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

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This issue of *Oral Tradition,*
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is dedicated to the memory of

ALBERT BATES LORD

in grateful acknowledgment of
his unparalleled contribution
to the field of studies in oral tradition.

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Editor's Column

With the present issue *Oral Tradition* embarks upon its new editorial program of two per volume and year, each to be approximately fifty percent larger than the standard triquarterly number. This format is intended to make possible certain changes in the journal: in addition to bringing costs more under control and providing the same annual page allotment, it is designed to make for greater heterogeneity in each issue. The increased space will of course mean that more different traditions can be examined in a given number, and it will also make room for "clusters" of essays on a particular subject or in a particular field, groups of articles that will constitute a focus amid the natural diversity of *OT*'s responsibilities. We will also maintain the possibility of devoting an entire number to a single area, so special issues such as those that have appeared in the past will remain part of the editorial program. Since the journal was established in order to facilitate communication among scholars sharing an interest in oral tradition but segregated by the disciplinary structure of modern academia, this enhancement of diversity in *OT*'s contents seems appropriate.

The first "augmented" number exemplifies the new format. Eight essays, two review articles, and a symposium contribution range over a wide selection of areas: Scottish songs, ancient Greek orality and literacy, the Finnish *Kalevala*, Latin charms, Irish myth, Old English narrative, an archive of Turkish oral traditions, the modern American storytelling movement, the use of acoustic media for medieval works with roots in oral tradition, and James Joyce studies. Future issues will feature scholarship on Russian charms, Arab women's songs, Serbo-Croatian women's songs, the Old English *Beowulf*, the ancient Greek *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Hispanic balladry, Japanese folklore, Old French epic, and African American rap music, as well as the third and final section of Mark Edwards' bibliographical survey of oral traditional studies on Homeric epic and an update of my omnibus annotated bibliography on the Parry-Lord approach (*Oral-Formulaic Theory and Research*, 1985; previously updated in *OT* 1 [1986]: 767-808 and 3 [1988]: 191-228). Also in preparation is a special collection on Native American and another on African American traditions.

We continue to be grateful to our readership and ask you for two kinds of assistance as *Oral Tradition* enters its seventh year. First, in respect to our ongoing subscription drive, please alert two colleagues to the rewards of receiving a personal copy of the journal for the nearly nominal charge of $18 per year; of course, your own early renewal will also help in that regard. Second, urge specialists in various fields to submit their manuscripts to *OT*. For our part we will continue to encourage conversation across disciplinary boundaries, in the hope of fostering the growth of studies in oral tradition as the complex and international field it has proven to be.

John Miles Foley, Editor

Oral Tradition, 7/1 (1992):3-27

A Gaelic Songmaker's Response to an English-speaking Nation

Thomas McKean

> The human experiences of the Gaels can be traced in the instinctive, inveterate and spontaneous compositions of the bards; ...they react to every major event affecting the lives of their community, and their songs mirror their folk-history (Bloomfield and Dunn 1989:67).

I: The Bardic Tradition

Iain MacNeacail [John Nicolson] was born on the Isle of Skye into a culture that places a high premium on verbal dexterity, observation, and quick wit. He is one of the last of the *bàird bhaile* [village bards], the local poets who were often requested, indeed expected, to make songs, both serious and satirical, for the local *céilidhean* [visiting sessions or informal house visits]. The *bàrd bhaile* [village bard] was an important figure in Gaelic society for centuries and remained so until well after the Second World War. These unpaid, unofficial poets were the *de facto* spokesmen and -women for their communities and as such wielded considerable power over both their neighbors and public opinion. For this society a song was, and to some extent still is, very much a functional and practical piece, an essential element of communication seamlessly integrated with other types of human expression. To mainstream Western society on the other hand, a song, whether old or new, is well outside accepted norms of daily social interaction; to most, it is an anomaly, while to the *bàird bhaile* and their communities, it is not. Only in the present century has Gaelic society's ancient emphasis on song and poetry as the usual form of emotional expression begun to break down.

The roots of this functional and oral songmaking tradition in Scotland date back to the coming of the Gaels of Ulster to their colony of Dal Riada in southwest Scotland in the sixth century A.D. The "professional bard" or "poet" in this early period was actually a songmaker,

since most Gaelic poetry until the present century was meant to be sung; indeed many of the Gaelic words for "verse" (e.g. *luineag*, *rann*, and so on) have implications of melody. These highly trained and skilled songmakers composed orally, to extremely difficult metrical patterns. (It is said that bards used to lie in the dark with a heavy stone on their stomachs as an "encouragement" to composition, though perhaps it was more of an incentive to finish![1])

As far as we know, these paid bards were always men, as composing poetry was not then considered a seemly occupation for a woman. There are records of several women, most notably Sìleas na Ceapaich [Julia (MacDonald) of Keppoch] and Màiri nighean Alasdair Ruaidh [Mary (MacLeod) daughter of Red-haired Alasdair] in the seventeenth century, performing the functions of bards.[2] Unfortunately, there are no known records that payments were made for their services in anything other than kind, suggesting that professional status was not conferred upon them. And even in this century there are several traditions, found in the Western Isles of Scotland, that these women were buried face down, an acknowledgment (or punishment) of their bardic (i.e. unwomanly) activities. It seems that even then, under the nominally more egalitarian Gaelic Law, there was no equal pay for equal work! Despite this professional prejudice, however, it must be pointed out that much of extant Gaelic vernacular verse is thought to be by women.

The most highly trained of the professional songmakers in the employ of a chief were composers primarily of eulogies, elegies, and other praise poems for the nobles of the clan. They were also, following the conflation of the different ranks of court poet of the Classical period, the keepers of genealogical knowledge in the clan system. Between these two duties of praise (implying present legitimacy of the ruler based on his heroic behavior) and genealogy (implying historical legitimacy), the songmaker was in a unique position of influence within the normal corridors of political power. He was, as a result, second only to the Clan Chief in terms of the status accorded him by others.

There was of course a danger that the songmaker would simply act as a sort of publicity agent because he was in the Chief's pay. In fact, it was often the bard who held the upper hand, so great was the Chief's fear of

[1] See Martin (1884:116) for a description of these bards learning to compose at a bardic college.

[2] Their poems are available in collected editions. See Ó Baoill 1972 and Watson 1934.

satirical condemnation in song. Public image was and is an important consideration for any leader, especially a Clan Chief. Technically his empowerment was hereditary but, practically speaking, it was largely based on a good reputation among his subjects. A scathing, rapidly spread satire was therefore a thing to be feared. This is easily believable when we consider how valuable a word-of-mouth recommendation must have been in the absence of academic transcripts, diplomas, and the other "immutable" proofs of virtue we have today. Furthermore, the Chief's health was at risk, since there are several reports in Scottish oral tradition of people breaking out in boils as the result of a satirical blast.

The bards' professional status lasted until the Jacobite defeat at Culloden in 1746.[3] In the following centuries the Highlands were mercilessly colonized culturally, and to some extent physically, by the English government and its armies. The people's confidence in their own culture and language was systematically undermined through educational propaganda until, by the late nineteenth century, they themselves considered the Gaelic language a hindrance to upward mobility; to learn English and to leave the Islands was considered "what was needed to get on in the world" (Smout 1986:219). Gaelic society was methodically crushed in a concerted effort at ethnocide that continues to this day.

The Statutes of Iona in 1609 had required the Chiefs to educate their sons in Lowland schools and so, by the early nineteenth century, the aristocracy was heavily anglicized; they had become no more than absentee landlords (and English-speaking at that). The Chiefs needed cash to maintain their newly acquired expensive London lifestyles; the people, no longer militarily necessary as a measure of wealth and power, were systematically cleared from the land, making way for the more profitable (and less troublesome) sheep. Having been moved to the shoreline, the inhabitants were forced to gather and burn kelp for the landlords, who sold the resultant potash for use in English and Lowland industry. With the end of the Napoleonic wars in 1815, however, inexpensive supplies of potash became available from Spain and the kelp market collapsed. Cattle prices

[3] One of the last of the professional songmakers was John MacCodrum, an expert satirist whose songs were collected, edited, and translated by William Matheson (1938). The volume also contains interesting biographical material, including some of the financial details of being a professional bard (xxiv-xxv). The poetry of other professional bards of this era is also well-represented in collections such as *Eachann Bacach and other MacLean Poets* (Ó Baoill 1979), *Bardachd Shìlis na Ceapaich, c. 1660-c. 1729* (Ó Baoill 1972), *Orain Iain Luim* (MacKenzie 1964), and *Bàrdachd Gàidhlig* (Watson 1959), to name just a few.

also fell at the same time due to freer access to continental markets, leaving the crofters, newly converted to a cash economy, without a cash income and starved of land on which to grow their food. Emigration then became the landlords' new solution to the overcrowding caused by their own misappropriation of land.[4]

The Chiefs could no longer afford to keep a professional song-maker, even had they desired, and the makers themselves, no longer benefiting from a system of patronage, ceased to find praise poetry such an interesting form of composition. The emphasis of bardic vernacular verse shifted to nature poetry. The eighteenth century saw a great flowering of this genre through the efforts of poets like Alasdair Mac Mhaighsteir Alasdair [Alexander son of the Minister Alexander (MacDonald)], Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir [Fair-haired Duncan MacIntyre], and others, many of whom are now anonymous.

While beautiful and often technically brilliant, many of the later eighteenth- and nineteenth-century nature poems talk in paradisiacal terms of the pre-Clearance Highlands, often mistakenly blaming the sheep for the devastation, rather than the people's own kin: the landlords. This self-deception arises in part from the paternalism inherent in the clan system; the people entrusted much of the responsibility for their welfare to the chief, who was in most cases a relative.[5] In addition, the Gaels' self-esteem and sense of the value of their culture was by this time almost nonexistent. Little wonder, then, that they did not rebel against both their blood ties and a system that taught that authority was right and beyond the question of ordinary folk.

This unprotesting mind-set held sway through the vast emigrations caused by the worst of the Clearances (ca. 1820-70) and the potato famines of the 1840s. A further shadow was also cast over the free expression of Gaelic song-poetry by the evangelical revivals that swept the Highlands in the mid-nineteenth century, teaching that this world was no more than a "vale of tears" and song a "mere vanity" therein. As the modern Gaelic poet Somhairle MacGill-eain [Sorley MacLean] puts it, "Gaelic song poetry

[4] See Hunter 1976 for an exhaustive and moving study of the people's transition from clansmen to crofters. Hunter also has an extremely valuable and extensive bibliography. For a brief introduction to the Clearances and summaries of some of the major turning points of the 150-year crisis, see Thomson 1983.

