the entire city. It was in the Daigokuden that the edict upon the abdication of Kōken's father Shōmu Tennō was proclaimed in 749, and where the one announcing her accession to her first reign was also read (*SN* 3:83). The Daigokuden was also the site for half of the fourteen New Year's Day celebrations recorded in the chronicle for the period 749-70.

The New Year festivities typically extended throughout the first month and during that time the Empress frequently invited the high-ranking officials to banquets in other, smaller

buildings within the palace enclosure. Those structures mentioned in the chronicle are the Dairi, Chōdō, Tōin, Daianden, and Kōmon. After the banquets, edicts were customarily proclaimed announcing the New Year's list of promotions and honors. A paraphrased summary of the calendar for the first month of the year 754 (*SN* 3:137) provides an idea of the New Year celebrations and the types of edicts read:

> **First day:** Banquet at the Dairi for officials fifth rank and higher.
> **Fifth day:** The emperor went to Tōdaiji (Great Eastern Temple) where 20,000 lanterns were lit. An edict was read announcing spring, the calendar, and a great amnesty.
> **Seventh day:** Banquet at the Tōin for officials fifth rank and higher. An edict was read announcing promotions.
> **Sixteenth day:** At the Daianden an edict was read announcing promotions.

It will be noted that the audience for the edicts in this case was the officials of fifth rank and higher. The precise number of these officials is difficult to estimate, although it may have been fewer than a hundred. There were eight ranks of bureaucratic office at the time and each was subdivided. The highest three grades included princes and princesses of the blood; these grades were each divided into a higher and lower level. From the fourth rank down, each rank was subdivided into four levels. The fifth rank and higher were the *crème de la crème*. But an entry from the first month of the year 769 (*SN* 4:227) shows that the lower echelons were also feted at the New Year:

> **Seventeenth day:** The emperor went to the Tōin and gave a banquet for mid-level officials. There was a banquet at the Chōdō for the heads of the various civil and military offices and for the *Emishi* from Michinoku. The *Emishi* were given gifts and awarded low rank.

Here the numbers of officials involved would be even more difficult to calculate. The *Emishi*, by the way, refers to representatives of the indigenous people from the north against whom there was intermittent warfare during the latter part of the century.

In 764, a dramatic edict was issued at the Heijō Palace on the occasion of Fujiwara Nakamaro's revolt (*SN* 4:43). This was a highly unusual circumstance; the titular Emperor Junnin was accused of complicity in the revolt and a messenger was sent from Retired Emperor Kōken to formally dethrone Junnin and announce that he was being exiled to the island of Awaji. At the time, Kōken was actually residing in the Hokkeji Temple east of the palace complex, a site that had been her grandfather Fujiwara Fuhito's mansion. In this extraordinary instance, soldiers were sent to roust Junnin from bed in the palace; an imperial prince read the decree of exile to him and his family, then immediately sent them on their way.

In addition to the main Heijō Palace, the Last Empress also spent significant amounts of time in the palaces of other, lesser capitals—Naniwa, Hora, and Yugi no Miya. Each of these palaces was the site for at least one edict. In addition to these more stable locales in the capitals, special temporary palaces were constructed especially for the frequent royal progresses, or *miyuki*, to neighboring provinces.

Temples

Since its construction and the completion of its enormous Buddha image (*Daibutsu*) in 752, the Tōdaiji (Great Eastern Temple) played an occasional role as an impressive setting for court ritual. Situated in the northeast corner of the city of Nara, this temple was the apex of a system of official temples located in every province. We have noted above that Tōdaiji was the site of an imperial visit on the fifth day of the first month of 754, among a series of festivities in the palace itself to mark the New Year. The temple was the setting for the famous *senmyō* of 749 (*SN* 3:97) in which Retired Emperor Shōmu addressed the god Hachiman. Note especially that although Kōken had already succeeded to the throne, the edict is recorded as the words of her father Shōmu read by the herald, the *Sadaijin* (Great Minister of the Left). This was a feature of the early years of Kōken's reign, when her mother, here described as the retired empress, also issued occasional edicts. Note also that both the high nobility and officialdom attended the ceremony, and that the specific number of 5,000 priests is recorded. While the accuracy of such numbers in *Shoku Nihongi* may be open to question, the spacious grounds of Tōdaiji as it exists today can easily accommodate such throngs (Bender 1979:135):