[5] While this was the norm, it was not always the case. In some cases, a tenant willing to declare loyalty to a particular chief was free to do so. He was then able to assume the clan name if he so wished.

degenerated to a feeble wail and to a feebler pietism" (1985:107-8).[6]

The end of that devastating century, however, brought the dawning of a new age; a little vigor returned to Gaelic verse as poets like Dr. John MacLachlan of Rahoy and especially Uilleam MacDhùnleibhe [William Livingston] put a new life in the poetry. For popularity and influence, however, the composer of the late nineteenth century who undoubtedly stands out is Mary MacPherson, or Màiri Mhór nan Oran [Big Mary of the Songs], as she is known throughout the Highlands. About nine thousand lines of her poetry, which includes some stinging anti-landlord criticism, were noted down from her recitation by a Mr. John Whyte and published in 1891. The editor, Alasdair MacBheathain [Alexander MacBain], says in his introduction (1891:xiii-xiv) that though she

> can read her own poetry in print, she cannot write it. . . . And she has at least half as much more of her own, and twice as much... floating [i.e., then current in oral tradition], unpublished poetry, mainly that of Skye and the Western Isles.

Clearly her memory was astonishing, and MacBheathain's mention of it is an indication of the value that Gaelic society places on a good memory.[7]

Crofters' conditions improved slightly with the 1886 Crofters' Holdings (Scotland) Act, by which this group was granted such minimal rights as security of tenure. The focus of the Gaels' land agitation was then no longer so sharp, and the poetic outcry against the profiteering landlords abated to some extent.[8] Filling this relative void of poetic activity, a new

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[6] MacGill-eain [Sorley MacLean] is known to most European and world audiences as a major award-winning literary poet, but he is also a tradition-bearer with a great first-hand knowledge of Gaelic song and its traditions. This rich background suffuses practically all of his own poetry.

[7] William Matheson echoes this appreciation in his edition of the songs of John MacCodrum where he says that one person "might know thousands of lines of poetry, together with a large number of prose tales" (1938:xix).

[8] The Act improved the rights of the tenantry vis à vis the landlords by granting security of tenure and the right of inheritance, and by establishing a Land Court for the fixing of fair rents. Unfortunately, however, it did not provide a solution to the crofters' main grievance: land shortage. No attempt was made, at that point, to reapportion the fertile former common-grazing lands that had been usurped by many Landlords. The Land League and other crofters' resistance organizations, therefore, did not see the legislation as

tradition appears: the aforementioned *bàird bhaile*. Local bards were not, of course, a new development, but a perceived upswing in the activity of the tradition can be traced to three factors: (i) the absence of a strong formal tradition that might have overshadowed the work of these less established local poets; (ii) the growth, following the clearance of the rural Highlands, of large Gaelic communities in cities such as Glasgow, providing a new synthetic community in which the local poet's observation was needed,[9] and a newly literate urban population that also had access to the large numbers of Gaelic books that were beginning to emerge;[10] and (iii) the establishment of the *Mòd* competitions in which local poets were provided with a platform for their material.

Over the years there have been a number of good collections of *bàird bhaile* poetry—e.g., *Dòmhnall Ruadh Chorùna: òrain is dain le Dòmhnall Dòmhnallach a Uibhist* (Dòmhnallach 1969), *Sporan Dhòmhnaill* (Mac an t-Saoir 1968), *Sguaban Eòrna: Bàrdachd is Dàin le Iain MacDhòmhnuill* (MacDhòmhnuill 1973), *Na Bàird Thirisdeach* (Camshron 1932)—and they

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the great landmark that we often consider it today. See Hunter 1986 for comprehensive detail.

[9] A perfect example of a poet in this new urban role is Dòmhnall Ruadh Phàislig [Red-haired Donald of Paisley], who made many songs on local issues within the Gaelic community in Glasgow. See Mac an t-Saoir 1968

[10] In the nineteenth century, most rural villages in the Highlands had voluntary schooling programs run by the church, which taught reading and writing in Gaelic for the purposes of religious education. "At this time," wrote the Swiss traveler Louis Necker de Saussure in 1822, "there is scarcely a village in the Highlands where children do not learn to read and write in Gaelic and the Holy Scriptures are in the hands of every Highlander" (90). The Free Church of Scotland alone opened 596 schools between 1851 and 1869, but unfortunately, with the coming of the Education (Scotland) Act in 1872, making school attendance to the age of fourteen compulsory, they were either closed down or transferred to state control (Durkacz 1983). All children were then taught to read and write only English and, by the late nineteenth century, "the Highlander himself was strongly and consistently against the use of Gaelic as a school language" (Durkacz 1977:19). Despite prohibitions against, and in some cases corporal punishment for, using Gaelic, a number of young scholars applied the same basic principles learned in the reading of English to the Gaelic of the Bible, small books of Spiritual songs, and the Gaelic newspapers and periodicals that were becoming available in inexpensive popular editions. A new literate class of Gael had been created.

continue to appear.[11] Unfortunately, collections like these and those of professional bardic poetry usually elucidate only the factual background to the bards' topical and occasional songs. In the process they almost wholly neglect the social function of the songs and the thought processes of their composers (probably partly due to the posthumous nature of many of these collections). In recent years, the School of Scottish Studies at Edinburgh and other university folklore departments have gone some way toward correcting this oversight of context with publications such as the LP and booklet *Calum Ruadh, Bard of Skye* made by Danish musicologist Torkild Knudsen (1978). In Knudsen's recordings, Calum Ruadh MacNeacail [Red-haired Malcolm Nicolson], a Skye bard of classical style, reflects on his methods of composition and selection of subject matter. The emphasis is on the bard's own impressions of his technique and, while it is a valuable contribution, the social contexts of the functional songmaker are still under-investigated.[12]

II: The Gaelic Songmaker

The Isle of Skye on the west coast Scotland has produced its share of songmakers in the last few centuries: the lyrical Uilleam Ros, Niall MacLeòid, Màiri Mhór (whose village, if she were to be called a village bard, would have to be the entire *Gàidhealtachd* [Gaelic region], wherever Gaels were downtrodden), and more recently Bàrd Ghrialain [the Bard of Grialain], Aonghas Fleidsear [Angus Fletcher], Calum Ruadh Nicolson of Braes and Iain "An Sgiobair" MacNeacail [John "Skipper" Nicolson].[13]

An Sgiobair is one of the last of the *bàird bhaile*, still making songs at the age of eighty-eight. He made his first song at the age of fourteen about a shortage of tobacco at the end of the First World War and he can

[11] A further selection appears in the bibliography. It is not intended as a comprehensive list.

[12] My Ph.D. on Iain "An Sgiobair" MacNeacail, also of Skye, while including a good deal of straightforward collection of unrecorded material, focuses primarily on the poet's own thought processes and especially on the social function of his songs and song-making, as seen from his own and others' perspectives. It will also discuss his poetry in relation to that of the *bàird bhaile* in much greater detail than I have space for here.

[13] These two Nicolsons are not related; the surname is one of the most common in Skye.

still sing all six verses of it. "I thought anybody could make a song! But I don't know," he says, not so much belittling his talent as indicating how natural he considers a life filled with song.[14] Gaelic society is filled with song, and so Nicolson has become well known in his native village, and beyond, as a bard. Between the wars Nicolson often made a new song, sang it at a *céilidh* or two, and then it would be forgotten as it ceased to be topical or as a new issue presented itself: "they were for the time being, just." Since the topics were often ephemeral, a song usually had a short working life. Sometimes, however, it would prove popular and be taken up by local people and learned, sung, traded, and taken to other parts of Skye and further afield.

In those days, between the turn of this century and the Second World War, the *céilidh* was a daily event.

> Well, [on] the winter nights you wouldn't mind maybe walking a couple of miles up over to a house in [the next village] or something like that... and maybe three or four or five or six, maybe eight at times [would be there].

They would gather at the *taigh céilidh* [the visiting house for that day] to share songs and stories old and new, news, tales of unusual occurrences, and debate: "to pass the time" during the winter nights (SA89.25.B8), which in Skye can be as long as sixteen hours. It is in this context of lively community that Nicolson has spent most of his life:

> Aye, but that was the custom you know at [that] time; you had nights in the house. You'd always be there and somebody would have something queer [i.e., funny] to say and you would get at them for doing it. . . . Well, I would be here tonight and another house tomorrow; you got [to] go round the place, you know. . . . And the rest of the boys would be following suit. . . . Aye, except Sunday. Oh yes, well, we had church on Sunday. We had to. . . go there anyhow (SA88.64.A10).

At the *céilidh*, oneupsmanship would be the order of the day. As one

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[14] All quotes, unless otherwise stated, are drawn from my fieldwork with Iain MacNeacail. They may be found on the following tapes in the School of Scottish Studies' S(ound) A(rchive) at the University of Edinburgh: SA85.86, SA88.63-65, SA89.25-28. Ellipses indicate editing and tightening, square brackets indicate word(s) added for clarity. Italics in brackets indicate "stage directions" that describe Nicolson's movements or emotions that are not expressible in writing alone. In quotes where conversation is shown, IM = the informant Iain MacNeacail; MB = Margaret Bennett of the School of Scottish Studies; and TM = Thomas McKean of the Departments of Celtic and Scottish Studies at the University of Edinburgh.

villager put it to me,

> one was as good as the other at cutting each other. One would say something smart and the other would say something smart, and that would be going on all day![15]

These evenings were clearly an important and regular feature of village life and, while they certainly occur less frequently than they used to, they are not yet dead; when I asked at what point did they stop, Nicolson's response was quick: "Oh, they never stopped yet!" Even today on long winter nights, the people *céilidh* [visit], though not on the same scale:

> Well, they're not what they were, you know; television and everything has brought things to a halt now. . . . That was the only way, before you had the wireless or anything. . . . That was the ways of the Highlands and the Islands all through; that was the custom. They were quite happy at that time. . . . They weren't rich financially in any way, but they had so much they did [i.e. they were so busy] and they were quite happy with it. Not what they are today! (SA89.25.B8).

The *bàird bhaile*, whose witty, intelligent repartee was so popular at the *céilidhs*, made songs about anything: songs of love and emotion, songs about local history, elegaic songs, and biting satires that, without naming names, left no one in doubt as to who was being lampooned. "They were feared of me making a song to them," Nicolson says. "Maybe myself and a neighbor were cast out on [i.e., disagreeing or feuding about] something, and that was enough" (SA88.64.B7-B8). The power of satire does not appear to have dimmed since the days Mary MacLeod raised boils with a song.

In this tradition the satirist-poet is often a sort of social conscience for the village, drawing attention to misdeeds of all sorts for all to see. Villagers become quite wary of stepping out of line, lest they draw his attention, for what amounts to public ridicule awaits them, with the added attraction that it is singable and catchy: gossip set to music, if you will. One neighbor recalls an exchange that started with Nicolson making a satire on a local woman. She then threatened to make an *aoir* [satire or cursing song] on him in retaliation, unless he corrected his slight with a good song

[15] Interview with Peter Stewart, 5.5.90.

about her. He responded favorably and so was spared the *aoir*.[16] The use of satire as a means of social control was, apparently, a two-way street. One's reputation in the area could live and die in song.

The effect of this sort of heated exchange was tempered by other types of song, e.g., songs of exile, like *'Nuair 'sa mhadainn 's mi 'g éirigh* ["In the morning as I rise"] about his years working away from Skye on the mainland; songs of love, like *Òran do Mhàiri* ["A song for Mary"]; or songs about local events, like *Òran Bliadhna Ùire* ["A New Year's song"]. While satire was certainly a release for potentially damaging tensions in a small island community, the bard was also looked to as a chronicler of memorable local events and characters—a sort of vernacular version of the court bard. Between them, Nicolson and another local Skye bard, the late Aonghas Fleidsear seven years his senior, made songs about the iron horse (in this case a bicycle), political questions, affairs of the heart, amusing local issues, and even myxomatosis![17] To Nicolson, song is an expression of emotion and of the need to communicate. It is used, as Brendán Ó Madagáin says of Gaelic song (both Irish and Scottish), "on occasions when feelings were such that ordinary speech was inadequate" (1985:143). Ó Madagáin goes on to state that this function has "largely been lost to characteristic Western society" (*ibid*.). Nicolson, however, retains it as part of his daily life.

An Sgiobair [the Skipper], as Nicolson was nicknamed when he first went to school in 1908, composes entirely orally.[18] Although he can read and write English and has taught himself to read and write Gaelic, he remembers the many songs he has made over the last seventy years without the aid of written texts. He discusses this skill with typical modesty and understatement:

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[16] This incident was recounted by Peter Stewart and relayed to me in a letter by Margaret Bennett, 12.11.89.

[17] Myxomatosis is a disease that was introduced to Scotland following World War II to control rabbit populations. It has decimated large numbers of animals, but also leaves many crippled and weak.

[18] He says this particular epithet was chosen because he "wore a sailor suit and sued to be around boats and such like," but also, perhaps, because of his slightly authoritarian manner. The tradition of nicknaming is strong in Gaelic society, and may arise from the fairly rigid "rules" for the naming of children after immediate ancestors and the relatively localized concentrations of surnames. See Dorian 1981 for a good discussion of Scottish Gaelic *farainm* [nickname] traditions.

IM: Well yes, now and again something would come, but they were forgotten; [they were] only for the time being just.
MB: Did you write them down?
IM: No, no, probably it would come at me as I was walking up the road. . . . Ach I just was picturing something in my mind, making a picture of it and putting words to rhythm. No, I never write anything.
TM: And did you change them after you finished them?
IM: No. No, but they were only just for the time being and [then] that was all forgotten, you know (SA88.64.B5).

He composes when walking along or engaged in some other rhythmic activity, "just as long as [the words] are coming in rhythm," he says, as if producing complex rhymes was effortless. Effortless or not, *céilidh* participants were discriminating and if the local bards' poetry was not up to standard, "the locals would soon criticize you on that" (SA89.28.B9).

It is often the case that traditional songmakers set new words to old tunes. For proof of this, one only has to look at almost any collection of traditional-style Gaelic songs, such as *Clarsach an Doire* (MacLeòid 1975), *Songs and Poems in the Gaelic Language* by Rob Donn MacKay (1829), or *The MacLean Songster: Clarsach na Coille: A Collection of Gaelic Poetry* (Sinclair 1881), where nearly every song is preceded by the words "air fonn..." [to the tune...] followed by the name of a melody (either Highland and Lowland). Bloomfield and Dunn mention emigrant Gaels in the new world making new songs "cast in the old pattern and set to old tunes" (1989:68). This seems to have been the case for English-language songmakers as well, as a glance at almost any broadside from the British tradition will reveal: "to the tune of. . ." or "sung to the air. . . ." Even in English-speaking North America, the habit continues. For example, Edward D. Ives, in writing about Prince Edward Island satirist Larry Gorman, says, "a traditional song-maker creates new words to old tunes" (1964:159).

Nicolson does not *consciously* select a tune to which he will fit words, although the basic contours of his melodies are drawn from a pool of songs that were popular on the *céilidh* scene between the wars. In his composition process the melody arises as a derivative of the rhythms of the words; it is a re-creation that uses the contours of a particular traditional tune as a point of departure. "In the aesthetic world of the traditional singer," writes Anne Dhu Shapiro referring to Nicolson, "this is indeed composition; refashioning the Gaelic tune to fit the new text makes a

completely new entity" (1985:411).[19]

Even the use of melody itself is not a deliberate decision, but a necessity that arises out of the need to communicate. It is an essential vehicle for the words that formalizes the communication, giving certain signals to the listener that s/he is receiving a distilled message. To communicate most effectively, then, a message or poem *must* be sung. Referring to a modern Gaelic writer, Nicolson maintains, "You can't sing a single one of his songs, how can he be a poet!"[20] To be a true poet, in his eyes, you must make songs.

Nicolson makes a series of subconscious decisions while making a song, so that the music "goes with the rhythm, with the syllables" (SA89.28. B7). As MacGill-eain, a modern European poet thoroughly conversant in Gaelic song tradition, has so neatly described it, "the song-poet is walking the tightrope of meter without being conscious of it, [making] ineffable melodies rise like exhalations from the rhythms and resonances of the words" (1985:112, 106). The songmaker, according to the Gaelic scholar John MacInnes, begins the melody wherever s/he likes, but is then faced with a limited number of choices for the next note. The next note brings fewer options, the next even fewer, and, by the time the first line is complete, s/he is practically locked into the rest of the song according to the ground rules of traditional melody.[21] There is almost the sense of a "tone language" type connection between certain syllables and pitch. In other words, the choice of vocalic sound and rhyme scheme almost demands certain pitches and progressions of melody. It is important to emphasize that to the Sgiobair the music is *not* a separate concern. It is not the primary concern, but it is an essential one.

One of the more remarkable aspects of An Sgiobair's songmaking is his spontaneous composition. By this I do not mean to imply *instantaneous* composition, because his songs are never off the cuff, but a fully formed song, usually topical, could be made on short notice and sung before an event was over. One such occasion was an evening when the local lads

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[19] She goes on to say that, "In fact, the use of old tunes with new texts may well be one of the principal means by which, over time, whole families of related tunes are spawned" (411). This seems a very likely solution to the problem of the origins of the huge "tune families" found in the British Isles and related traditions.

[20] Interview 12.9.88.

[21] Expressed in a discussion following a seminar I gave at the School of Scottish Studies, 15.5.90.

were gathered for a good *crack* [chat] at *taigh an t-Saighdeir* [the Soldier's house]. At eleven p.m., however, the host decided to utilize the assembled manpower to slaughter a ram.

> Well, as they were doing the thing, you know, I start[ed] thinking. [They] were discussing it. I started composing you know, what was going on, you know, putting [it] in rhythm and when I went, you know, before I left, I had the song made! [*claps hands*] "Oh well," he said to me, "it's a good recipe." [*laughs*] That was the only thing he said about it! The other boys were vexed. (SA89.25.B11)

In his choice of rhyme schemes, rhythms, form, and melody, Nicolson has much in common with eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Gaelic poets; he is an oral songmaker of great skill with a thorough understanding of his poetic tradition, embracing a wide range including nature, elegaic, panegyric, and narrative poetry, as well as satirical verse. His memory is such that he can sing both the first song he ever made (at age fourteen) and a seven-verse traditional song only heard three or four times. This ability serves him well, as he will often answer a question in general daily conversation by reciting verbatim a verse (or five for that matter) by one of his favorite song-poets of the last three centuries, especially the great Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir and the Skye songmakers Uilleam Ros and Màiri Mhór nan Oran.

"Oh yes, they love their Duncan Bàn," remarked Gaelic scholar John Shaw. It is Mac an t-Saoir against whom Gaelic oral songmakers and tradition-bearers measure other bards, a regard that may be due to the fact that MacIntyre's long complex poems were composed entirely orally, since he was not able to read or write.[22] That a non-literate bard should win greater respect from tradition-bearers than any other, including the highly literate Mac Mhaighsteir Alasdair, is an indication of the premium that Gaelic song-tradition places on a good memory. By quoting these bards as authorities in response to a question, Nicolson shows not only the quality of his memory, but the importance of song in his life; the answer is in song.

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[22] His finished songs were written down by the Rev. Donald MacNicol from the poet's dictation, further "revised and rewritten by the poet's first editor, Dr. John Stuart, minister of Luss" and printed during his lifetime (MacLeod 1952:xxvii). Their good state of preservation in oral tradition may be due to their appearance in popular printed collections such as *Sàr-obair nam Bàrd Gaelach* [*The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry*], assembled by Alexander MacKenzie (1840). On the other hand, it is also possible that editors like MacKenzie made their selections based on which songs were popular at the time. It is now almost impossible to say which is the case.

III: The Response to an English-speaking Nation

In recent decades, as Skye has shifted from a crofting economy (largely dependent on subsistence farming and barter) to a cash economy (increasingly dependent on tourism) and the number of English-speaking incomers has increased to flood proportions, Nicolson has seen his village, his island, his language, and his culture ebb away in a flood of anglicization. Tour buses, Members of Parliament, Lords, and Clan Chiefs all weave their way down Nicolson's two-mile side-road (often getting stuck in his driveway) to visit him in his role of "bard to the Clan Nicolson." Though there is no professional position, An Sgiobair has been given that title by the Clan Chief. What are the implications of these changes in the fabric of society, to a man for whom song is such an essential form of everyday expression?

Recently, in response to English-speaking incomer's queries about the content of his Gaelic songs, and about the history of the Gaels and the Isle of Skye, Nicolson has started to respond in English, but in the medium in which he feels most comfortable—that of song. A song is, as we have seen, a language of daily communication in which he is fluent, rather than the set piece it is for most singers and listeners. It has been a primary mode of social interaction in his culture for centuries.