> The nun and priestess of the Great God Hachiman, Ason Ōmiwa Morime, worshipped at *Tōdaiji*. (Her palanquin was of a purple color, like that of the imperial palanquin.) Emperor Kōken and the retired emperor and empress also proceeded to the temple. On this day, great numbers of government officials and various members of the aristocracy all gathered at the temple. Five thousand priests prayed, performed ceremonies of veneration of the Buddha, and read sutras. The music of Great T'ang, Palhae and Wu, and the Gosechi and Kume dances were performed. The Great God Hachiman was awarded the first rank, and Himegami the second. Sadaijin Tachibana Moroe presented an edict and read it to the god.

Particularly during the latter part of Shōtoku Tennō's reign, the great temples of the capital were the destinations of imperial visits and the sites for a variety of court activities. Below is an extract from the calendar for the first three months of 769 (*SN* 4:149-57):

> **First month, eighteenth day:** The emperor went to Tōin (in the palace grounds); a shō was issued announcing promotions.
>
> **Second month, fourth day:** The emperor went to Tōdaiji and announced promotions.
>
> **Second month, eighth day:** The emperor went to Kōfukuji*;* there was a performance of music and conferral of court rank on temple personnel.
>
> **Second month, fourteenth day:** The emperor went to Tōin, and witnessed a sacred liturgy presented by the governor of Izumo Province.
>
> **Third month, second day:** The emperor went to Gangōji and presented gifts.
>
> **Third month, third day:** The emperor went to the Hōin of *Saidaiji*; literati were invited to a winding water banquet, and the emperor presented gifts.
>
> **Third month, ninth day:** The emperor went to Daianji and announced promotions.

> **Third month, fourteenth day:** The emperor went to Yakushiji, presented gifts, and awarded court rank.

Although the presentation of gifts and the award of rank and promotion were not always couched in the format of an edict, the pattern of utilizing the grand temples for court ceremonial is clear. The emperor's visits were frequent and consistent enough to demonstrate that such activity was a fundamental imperial duty and ritual responsibility. The laconic chronicle does not always describe the proceedings in detail, but it is obvious from the above that these visits often included the performance of music and occasionally a banquet. The winding water banquet was a literary activity that involved the floating of wine cups down a stream and the composition of poems by the famous writers of the day. While the temples listed here were all within the confines of the imperial city, we will see below that the pattern was repeated in lesser provincial temples when the emperor journeyed on royal progresses around the countryside.

Mansions

Scattered through the record are notations of visits to mansions of high officials. Particularly notable are the *Tennō*'s visit to the mansion of the *Sadaijin* (Great Minister of the Left) Fujiwara Nagate in 769, upon which occasion he was promoted to the Junior First Rank (*SN* 4:229). Soon afterward, Shōtoku went to the mansion of the *Udaijin* (Great Minister of the Right) Kibi no Makibi and awarded him the Senior Second Rank. These two officials had been mainstays of her earlier administration and were to oversee the transition of power after her death. At this point Shōtoku was already ailing, and these appointments may be seen as attempts to ensure a smooth succession. But the most famous of these visits was earlier in her reign, when Kōken and the whole court was relocated to the Tamura Mansion of Fujiwara Nakamaro, her cousin, south of the palace in the eastern sector of Nara.

In 757 Kōken and her mother the Dowager Empress Kōmyō moved there with the rest of the court due to repairs at the Heijō Palace. Their two-month residence saw a peak in the production of edicts. In the fifth month Kōken appointed Nakamaro to an extracodal high office and also issued a *choku* ordering the promulgation of the Yōrō law code, which had been the handiwork of their mutual grandfather Fujiwara Fuhito and for unknown reasons had never been fully disseminated (*SN* 3:187). It was while the court was residing at the Tamura Mansion that the conspiracy of Tachibana Naramaro (another cousin of Kōken) was unmasked and ruthlessly suppressed. Alternating pronouncements from both *Tennō* and the Dowager Empress were handed down almost daily from the second to the ninth day of the seventh month (*SN* 3:197-201). Finally, on the twelfth day Kōken returned to the Heijō Palace and from the Daigokuden issued a *senmyō* proclaiming the details of the curbing of Naramaro's plot and the exile of high officials (*SN* 3:203).