He has made two types of English song to date: the praise poem (a type often found in Gaelic tradition) and the narrative song (a much rarer type).[23] By answering in song he is, in fact, closer to his beloved bards in motivation and skill than he will ever admit. Not only is he performing much the same social function, but he is doing it in a foreign language and culture. Here he explains why he made *The Highland Clearances* in English:

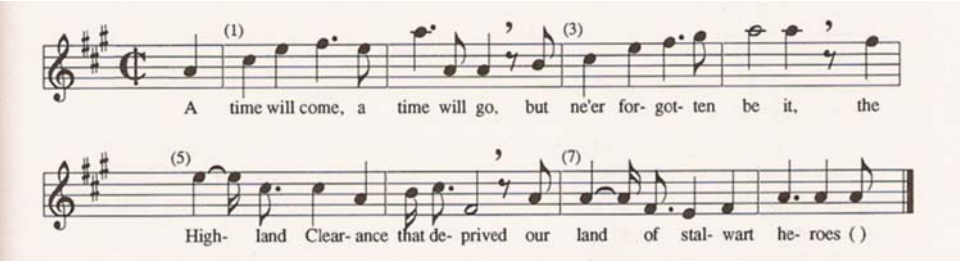
> There were so many coming about here and asking questions,... and did I know anything about the Highland Clearances? They came from Canada, New Zealand too, and Australia, and they were asking..."how did this happen?" and things like that. . . . Well, I was putting... together... what I heard of [i.e., from] old people. Well, I heard quite a lot from my father, you know. In age now he would be over a hundred and fifteen anyhow [i.e., born before 1870]. Well, he remembered quite a lot of the Clearances then, because his own aunties went over to Canada, [they] had to go. So that's how I thought of putting that together. (SA86.85.A1)

[23] See Ross 1957 for a discussion of the classification of Gaelic song.

In this song, unlike many of the makers of the spineless "Clearance Poetry" of the nineteenth century, Nicolson lays the blame directly at the feet of the "devilish type of landlords" and the politicians responsible for the crofter's plight. He tells the Skye-men's story in heroic terms, as befits the descendants of a warrior race:

The Highland Clearances

[Nicolson's tempo throughout is very flexible, but in this verse the quarter-note value is 125-130 per minute. His key of C# Major is rendered here as A Major.]



2. They were men of great renown
for liberty and freedom
and all they gained as a reward
was exile without reason

3. The land was wrenched out of their grasp
their homes were burnt to cinders.
No more evil could befall our race,
by devilish type of landlords.

4. Prime Minister Gladstone was to blame
with his evil clique around him
sent one thousand marines to Skye,
the people there to hound them.

5. The Skyemen gallantly did stand,
as always did to foe-men
and didn't yield an inch to them,
but routed all before them.

6. The final end to the dispute
was by Commission Royal—
that the land be graced by gallant men
that won such fame and glory.

7. Though wounds may heal, the scars
remain
and so it's with the Highlands;
the men that made our nation great,
gain nothing but remembrance.

The emphasis of this paper is not musicological, but I will discuss some aspects of *The Highland Clearances* in those terms.

The first verse alone is sufficient to indicate the tune, as Nicolson varies it only slightly throughout the song. Unfortunately, the printed page does not convey his fluid, rocking style, nor does this notation adequately describe the pitches of the human voice. This transcription is necessarily an

approximation of what he sings.[24]

I have tried to show the rhythm as An Sgiobair sings it and have omitted a time signature because he varies the pulse depending on the phrase; for example, in the third line he speeds up considerably for "the Highland Clearance. . . ." Commas above the staff indicate where the singer takes a breath and pauses (for approximately half a beat). The schwa indicates where he characteristically achieves release of the final "-s" sound with an extra syllable on the same pitch. An Sgiobair treats the rhythmic structure as a flexible skeleton around which he works, maintaining the overall pattern, and increasing the tempo considerably—from 125-130 beats per minute in the first verse, to 175 beats per minute in the last. His pitch remains steady throughout and his voice is confident, despite a slight quaver. Though he is eighty-eight years old, one can still hear elements of the strong, high, and moving tenor of the earliest recordings in the archives of the School of Scottish Studies (ca. 1950).

Melodically, lines one, two, and four of *The Highland Clearances* are closely related to the chorus of *Té Bhàn an Achaidh Luachrach* [The Fair One of the Rushy Meadow], a song well known in Skye in the first half of this century (there are eight versions in the School archives from different Skye singers). Where the tune varies it is in response to the dictates of Gaelic phrasing and assonance, having been modified through Nicolson's rhythmic composition system.[25]

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[24] I would like to thank Richard H. Gagné, Lorraine Lee-Hammond, and Dr. Peter Cooke for assistance and advice on the transcription.

[25] For a discussion of the melody of another one of An Sgiobair's few songs in English, see Shapiro 1985. One of Dr. Shapiro's propositions is the existence of several melodic shapes indigenous to the Isle of Skye, which she labels "Skye contours" and which she suggests Skye songmakers unconsciously use as a basis for their compositions. It is difficult to say whether the fact that An Sgiobair fits the postulated contour proves its existence or simply proves that he often uses Skye songs (especially those by Màiri Mhór nan Oran) as models for his own. A tendency Dr. Shapiro discusses is the importance he places on the provenance of a song or tune. This is typical of Gaelic society's emphasis on history and origin, whether it be genealogical, temporal, authorial, or geographical. In addition, Màiri Mhór and her songs have had a direct influence on Nicolson's life; not only did his father know her (he gave her frequent lifts from Portree to Uig), but An Sgiobair refers to her conversations with his parents, quotes her songs, and discusses her life more frequently than he does that of practically any other songmaker. Nicolson's admiration alone would surely go some way toward explaining many similarities between their works. While a "Skye contour" may well exist, to prove its existence we need much broader

Though this song is in English, we must look to Gaelic intonation, phrasing, and poetics to more fully appreciate its complex character. Nicolson has, with his distinctive Highland dialect, unconsciously developed his own form of Highland English poetry, which incorporates linguistic features common in Gaelic verse, especially assonance between long vowels in opposing lines. Since vowel length is not considered a feature of most English speech, its use in an English poem is rare. It is prevalent in Gaelic poetry and is the despair of most translators. Nicolson sympathizes with this:

> But what is very strange, you can't get... the interpretation of the Gaelic in English. You can't do it!... You have the Gaelic there, but you can't make it rhyme the same, no. But you can give exactly near the meaning of it, what he means, but you'll not get the word for word. . . . No, it doesn't sound [the same] (SA89.28.B14).

The major Gaelic features of this English poetry are (i) fixed internal assonantal rhyme that appears in the penultimate syllable of lines two and four, usually with a floating parallel in line three (noted below in **bold**), and (ii) moveable internal assonantal rhyme appearing, usually twice, in lines one and three (noted below by underlining).

1. A time will come, a time will go,
   but ne'er forgotten b**e** it,
   the Highland Cl**ea**rance that deprived
   our land of stalwart h**e**roes.

2. They were men of great renown
   for liberty and fr**ee**dom
   and all they gained as a r**e**ward
   was exile without r**ea**son.

4. Prime Minister Gladstone was to blame
   with his evil clique ar**ou**nd him,
   send one th**ou**sand marines to Skye,
   the people there to h**ou**nd them.

5. The Skyemen gallantly did stand
   as always did to f**oe**-men
   and didn't yield an inch to them
   but routed all bef**o**re them.

In this song, as in the few others An Sgiobair has made in Highland English, these rhymes often occur between English vowels that have been uncharacteristically lengthened, e.g., the "be" and the "he-" of verse one. This is partly due to the tune that Nicolson has re-created, which calls for a musical emphasis at the end of each couplet. By using syllables that sound artificially elongated to the Anglophone, however, Nicolson creates "vowel music" similar to that found throughout Gaelic song between that

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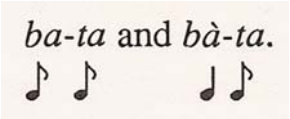
evidence than a few of Skye's many songmakers, two of whom practically knew each other.

language's genuine long vowels. The composer expects certain types of emphasis, rhyme, and rhythm, based on his lifetime of tradition and the melody he is re-creating, and he molds his English to fit these expectations.

A verbal description cannot adequately convey An Sgiobair's use of Gaelic's rich vowel music and rhyme schemes. Even the transcription above, though it shows some temporal lengthening of "be" and "he-," does not really express the sonority created by just the slightest augmentation of timing and a change in vowel quality, a feature several of the later verses display this feature more prominently. Many English speakers, listening to Gaelic poetry for the first time, are surprised at the concept of long vowels and how long they can actually turn out to be. Further adding to the unfamiliarity is the idea that, in Gaelic, vowel length can create minimal pairs—pairs of otherwise identical words whose meanings are differentiated by the value of the vowel alone, e.g., the words *bata* [stick] and *bàta* [boat]. They are phonetically identical in every way but vowel length, and we can assign the following timings to them:



Another linguistic feature for which Gaelic is known is the *shortness* of some of its unmarked syllables, especially in *puirt-a-beul* [the mouth music or mouth tunes] and in the vocables of the tweed-working songs. This characteristic can be seen in the third measure of many verses of this song in the unusual shortening of some of the English syllables—"that de-" in verse one, "a re-" in verse two, "inch to" in verse five, and so forth.

By virtue of being in Highland English, which reduces the intimidation factor of listening to a foreign tongue, this poem allows the Anglophone to appreciate some of the aural subtleties of Gaelic song-poetry usually missed by non-speakers of the language. Most translations of Gaelic songs by less traditional poets are heavily content-oriented and though they may, in spirit, be accurate reflections of the poet's original concept, they rarely convey a poem's aural feel to the listener. Nicolson's expertise in his native idiom colors his poetry in the language of another culture, even when the language, culture, and idiom are as unrelated as those of English and Gaelic.

By grafting aspects of his fast-disappearing song tradition onto the cultural juggernaut of English, An Sgiobair challenges an attitude that Gaels have been persistently taught to accept—that their language must adapt to English, whether to survive or simply to die gracefully. This idea has been

both figuratively and literally beaten into the psyche of the Gael over the last few centuries. Its influence can be seen in much of this century's Gaelic poetry in the assumption that the culture's poetic tradition must somehow "catch up" to developments in modern European poetry, even to the extent of changing its very nature.

It is clear that Nicolson has no such inferiority complex. Perhaps a bard performing his traditional community function is less susceptible to majority propaganda, because he is expected to be (and is) a little outside the usual. Through his songs he is a source of change and comment, but also a barometer of them. Nicolson, like many other bards, also benefits from a wide knowledge of the depth and wealth of his tradition; he knows that feelings of cultural inferiority are without foundation. On the contrary, he feels that Gaelic is more accurate in speech than English and a more ancient language.

While this sentiment may come across as chauvinistic, it is not without foundation. Most people well acquainted with the Gaelic language feel that it is unmatched for expression of emotion and precision of thought. For example, a central frustration for any would-be translator is the lack of English equivalents for most Gaelic adjectives. Often a single verse of poetry will have numerous adjectives expressing subtle shades of the same meaning. To translate such a verse into English accurately often requires a paragraph of English prose. Even resorting to the dictionary (usually Dwelly's) for each one yields the same English word over and over again.

An Sgiobair's pride in the antiquity of Gaelic is not unfounded either. It is one of the oldest European languages and possesses the oldest written tradition as well. (Nicolson often quotes Donnchadh Bàn Mac an t-Saoir, who said that Gaelic was the language spoken in the Garden of Eden, and he goes on to ask, "can you prove it wasn't?") Nicolson's pride in his native language is a natural thing. For me, as an outsider surrounded by the aftermath of the Clearances, it is refreshing to see a Gael, long taught by the system to devalue his own language and culture, openly displaying such pride in his birthright.

Nicolson's conviction that there is no better descriptive language in the world is well borne out by the nature poetry of Donnchadh Bàn, Mac Mhaighsteir Alasdair, and others.

> There wasn't a vegetable [i.e., plant] in the field or a fish in the sea [that they didn't have a name for]. They say Donnchadh Bàn, he was giving a description of the *bradan*, or the *breac*. . . .

Here Nicolson recites several adjective-packed[26] verses of Donnchadh Bàn's long song *Coire Cheathaich* [*Misty Corrie*]. "Well,... tell that to anyone here, and they wouldn't understand a word of it," he says, proceeding to translate the verse. Occasionally there is an obscure word that he does not know, but even so he has an appreciation of difficult language that is typical of Gaelic culture and its sense of tradition.

This crofter, though he finished his schooling at the age of fourteen and was never formally taught to read his own language, can nevertheless recite and translate eighteenth-century Gaelic. "Well, look at the description," he continues, "and that man couldn't read or write his *Gàidhlig* [Gaelic]! But where'd he get it?"

> Well, when I go into the language of Donnchadh Bàn and Uilleam Ros here; . . . there's no comparison! I know what a fool I am, compared to them.

Nicolson both appreciates the efficacy of an oral education and wonders that it worked so well.

> TM: Do you try to use difficult words [when composing]?
> IM: Ah well no, but I want to go as deep in [the words] as I can. But if I did so local[ly],... they wouldn't understand it, because they['re] working on the surface of Gàidhlig here, compared to what these bards were. Well,... you can't say they were fools! Oh ho [*laughs*], I wish I was one of them!"

Nicolson obviously considers himself to have only a shadow of the virtuosity of the older bards, and yet aspects of his art are comparable and the obstacles just as daunting. Where the eighteenth-century poets' world was being physically dismantled by the Hanoverian Army, An Sgiobair's is undermined daily by an insidious cultural imperialism. On the surface, it may seem that he has made a concession to English incomers by using their language, but it is, for all that, a rather subversive contribution, since the aural feel of the poetry, and the use of the medium of song itself, comes from Gaelic tradition. Nicolson, by his confidence in that tradition, shows us that it has a great deal yet to offer to European culture.

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[26] This is a technical term used in discussing Gaelic poetry and describes a technique by which bards have long shown off their virtuosity. Using numerous adjectives with subtle shades of meaning in a single verse, they create an extremely precise word- picture. By the time one reaches the end of such a verse, the image is so exact that little is left to the imagination.

Poetic concessions in favor of English are unnecessary to Nicolson. We have already seen that he does not consider most modern Gaelic verse-makers poets at all, for the concepts of poem and song are still largely identical to him. He applies this same unity of song and poem to English, redefining and enriching the interface between the languages. In the process of creating this middle ground of Highland English song-poetry, he gives new life to aspects of both poetic traditions, including his own endangered one. Perhaps even more important, culturally speaking, is the idea of the "song as response"—Nicolson draws on a centuries-old tradition of songmaking as an essential mode of social expression. He makes his oral world more accessible to us and, in the process, restores some of Gaelic Scotland's lost confidence and pride in the face of rapid cultural change.

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Oral Poetry and the World of *Beowulf*

Paul Sorrell

I

Anyone who sets out to discuss *Beowulf* as an oral poem immediately places him- or herself on some rather shaky ground; for this is a hotly contested area where opinions are very definitely, even emotionally stated. I remember as a graduate student in the mid-1970s being told by a very distinguished scholar that *Beowulf* could not be an oral poem, since it was simply too *good*.[1] But since that time oral studies have burgeoned in all directions, and those of us who try to keep up with the field are gaining an increasing admiration for the sophistication and complexity achieved by poets working in preliterate cultures, or societies where the impact of literacy is marginal or restricted.[2] Indeed, the appearance in recent years of two major books that give full weight to the oral affiliations of *Beowulf*, not to mention a host of lesser productions, signals the emergence of a new consensus in Old English studies.[3]

Since the pioneering work of Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord on Homer and Serbo-Croatian epic, the methodology employed has been a comparative one—contemporary oral traditions have been studied not only

[1] On the well-entrenched view that oral composition (and formularity in particular) is incompatible with artistic excellence, see Bauman 1986:7, Olsen 1988:144-49, and Foley 1988:164 (Index, *s.v.* "Aesthetics"). For effective rebuttals of such objections, see Bauman 1986:8 and Finnegan 1988:71-72.

[2] See, e.g., the studies collected and cited in Foley 1985 and 1990 and the survey of the Parry-Lord tradition in Foley 1988.

[3] See Niles 1983: espec. pp. 31-65, 121-37, and Irving 1989. See also the survey articles in Foley 1981a:51-91 and Olsen 1986 and 1988. I have not seen the important study by Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe (1990).

for their own sake, but in order to illuminate the older literature of which *Beowulf* is an exemplar. Of course such an approach, spanning large tracts of time and very diverse cultures, is full of pitfalls and requires sensitive handling. But some of the results so far achieved have been very encouraging.[4] I hope in a small way to contribute to them in the course of this paper.

I should say at the outset that I do not consider *Beowulf* to be an oral poem *pur et simple*. The contention of some earlier scholars that formulaic = oral has been thoroughly exposed for the simplistic equation that it is.[5] The Old English poetic tradition was a very conservative one, and poets retained their traditional diction and prosody even when translating directly from Latin texts.

But conservatism, or conservation—the instinct to conserve what is good from the past—faces both ways and allows us to see more than it perhaps knowingly reveals. For embedded in a poem like *Beowulf* are elements, vestiges of thought and poetic expression, that go back a very long way indeed. My contention is that *Beowulf* emerges from a general background of oral poetry that puts the reader in touch with traditional modes of thinking and of perceiving the world.[6] I am aware that in making such a statement I am entering an arena of current scholarly controversy, and that some such term as "distinctive" may well be a more judicious choice of modifier than "traditional." The social anthropologist Jack Goody—to cite one of the protagonists in the debate—accepts the fundamental distinction between "traditional" (what used to be called "primitive") cultures and those of "advanced" western society and holds that the crucial factor that in every case distinguishes the two is the advent of literacy, the introduction of a writing culture that not only provides new instruments of technology, and a new way of conceptualizing language, but may even

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[4] For a survey of comparative studies, see Olsen 1988:157-63. The work of Jeff Opland is particularly significant; in a number of studies, culminating in his book *Anglo-Saxon Epic Poetry: A Study of the Traditions* (1980a), he has sought to illuminate Old English poetry by setting it against the living oral traditions of the Zulu- and Xhosa-speaking peoples of southern Africa. On the need to assess each tradition of oral poetry in terms of its own particular characteristics, see Foley 1981b and Niles 1983:41, n. 21.

[5] For a discussion of the debate, see Olsen 1988:150-57 and also Finnegan 1988: 158 and the references cited there.

[6] On the persistence of oral habits of mind in Anglo-Saxon England and in other cultures to which literacy has been introduced (not always recently), see Parks 1987:49-51.

unlock new cognitive potential in the human brain.[7] The conclusions of Goody, Ong, and others are being challenged by a number of scholars who reject what they consider to be an unwarranted reification of the phenomenon of literacy and its determining role in social and intellectual change, and instead lay emphasis on the extent to which literacy is itself modified and assimilated to existing systems of belief and social organization in newly literate societies.[8] Ruth Finnegan—a strong proponent of this viewpoint—rejects any kind of technological determinism and all theories that propose a "technologically based great divide between the oral and the literate" (1988:14), and denies that there is any basic difference in modes of thought between oral and literate cultures (1988:59-85, 154-55). The ramifications of the question continue to be explored; in a recent volume of essays on literacy in the early Middle Ages, the editor notes that the various studies emphasize and seek to explore "the possibilities of a complex interrelationship between writing and other elements of social and cultural practice" (McKitterick 1990b:319).[9] Such an approach, rejecting deterministic explanations and fully alive to the complexities of a situation where "tradition" is never a fixed or static entity, but subject to constant change and innovation,[10] not least as a result of the interplay of oral and written modes, has much to commend it.

Some scholars have begun to venture into these deep waters in the field of Old English literature. In a fine series of recent articles Peter Clemoes has examined the style of Old English poetry, and in particular the syntactic patterning of opposed half-lines within larger units of meaning (1979, 1981, and 1986). Although he does not relate his findings directly to the impact of literacy in Anglo-Saxon England, Clemoes draws a firm distinction between the stylistic mode of earlier poetry (in which he includes *Beowulf*) that he sees as embodying traditional, even archaic modes of thought; and later poetry that manipulates the half-line in order to produce conspicuous rhetorical effects derived from Latin models and

[7] Goody 1977; similar views are advanced in Ong 1982.

[8] See espec. Finnegan 1988 and Street 1984. For a discussion of the literature and a detailed case-study, see Kulick and Stroud 1990.

[9] For a balanced appraisal of the debate and Goody's contribution to it, see McKitterick 1990a:4-5.

[10] See Finnegan 1988:57-58. But see Lord 1986:468, 494 for a reaffirmation of the place of "tradition" in "oral traditional literature."

designed to appeal to the eye as well as to the ear. To give one of his examples, from *Christ III* (ll. 1495-96):

> Ic wæs on worulde wædla þæt ðu wurde welig in heofonum,
> earm ic wæs on eðle þinum þæt þu wurde eadig on minum.
>
> [I was poor in the world that you might become rich in heaven,
> I was wretched in your country that you might become fortunate in mine.]

What was once a vehicle for fundamental cultural data has here become "a framework for abstract thought" (1986:12). Clemoes' analysis is very close to that expressed in 1969 by Northrop Frye in his essay "Mythos and Logos," in which he opposes oral cultures, in which the central figure is the rhapsode (defined by *Chambers 20th Century Dictionary* as "a reciter of Homeric or other epics") to "writing cultures," dominated by the figure of the rhetor. In oral cultures the characteristic medium is poetry, and verbal expression is organized rhythmically. In writing cultures the emphasis shifts to prose and verbal expression is organized syntactically. Here poetry is seen as an adjunct to the "rational" disciplines (law, theology, ethics, and so on), giving imaginative force to ideas that are much better expressed in prose, with its superior capacity for "conceptual expression" and abstract language. (As Frye notes, many of these ideas are familiar from Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*.)[11]

But let us return to the poem. To say that *Beowulf* has a background in oral verse, in a way that *Christ III* or the poems of Cynewulf (say) do not, is I believe an eminently defensible position. I do not intend to enter the debate about the dating of *Beowulf*—the poem has been dated to every century from the seventh to the eleventh—but it must be clear by now that I favor an early date, at least for the formation of the poem's primary elements. (I hope to clarify what I mean by this in the course of the essay.) Our starting-point should be the recognition of the ultimate origin of the extant Old English poetry—a common Germanic tradition of oral verse-making brought over from the Continent by the early settlers in England.[12]

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[11] J. M. Foley (1988:95-96) draws attention to several papers by Eric Havelock in which he details a process by which the Presocratics transformed the *mythos*-centered world of Homeric thought into a world of analytic abstractions based on *logos*.