One *senmyō* from the Dowager Empress was read to the five main conspirators, royal princes and nobles who had been summoned to the Tamura Mansion (*SN* 3:201). The edict was quite personal: she refers to the conspirators as her close relatives, wonders how they could have had it in their hearts to rebel, and, as a compassionate Buddhist monarch, forgives them. The

chronicle records that the five backed out of her presence via the south gate, kowtowing and making profound apologies. It also records their deaths or sentences of exile the following day.

Royal Progresses (*Miyuki*)

Fujiwara Nakamaro, whose mansion had served as the temporary home of the court in 757, raised a rebellion in 764. After his resounding defeat, Kōken, who had abdicated and put the puppet Junnin on the throne, ascended the throne again with the name Shōtoku. In the following year she and members of her court embarked on a royal progress through the adjacent provinces of Kawachi and Izumi to the province of Kii (*SN* 4:91-101). It is tempting to view this as a triumphal procession. *Shoku Nihongi* does not designate it explicitly as such, although it was during this *miyuki* that the news of the exiled Junnin's death was formally reported to the court. Junnin had been a party to the revolt of Fujiwara Nakamaro. It was ordered that temporary palaces (*karimiya*) be erected along the route of the procession. *Shoku Nihongi* notes that the highest officials were appointed to oversee the royal progress, and narrates the procession in detail. It lasted about a month, and the court visited the sites of ancient palaces and an imperial tomb, where the Empress read an edict honoring her ancestor Prince Kusakabe. At the island of Tamatsushima in Kii province, which Shōtoku's father Shōmu had visited in 724 to worship the local divinity,[8] a special camp was established facing the sea and music and dance were performed.

Along the route the court inhabited several temporary palaces, and at one such location a special market was opened for the local merchants. The commerce included the sale of relatively low court ranks to the regional potentates. The provinces along the way were expected to furnish provisions for the royal retinue, and imperial edicts announced amnesties and the remission of local taxes in recompense. As the procession moved from one province to the next, Shōtoku issued re-scripts thanking and rewarding the provincial governors with gifts.

The route of the *miyuki* led to the home province, Kawachi, of the Buddhist priest Dōkyō, now a close advisor to the sovereign, who visited several temples in the vicinity. The climax of the royal progress was a ceremony at Dōkyō's clan temple, where music and dance of China and Korea were performed and the Empress proclaimed a decree appointing the priest to the highest office in the civil bureaucracy. As the *miyuki* left Kawachi and wended its way home, edicts

[8] A poem in the *Man'yōshū* commemorates Shōmu's visit (Sasaki et al. 1969:191):

From Saiga's plain, where we serve
At the palace everlasting
Of our august Sovereign reigning in peace,
The island lies athwart in the sea.
White waves gambol along its clean shore
When the wind arises.
Men gather the dainty seaweed
When the tide is low –
So precious since the age of the gods,
This Tamatsu-shima, Island of Jewels!

granted tax relief, gifts to the elderly and local officials, promotions to the latter, and a general amnesty. When the court returned to the Heijō Palace in Nara, further re-scripts awarded gifts and promotions to the military officials who had accompanied it.

Conclusion

The imperial edicts in *Shoku Nihongi* in fact constitute the backbone of the chronicle, and their contents comprise a narration of the major political events at court during the eighth century. As we follow the Last Empress peregrinating around the core of her realm, we witness a powerful woman in the tradition of the female sovereigns before her, dealing with a fractious body of officialdom that was almost never free of succession disputes, conspiracies, and rebellions. The edicts conjure visions of the grand New Year ceremonies in the Heijō Palace, the magnificent Buddhist temples and noble mansions that served as backdrops for court ritual and entertainment, and the spectacle of grand processions in which the empress and officials moved across the landscape and camped in temporary palaces. Although the language of the chronicle is spare and does not offer us all the detail we would wish, the performative loci are sketched sufficiently to provide a picture of the active production of royal re-scripts in a dynamic variety of settings.