[12] On the evidence for such a common Germanic tradition, see Niles 1983:45 and the references cited in Foley 1981a:61, n. 113. See also Lönnroth 1981 on the stable relation between a particular formula and a given theme in early Germanic verse as an

Recent investigations of the formulaic structure of Old English verse have shown that any given poetic formula is the product of a "formulaic system" involving the interaction of metrical, syntactic, and lexical elements; a vast interlocking set of such systems or matrices is available to the practiced poet, with the result that any given formula is a particular realization of a given matrix, an instantiation of the poet's wordhord. A poetic possessed of such flexible generative capacities must have offered considerable advantages to a poet who must compose and perform simultaneously (as in the case of oral epic delivery); for John D. Niles such a view of the formula and its underlying system accords with our knowledge of the poetic "language" or "grammar" acquired by specifically oral poets.[13] We cannot know the extent to which the *Beowulf*-poet was conscious of this technical heritage or exactly in what manner and with what degree of attentiveness to oral/aural concerns he manipulated his formulas. But his familiarity with extempore verse-making (as attested by tradition, if not practiced in fact in his day) is illustrated in the well-known passage where Hrothgar's thane composes a song (on horseback) in celebration of Beowulf's victory over Grendel: "word oþer fand / soðe gebunden. . . ." ("He found successive words correctly linked together. . .").[14]

There are many potential areas where the oral inheritance of *Beowulf* might fruitfully be explored. We could look, for example, at the "I heard" ("ic gefrægn," "ic gehyrde") formula (or, uniquely in the opening lines of the poem, "we ... gefrunon," "we have heard..."), where the poet acknowledges both his indebtedness to the past, the fact that his own telling is only the latest of many, and (in the poem's opening lines) the link between poet and audience. In *Beowulf* the important question is: does this formula persist as a mere relic, as in such text-based poems as *Andreas* and

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indication of oral formulation.

[13] See Niles 1981:espec. 399-401. Niles's article modifies and extends the analysis proposed in Fry 1967 and 1968, and also draws on Nagler 1967. For surveys of recent research on the Old English poetic formula, see Foley 1981a:60-79 and Olsen 1986:565-77 and 1988:167-68.

[14] On this passage (ll. 867b-97), see Irving 1989:84-86 and Niles 1983:37-39, and espec. the references cited on p. 37, n. 14. All quotations from *Beowulf* are from Klaeber 1950.

Elene, or does it still speak of a living oral community?[15]

Then there is a whole raft of elements in the poem that can be attributed to one salient feature of oral poetry: the tendency towards an immediate local effect, often at the expense (it seems to us) of narrative unity. Under this heading come the well known "digressions"; internal inconsistencies and contradictions (e.g., the conflicting statements about Beowulf's childhood); and what Niles (1983:174) calls "truncated motifs," such as the reference to the curse on the hoard, an intrusive element that seems entirely surplus to the requirements of the plot. Also in this category are the numerous expressions of gnomic wisdom and authorial commentary, what Stanley B. Greenfield (1976) has termed the poet's "authenticating voice."[16] The sententious expression of wisdom is a hallmark of oral cultures,[17] and for the most part such expressions in *Beowulf* are well integrated into their respective narrative contexts. The few cases in which the poet's comments sit awkwardly in context show the importance he gives to such overt expressions of collective wisdom. Examples include the pair of homiletic gnomes on the theme of *sawle weard* at 183b-88 ("Wa bið þæm ðe sceal.... Wel bið þæm þe mot....") and what we may consider a merely opportunistic aside, divorced from the narrative context, at 2764b-66:

> Sinc eaðe mæg,
> gold on grund(e) gumcynnes gehwone
> oferhigian, hyde se ðe wylle!
>
> [Treasure, gold in the ground, can easily get the better of any person, hide it who will.]

Questions of narrative competence aside, such expressions are bound to seem intrusive to us to a greater or lesser degree because of our tendency to distinguish between narrative and sententious modes (prizing the former to the detriment of the latter) in a way that would have been entirely alien to

[15] See now Parks 1987, which discusses this motif in the context of oral tradition.

[16] For a cogent discussion of "local effect," see Cherniss 1970.

[17] See Frye 1969:7 and Bloomfield and Dunn 1989:106-49, espec. 135-37.

an early medieval audience.[18]

If we feel irritated by a lengthy digression on Swedish history, or baffled by a particularly inscrutable gnome, then this is not because the poet is a poor craftsman. The oral poet works in a temporal, not a spatial dimension; he is not able to conceive his work in one great sweeping overview, as a poet might who was working in a fully literate tradition. Such a conception of structure can accommodate any number of excrescences and divagations along the way; or rather the poet is restricted in the character, weighting, and distribution of his material only by the necessity to include those narrative elements essential to the story as he has received it (e.g., the tale of Beowulf must presumably not omit such key elements as the hero's journey to Denmark, the fight with Grendel, and so on). In approaching such a work, it is up to us to adjust our perspective.

II

I shall touch again on some of these points, but I want now to consider the first of my major topics: the question of the poem's structure and what (if anything) it can tell us about the oral background of *Beowulf*. Everyone knows that the poem is organized around the three main fights Beowulf has with the monsters: first against Grendel; then Grendel's mother; and finally (many years later, in his old age) against a ravaging night-flying dragon. The marked hiatus between the Grendel-fights on the one hand, and the dragon-fight on the other, has long been remarked. The poem conspicuously lacks the smooth linear structure we might expect in, for example, a Victorian novel.

J. R. R. Tolkien, in his famous remarks on the poem as presenting "a contrasted description of two moments in a great life, rising and setting; an elaboration of the ancient and intensely moving contrast between youth and age, first achievement and final death" (1936:271), sought a literary rationale for the poem's structure, accommodating it to the categories of the literary criticism of his day (and his perceptions are still perfectly valid from one point of view). Other critics, beginning with Etmüller and Müllenhoff in the nineteenth century, took a less exalted view and posited composite authorship of various kinds. In 1905 L. L. Schücking published

[18] For further examples of "opportunist" comments that seem imperfectly welded to their respective narrative contexts, see ll. 20-25; 1002b-8a; 1057b-62; and 2291-93a. There is a discussion of these passages in Sorrell 1979:175-76 and 195-200; Shippey 1977 is also useful.

his influential study in which the section of the poem recounting Beowulf's report to Hygelac (which he called "Beowulf's Homecoming") was given special significance—he saw it, in the words of Janet Bately, "as a piece specially composed by a poet-editor to join two originally separate poems, *Beowulf* as we have it being a work of composite authorship" (1985:409).

F. P. Magoun (1963) saw the poem as made up of three distinct folk-poems (with "Beowulf's Homecoming" as the second, lines 2009b-2176) brought together by an anthologizing scribe, "while Sisam described the poem as we have it as a serial in three installments which 'seems to have been built up to meet the demand for another story about the hero who destroyed Grendel,' with the 'Return' appearing to be 'an extension of the two older stories of Grendel and Grendel's Mother made by the poet who gave *Beowulf* substantially the form in which it has survived'" (Bately 1985:410).[19]

In what follows I hope to extend and modify these views by reference to my understanding of the processes of oral composition and performance. I should say at the outset that I do not see the need to retain any theory of composite authorship—such a view is foreign to oral poetry in any case. As Tolkien noted, the poem spans the whole career of the hero, "from first achievement to final death," albeit with some *lacunae* in the middle. This is an unusual pattern in a poem originating in a purely oral context. In his 1963 article (mentioned above) Magoun noted that oral songs are typically non-cyclic in character—in their original state they are told as discrete episodes, not as complete cycles to be performed in a single connected sequence; his examples include the Finnish epic, the *Kalevala*; and *Fáfnismál* and *Reginsmál* in the Poetic *Edda* (1963:128-32). Magoun's findings are corroborated by the evidence of *Beowulf*, where references to narrative poems, scattered and allusive as they are, suggest verse that deals with restricted subject matter: in particular the songs (*gyddum*) that publicized Grendel's long-standing feud with Hrothgar (ll. 146b-54a); and the Finn episode (ll. 1063-1159a), a *leoð* that is sung through in a single

[19] Bately's excellent summary of scholarly opinion on the authorship and structure of *Beowulf* should be supplemented by Haarder 1975:89-110 and Chase 1981:3-4. Chase notes in particular the postulation of B. A. K. ten Brink (1888) "of a final redactor in the course of the eighth century who did his best to reduce the loose collection of stories about Beowulf to a single epic" (Chase 1981:4).

sitting (see ll. 1159b-60a).[20] More problematic is the Sigemund material at ll. 867b ff.; we are told that Hrothgar's thane relates many events of Sigemund's career (ll. 874b-79a),[21] but the *Beowulf*-poet focuses in his summary on a single incident—the slaying of a dragon and the recovery of a treasure-hoard (ll. 884b-97). The Sigemund material is ostensibly an extension of a song about Beowulf himself; the singer is said to recite "sið Beowulfes" ("Beowulf's exploit") in narrative form (ll. 871b-74a). Further short narratives may be implied in the song of the Creation reported at ll. 89b-98 (part of a Christian cycle?) and in the reference in Beowulf's report to Hygelac to the recitation of *gyd* ("elegy"?) and *spell* ("narrative"? "lay"?) at Hrothgar's court, in the context of a single day's feast (ll. 2105-16a).

An example from Oceania sheds further light on Magoun's conclusions and—significantly for the thesis proposed here—provides an excellent illustration of the effect of an emergent writing culture on traditional narrative materials. In the context of a discussion of the use of writing and the influence of nineteenth-century European collectors in the recording of texts in the Pacific, Ruth Finnegan quotes Katherine Luomala on the literary characteristics of the version of the famous Maui story included by Sir George Grey in his *Polynesian Mythology* (1855):

> "Its unity, coherence, and depth of feeling point to the work of a literary genius reinterpreting the mythology of his people. . . . Its author-raconteur saw the possibility of using an error in the father's rites over Maui as a point of departure in building up suspense to a climax. The narrator has integrated various stages of Maui's career from birth to death into a composition which resembles a novelette in its closely woven plot. The Arawa cycle is a masterpiece of primitive literature."