Bestowal of gifts, often in the form of appointment to court rank or office, is a major motif of the performative utterances of the sovereign in our twenty-year sample. Perhaps this is most obvious in the New Year's list of honors distributed in the round of banqueting at the Heijō Palace, but the Empress gives gifts wherever she goes, in her visits to mansions, temples, and especially on her royal progresses. Particularly during the latter, this largesse in the form of tax relief, amnesties, and award of official rank to local officials have the nature of reciprocity, as it is in fact given in exchange for the provisioning of the court on its travels. The function of the opening of local markets and the sale of titles should especially bear future scrutiny. The symbolic presence of the monarch is not sufficient—her "legislation" comprises a beneficence that functions as a sort of social leveling through the bestowal of favor.

Audiences for the proclamation of edicts may be as grand as the 5000 priests and hosts of officials at the Tōdaiji or as intimate as the five trembling conspirators in the Tamura Mansion. Musical offerings to the sovereign occur most often during imperial visits to Buddhist temples. In at least one case the literati are summoned to compose poetry for a state-sponsored banquet. The deposed Junnin and his family are dispatched into exile by a herald's reading of an imperial decree when the sovereign is not even present. Dōkyō's appointment to the highest civil office is announced to his extended family in the clan temple deep in his home turf to the accompaniment of continental music and dance. The role of the emperor in fixing the calendar is suggested not only by the importance of New Year's edicts, but in the single instance cited when Kōken goes to the Tōdaiji to announce the onset of spring.

Missing from the record is the humdrum routine of the scribes composing edicts, forwarding them up through the bureaucracy, the highest officials consulting with the monarch,

then presenting them to the herald to be voiced as the words of the emperor.[9] Among the many questions left unanswered by this study is that of these specific bureaucratic mechanisms. More fundamental and vexing is the question of precisely which of the *senmyō*, *choku*, and *shō* were actually presented orally. While the performative loci are amply documented, issues of performance are only hinted at by the occasional notice of the identity of the herald or the specifics of the audience. The entire body of some 900 edicts in *Shoku Nihongi* constitutes a crucial database for study of a document type that is only now beginning to be closely examined, particularly in the West.

Certainly the eighth century in Japan, when the adoption and transformation of the Chinese written language was in full bloom, should be ranked along with ancient Greece as a critical epoch in which an oral culture began to make its uncertain and wavering progress into literacy. The long history of Japan's development into a powerful and technologically advanced, twenty-first-century state still employing an orthography quite different from that of Western scripts would seem to give the lie to claims that the introduction of the alphabet in some mysterious way altered mind and society and inevitably led to the wonders of modern science and Western dominance. That Japan's transition from orality to literacy has been so long ignored is testimony to Occidental scholarship's wanton ignorance of the processes by which the Muse began to write in exotic cultures.[10]

Independent scholar, Philadelphia

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[9] While this procedure is prescribed by law codes extant only in ninth-century compilations, the actual process is not documented in *Shoku Nihongi*.

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About the Authors

Bruno Alonso
Bruno Alonso is currently completing a degree in psychology at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. His research interests include educational psychology, identity theory, and psychotherapy. He is also a professional pop-music composer and producer.

Asier Barandiaran
Asier Barandiaran received his B.A. in Basque philology from the University of Deusto (Bilbao, Spain). In 2002 he was awarded a doctorate by the University of the Basque Country. Since 1995 he has served as Assistant Professor of Basque Language and Literature at the University of Navarre. Barandiaran has published articles and books on Basque orality, particularly on *bertsolaritza*, as well as Basque rhetoric in various academic journals, including *Fontes Linguae Vasconum*, *Oralia*, and *Egan*.

Ross Bender
Ross Bender received a Ph.D. in pre-modern Japanese history from Columbia University in 1980 and is currently an independent scholar in Philadelphia. His research focuses on the history and religion of ancient Japan. His forthcoming publications include "Changing the Calendar: Royal Political Theology and the Suppression of the Tachibana Naramaro Conspiracy" in the *Japanese Journal of Religious Studies*.