Finnegan's comment that the version printed by Grey "is in the event just one among many possible ones, one composed by a particular individual (probably in writing), using his own insights and his own way of presenting the traditional episodes" (1988:116) seems entirely apposite.

Recent work on the African tradition has produced similar findings; here it is unusual to find an epic poem (or prose narrative) spanning the entire career of the hero—again the constituent episodes are told separately,

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[20] Alistair Campbell (1971:286-87) holds that at least two lays of Finn are incorporated in the poet's summary; but the subject is restricted to the fight at Finn's hall and its aftermath, as the poet indicates in his introductory comments at ll. 1063-70.

[21] Creed (1966) cites this passage as evidence against Magoun's theory of the composite structure of the poem.

on separate occasions, and there is no conception of a single connected work, complete in itself.[22] Finnegan gives the example of the Lianja "epic" from the Congo, which covers the birth and tribulations of the hero, his travels and leadership of his people, and finally his death. This runs to about 120 pages of text and translation in the printed version; "But how far was this conceived of and narrated as a unity prior to its recording (and perhaps elaboration) in written form? It is not at all certain that the traditional pattern was not in fact a very loosely related bundle of separate episodes, told on separate occasions and not necessarily thought of as one single work of art (though recent and sophisticated narrators say that ideally it should be told at one sitting)" (1970:109).

Often the separate episodes of such a cycle are brought together for the first time when dictated to a fieldworker such as an anthropologist or folklorist. The indigenous poets often remark with surprise on the novelty of the procedure—never before have they been called upon to relate the whole cycle in one continuous sitting or series of performances.[23] This, incidentally, illustrates one important way in which oral versions can be modified by being written down—when dictated to a fieldworker they are inevitably "decontextualized," stripped of their original setting and audience. Their new setting is a thoroughly unnatural one for performance. (Of course, since the 1960s the use of battery-operated tape recorders has largely obviated this problem—the observer can be much less intrusive.[24] But the point is an interesting one in an Anglo-Saxon context; we think for example of Cædmon's recitals to the learned monks of Whitby.)[25]

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[22] Finnegan 1970:108-10 (cited in Goody 1987:100-01). On the question of an African "epic," see Foley 1988:89.

[23] See Opland 1980a:82-83, 1980b:43-43, and Finnegan 1988:170-71 on the Mwindo cycle recorded from a Banyanga singer from the Congo Republic.

[24] But see Tedlock 1982 on the role of the observer (with tape-recorder) in the production of oral narrative. Tedlock discusses three case-studies (drawn from his work with the Zuñi people of New Mexico and the Quiché Maya of Guatemala) where "the dialogical ground on which storytelling takes place opens wide enough to reveal the mytho-grapher [i.e. observer]" (19; the case studies are discussed in chs. 13-16, pp. 285-338).

[25] In the Alfredian translation of Bede's *Historia Ecclesiastica*, IV.24, Cædmon's oral poems (based on biblical material taught him orally) are said to have been written down and learned (or studied) by his teachers. The free interplay between oral and written at this

The work done by Goody, Finnegan, and others suggests that epic (in the sense of the welding of discrete episodes—what older scholars called "lays"—into connected cycles seen as complete poems in themselves) is not a characteristic poetic form of purely oral cultures; rather it arises in societies in the early stages of literacy, where there has already been some contact with a writing culture (e.g., Goody 1987:96-109). I believe that this has important implications for our understanding of *Beowulf*. I see the poem as lying at the interface between oral and written, a situation where poetry is moving from one medium to another, from "event" to "text."[26] This is not the place in which to expatiate on the date and genesis of the poem; I will simply say that I am convinced by the argument, propounded by Patrick Wormald (1978) and others, that sees the aristocratic monastic society of the late seventh and eighth centuries as an ideal locus for the circulation of the poem.[27] And not the circulation alone, but also, I would argue, its literary preservation. For here we have a situation in which the writing culture of an elite minority is coming into contact with the oral storytelling traditions of the mass of the people: precisely the conditions in

period is further suggested by Asser's observation that Alfred as an illiterate boy learned to recite vernacular verse, but from a book that was read to him by his tutor (Asser, *Life of Alfred*, ch. 23). Asser also tells us that, as king, Alfred did not cease "to recite Saxon books, and especially to learn by heart Saxon poems, and command others to do so [et Saxonicos libros recitare, et maxime carmina Saxonica memoriter discere, aliis imperare]" (ch. 76; quoted in Opland 1980a:154). At an earlier period, Charlemagne's biographer Einhard tells us that the emperor, in addition to transcribing traditional laws, "also had the old rude songs that celebrate the deeds and wars of the ancient kings written out for transmission to posterity" (*Vita Caroli*, ch. 29; quoted in Opland 1980a:155).

[26] The terms are those used by Clemoes (1986:11).

[27] On the possible development of full-scale epic poetry from the short lay in Old English, see Campbell 1962. Campbell considers that the growth of Anglo-Saxon monasticism provided suitable conditions for the development of epic. Latin verse narrative provided a model, but "was not heavily drawn upon" (13). But for a rebuttal of Campbell's views, see Niles 1983:55, n. 47. Opland (1980b:41-42), discussing Cædmon's *oeuvre*, considers that biblical narrative poetry may have developed out of a native eulogistic tradition in an early monastic context.

which epic poetry can take shape.[28]

My view of the formation of *Beowulf* is briefly this: episodes from the *Beowulf*-cycle circulated orally from an early period; sometime in the late seventh or eighth century a monastic redactor (with aristocratic interests) shaped the poem into more or less its present form, recording the various episodes perhaps from a single singer (without benefit of tape recorder!) and doing a little editorial work to smooth over the cracks (perhaps most evident in the "Homecoming" section). From there an unbroken manuscript tradition carried the poem forward up to the unique surviving manuscript.[29]

Support for a reconstruction of this kind is provided by the sophisticated arguments of David Dumville in a paper that draws attention to the complex textual history of some Celtic texts that may well bear comparison with *Beowulf*. He cites, for example, a number of Irish analogues for what he calls "interpolations and omissions" and especially the bipartite structure of *Beowulf* (1981:145). Dumville studies the interaction of oral and written forms in two early Celtic texts, the Welsh heroic poem *Gododdin* and the Old Irish prose epic *Táin Bó Cúailnge*. The latter source exhibits a complex textual history; in particular, the heterogeneous linguistic forms of Recension I (eleventh century) are attributable in his view to the intervention of redactors and copyists: "There can be no doubt that here we see the hand of the redactor, whether adding new material, or supplying connecting passages, or offering in his

[28] See Opland 1980b:43 and the suggestive remarks by Goody on the influence of Islamic literacy in West Africa (1987:125-38). For the evidence of land-charters as an indication of the monastic monopoly of literacy, and the corresponding low levels of lay literacy in the early Anglo-Saxon period (i.e., before the ninth century), see Kelly 1990: espec. 42-46. Wormald 1977 inclines to the "old view" of a clerical monopoly of literacy throughout the period, but for an alternative view of the situation in the later period, see Keynes 1990.

[29] At the time of writing this paper I had not seen E. B. Irving's similar, if more general proposal (1989:7): "I boldly state here my own best guess, aware that the evidence for it is the merest gossamer. I think *Beowulf* is (or was originally) an eighth-century Mercian court poem, very close to oral tradition and carefully preserved thereafter, perhaps because of its excellence, by later transcribers." It is possible that the "Scyld Scefing" prologue to *Beowulf* is an accretion of the Viking age, as K. Sisam argued (1953:339). Recently A. C. Murray (1981:101-11) has extended Sisam's argument and argues for a late-ninth- or tenth-century date for the poem as a whole on the basis of the Danish genealogical material in the prologue; a similar argument is advanced by Audrey L. Meaney (1989:9-21 and 37-40).

own words what his sources may have given him in variant forms" (153-54). The linguistic variation and heterogeneity of *Beowulf* may well be an indication of such "an elaborate recensional history" (154), a history that may have included a period of oral transmission (151-52). Dumville concludes: "On a variety of theoretical grounds, supported by comparative evidence, *Beowulf* could be a work of very diverse origins and dates" (152).

III

All this is of course highly speculative and full of imponderables. So I want to move rapidly on to my second major emphasis: the treatment of *time* in *Beowulf*, and particularly the way in which the poet moves freely from the presentation of events in the "present" time of his narrative to other events—narrative, legendary, historical—located in different time-frames, in the "past" and "future" of the poem, as it were.[30] And just as in the first part of this paper I moved outside the traditional boundaries of literary studies to incorporate the insights of contemporary anthropologists, here I wish to draw on the work on Maori oral poetry of a distinguished classical scholar and Professor Emeritus of Otago University, Professor Agathe Thornton.

In her book *Maori Oral Literature as Seen by a Classicist* she discusses at some length the three accounts of Maori cosmogony and history written down by the Arawa chief Te Rangikaheke in 1849 (A. Thornton 1987:43-86, espec. 43-75). (It is important to note that Te Rangikaheke became literate only in the 1840s and that this material had never before been reduced to writing.) The three accounts fall into two groups. The first (MS. 81) was written for Governor Grey, with whom Te Rangikaheke collaborated extensively in recording Maori traditions. This is known as "the Grey Book." The second and third versions (MS. 43 and MS. 44) were written for the people of Hawaiki (the original Polynesian homeland)—they were Te Rangikaheke's kinsfolk and would be expert judges of the material. These two accounts are known as "the Hawaii Book" ("Hawaii 1" and "Hawaii 2").

Thornton draws attention to the marked stylistic differences between the two books, differences reflecting an oral versus a written mode of presentation. Thus in "Hawaii 1" there is much direct speech and dialogue,

[30] For a discussion of the various time-frames operating in the poem, see Niles 1983:179-96.

and extensive use of verbal repetition and parallelism to build insistent speech rhythms—features Thornton sees as characteristic of oral art. In the Grey Book, on the other hand, most of these features are dropped or diluted, so that a "smoother" narrative style is adopted.