John Eastlake
John Eastlake completed his Ph.D. in Irish Studies at the Centre for Irish Studies, National University of Ireland, Galway in 2008. His thesis consisted of a comparative study of Irish and Native American autobiography, proposing a new cross-cultural critical theory and method of reading Native autobiography. He currently teaches Irish Studies in Galway, Ireland, and has just completed a co-edited volume of essays, *Anáil an Bhéil Bheo: Orality and Modern Irish Culture*.

David F. Elmer
David F. Elmer is Assistant Professor of the Classics at Harvard University and Assistant Curator of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature. In addition to South Slavic oral traditions, his research interests include the Homeric poems and the ancient novel. He has published articles in the journals *Classical Antiquity*, *Classical Philology*, and *Transactions of the American Philological Association*. An essay comparing the poetics of South Slavic and Homeric epic will appear in the *Journal of American Folklore*.

Amadu Wurie Khan
Amadu Wurie Khan is conducting post-graduate work at the Department of Social Policy, University of Edinburgh, where he is currently researching the narratives of citizenship of asylum-seekers and refugees and the media in the United Kingdom. Previously he has undertaken extensive anthropological research on oral art forms among the Themne and Mende ethnic groups in Sierra Leone. He has also taught courses on African oral culture and literature, and English and Commonwealth written literatures.

His academic study in oral performance has been further enhanced by his work as a storyteller, and he performs for audiences across the United Kingdom. More information is available at a.w.khan@sms.ed.ac.uk

Marta Morgade
Marta Morgade is Professor of Educational and Developmental Psychology at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. Her research interests are semiotic theory, C. S. Peirce, and the history of psychology. Her articles have appeared in journals such as *Anthropos*, *Estudios de Psicología*, and *Revista de Historia de la Psicología*. More information about her work can be found at http://www.morgade.es

Valentina Pagliai
Valentina Pagliai is currently a Fellow at the Remarque Institute of New York University. She has conducted research on verbal duels in Italy as well as on racialization and discourse in Europe. Her publications include "Poetic Dialogues: Performance and Politics in the Tuscan *Contrasto*" (*Ethnology*, 2002), "Lands I Came to Sing: Negotiating Identities and Places in the Tuscan *Contrasto*" (*Sociolinguistics: The Essential Readings*, 2003), and "Singing Gender: Contested Discourses of Womanhood in Tuscan-Italian Verbal Art," co-authored with B. Bocast (*Pragmatics*, 2005).

David Poveda
David Poveda is Professor of Educational and Developmental Psychology at the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. He is interested in children's language and literacy practices across a variety of social contexts. He has published articles in journals such as *Language in Society*, *Journal of Folklore Research, Pragmatics*, and *Text*. More information and publications can be found at http://www.uam.es/david.poveda

Venla Sykäri
Venla Sykäri is a Ph.D. candidate in folklore studies at the University of Helsinki. Over the last ten years, she has been engaged in long-term field research on contemporary oral poetry in Crete, and is currently preparing a comprehensive presentation of the local tradition of rhyming couplets for her dissertation. The theoretical objective of her work is to show how this kind of dialogic oral tradition brings improvisation and individual creativity to the heart of the verbal art.

Sam Tsang
Sam Tsang received his D.Phil. in Biblical Studies from Sheffield University and currently teaches at Overseas Theological Seminary, a Chinese-speaking seminary largely serving the Diaspora Chinese community. His dissertation on Paul's metaphors in Galatians, "From Slaves to Sons," was published in 2005. His research interests range over the areas of orality in the ancient world, social world(s) of the New Testament, Pauline studies, Asian-American Christianity, and Sino-theology. He has written nearly twenty books in Chinese on both the Old and New Testaments.

Paulu Zedda

Paulu Zedda is an improvisational poet or *cantadori*, according to the south Sardinian tradition of *mutetu longu*. He is also *professore a contratto* of the musical ethnology of Sardinia at the University of Cagliari. Zedda has published several studies on oral traditional poetry in Sardinia, including *Sa Cantada: I Poeti Improvvisatori*; *Unu de Danimarca benit a carculai: Il mondo poetico di Ortacesus nelle registrazioni e negli studi di Andreas Fridolin Weis Bentzon tra il 1957 e il 1962*; and "La *cantada* campidanese a fini," in *Su cantu de sei in Sardinnia*; *L'arte dei mutetus.*