From the point of view of the treatment of *time*, the differences between the two versions are even more marked. Te Rangikaheke tells the story of how Tamatekapua, the Arawa chief, decided to emigrate from Hawaiki to Aotearoa (New Zealand). In the Hawaii Book, events are related not in chronological order, but in an order dictated by relationships of significance between events—for example, the linking of an event in the present (or near-present) with some mythological event that gives it special meaning. This creates a characteristic "zigzag" pattern, as Thornton's diagrams clearly show.[31] Such a narrative method reflects the Maori orientation to the *past* as the source of meaning for the present. In contrast, the Grey Book presents the narrative material much more briefly and in chronological order. Te Rangikaheke was clearly very astute in judging the kind of narrative presentation that would suit literate *pakeha* (European) tastes. In broader perspective, the production of alternative versions for two kinds of audience points to one area in which we can legitimately isolate important differences between oral and written narrative modes.[32]

The "zigzag" pattern of the oral method creates what Thornton calls "appositional expansions,"[33] an incremental style that is very close to the opportunistic local effects that motivate the so-called "digressions" in *Beowulf*. Like Te Rangikaheke in telling his stories to an Hawaiian audience, the *Beowulf*-poet often sets aside strict chronology. He is not interested in presenting a smoothly flowing linear narrative, but rather in evoking his thematic concerns in the most effective way.[34]

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[31] See the charts in A. Thornton 1987:97-100, espec. chart 3, "Odyssey 21" (99).

[32] Dennis Tedlock cites a 1904 study of the Zuñi Indians of New Mexico in which the author, Matilda Coxe Stevenson, reorders her collected materials in a chronological sequence "which reflects her own Western preoccupation with history more than actual Zuñi practice" (1983:36). See further Bauman 1986:8 on the "manipulation of narrative time."

[33] A. Thornton 1987:67; the concept was developed in Thornton and Thornton 1962 and further discussed in A. Thornton 1984:104-10.

[34] For an explanation of the chronological discontinuities in *Beowulf* as a literary device, see Leyerle 1967. From an examination of Alcuin's twin lives of St. Willibrord, Leyerle concludes that "natural" (that is, chronological) order was used in narratives

A good example of these techniques is seen in the poet's narrative of the celebrations in Heorot that follow Beowulf's defeat of Grendel. After the poet's narration of the lay of Finn and Hnæf, and Queen Wealhtheow's anxious speech to Hrothgar, the victorious Beowulf is presented with golden treasures:

Him wæs ful boren, ond freondlaþu
wordum bewægned, ond wunden gold
estum geeawed, earm[h]reade twa,
hrægl ond hringas, healsbeaga mæst
þara þe ic on foldan gefrægen hæbbe.
Nænigne ic under swegle selran hyrde
hordmaðum hæleþa, syþðan Hama ætwæg
to þære byrhtan byrig Brosinga mene,
sigle ond sincfæt,— searoniðas fleah
Eormenrices, geceas ecne ræd.—
þone hring hæfde Higelac Geata,
nefa Swertingas nyhstan siðe,
siðþan he under segne sinc ealgode,
wælreaf werede; hyne wyrd fornam,
syþðan he for wlenco wean ahsode,
fæhðe to Frysum. He þa frætwe wæg,
eorclanstanas ofer yða ful,
rice þeoden; he under rande gecranc.
Gehwearf þa in Francna fæþm feorh cyninges,
breostgewædu, ond se beah somod;
wyrsan wigfrecan wæl reafedon
æfter guðsceare, Geata leode
hreawic heoldon.— Heal swege onfeng.
Wealhðeo maþelode, ... (ll. 1192-1215a)

[The cup was borne to him and welcome offered in friendly words to him, and twisted gold courteously bestowed on him, two arm-ornaments, a mail-shirt and rings, the largest of necklaces of those that I have heard spoken of on earth. I have heard of no better hoard-treasure under the heavens since Hama carried away to his bright city the necklace of the Brosings, chain and rich setting: he fled the treacherous hatred of Eormenric, got eternal favor. This ring Hygelac of the Geats, grandson of Swerting, had on his last venture, when beneath his battle-banner he defended his treasure, protected the spoils of war: fate took him when for pride he sought trouble, feud with the Frisians. Over the cup of the waves the mighty prince wore that treasure, precious stone. He fell beneath his shield; the body of the king came into the grasp of the Franks, his breast-armor and the neck-ring together. Lesser warriors plundered the fallen after the war-harvest: people

intended for public reading, and that since *Beowulf* demonstrates "complex artificial [that is, non-chronological] order" (7), it was intended for the study [and was presumably a product of it]. But this analysis sits uncomfortably with his conclusion that stylistic interlace in narrative is to be linked to the principle of association, the atemporal manner in which the mind characteristically orders experience (14). For an alternative (and, to me, more satisfactory) explanation of the "interlace" phenomenon, see Cherniss 1970.

> of the Geats held the place of corpses. The hall was filled with noise. Wealtheow spoke....] (Donaldson 1986:49)

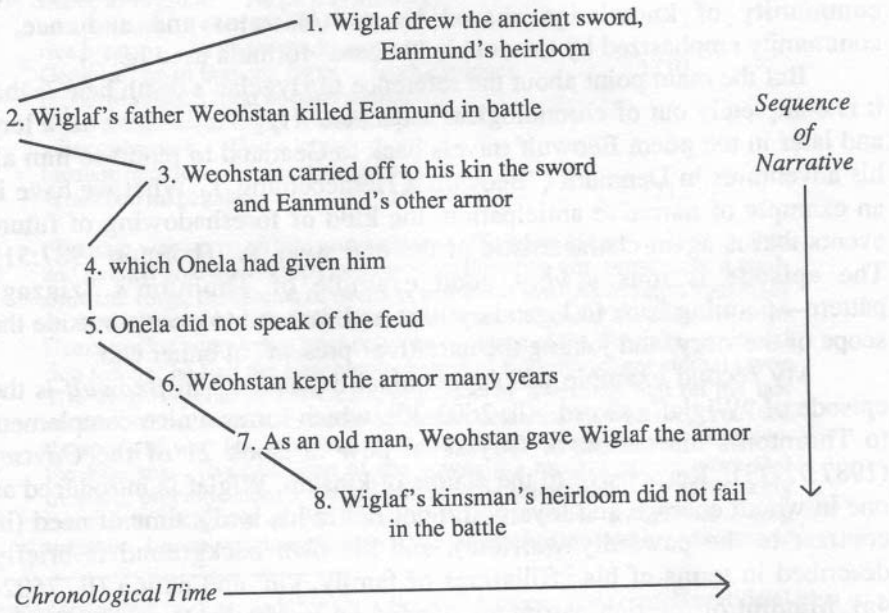
We note firstly how this episode is sandwiched within the "main" narrative, to which the poet directly returns: "The hall was filled with noise. Wealhtheow spoke...." Mention of the great necklace (*healsbeaga mæst*, 1195b) leads first to a highly allusive reference to another great necklace, the legendary *Brosinga mene*. (This is exactly what Thornton means by "appositional expansion.") Then in a short narrative digression, the poet returns to Beowulf's necklace and tells how Hygelac was wearing it on his fatal expedition against the Franks and Frisians. (This episode is also highly allusive and for some raises the question of *consistency* in the narrative; Beowulf is later said to have presented the necklace to Hygd, Hygelac's queen [ll. 2172-76]. The solution, of course, as with the reference to Hama and the *Brosinga mene*, lies in the more comprehensive knowledge of the Anglo-Saxon audience—they have the complete jigsaw whereas we possess only a few scattered pieces. Such allusiveness is an index of the poem's background in oral tradition, an indication of the community of knowledge shared by poet/narrator and audience, a community emphasized by the double "I heard" formula used here.)

But the main point about the reference to Hygelac's death here is that it is completely out of chronological sequence. Hygelac is Beowulf's lord and later in the poem Beowulf travels back to Geatland to report to him all his adventures in Denmark ("Beowulf's Homecoming"). What we have is an example of narrative anticipation, the kind of foreshadowing of future events that is again characteristic of the oral style (A. Thornton 1987:51). The episode is thus a very good example of Thornton's "zigzag" pattern—pointing back to legendary time and forward to events outside the scope of the story, and joining the narrative "present" at either end.

My second example of "appositional expansion" in *Beowulf* is the episode of "Wiglaf's sword" (ll. 2602-30), which forms a nice complement to Thornton's discussion of Odysseus' bow in Book 21 of the *Odyssey* (1987:72-73). Responsive to the claims of kinship, Wiglaf is introduced as one in whom courage and loyalty did not fail in his lord's time of need (in contrast to the cowardly warriors), and his own background is briefly described in terms of his affiliations of family, kin, and nation (ll. 2602-4a). Mindful of the rich patrimony handed on to him by Beowulf, Wiglaf prepares to do battle against his lord's enemy and draws the ancient sword that had once belonged to the Swede Eanmund, the ill-fated son of Ohthere who had sought refuge from his uncle Onela at the court of the Geatish king Heardred. We are told that Wiglaf's father Weohstan killed Eanmund and

carried off his armor (including the *ealdsweord etonisc*, l. 2616, "gigantic [or "giant-made"?] old sword"), which the victorious Onela later presented to him as the spoils of war. The poet tells us that the question of a blood-feud did not arise, "although he [Weohstan] had killed his [Onela's] brother's son" (ll. 2618b-19). Weohstan retained the armor of Eanmund for many years until, nearing the end of his life, he handed it over to his son. We reenter the narrative "present" at l. 2625b, where we are told that "this was the first time that the young warrior should engage in the onset of battle alongside his dear lord. His heart did not melt within him, nor did his kinsman's heirloom fail in battle" (ll. 2625b-29a). The structure of "appositional expansion" is evident here, and Figure 1 below represents the relationship between chronological time and narrative movement discernible in this passage.[35]

Figure 1



[35] The diagram is based on Thornton's representation of the episode of Odysseus' bow in the *Odyssey* 21 (A. Thornton 1987:99).

Although the term "apposition" is more familiar to students of Old English poetry as a stylistic or syntactic concept, it seems appropriate, as Thornton does, to extend it by analogy to larger narrative units.[36] Of course the features that I have isolated in these passages have been noted before; but possibly not in the same context.[37] My main point is that the technique of "appositional expansion" is simply part of the poet's inherited oral style—a way of making poetry that he found lying ready to hand. Under the circumstances, it would indeed be remarkable if he did *not* compose in this way.

IV

I want now finally to examine some of the ways in which this distinctive way of organizing the narrative reflects the vital concerns of a traditional culture whose thought-world is everywhere discernible in the poem. And here I want to invoke the close affiliation described by Goody between traditional modes of thought and oral modes of expression. I also want to draw on the insights of contemporary narrative theory, especially the work of performance-oriented scholars who seek a unified understanding of narrative based on a consideration of storytelling in its fullest possible context. Thus Richard Bauman proposes a triple focus on the narrative text; the events recounted in the narrative (narrated events); and the real-life situations in which the narratives are told (narrative events). Bauman draws here on the work of Roman Jakobson, Walter Benjamin, and especially Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of "the work in the totality of all its events" (1986:112). Popular narratives are thus seen as vitally connected to their social and cultural contexts, and the relationship of literary "form" to social "function" becomes a crucial issue, now open to systematic investigation by careful fieldwork and analysis (*ibid*.:2 and 8).

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[36] Cf. the analysis adopted by Fred C. Robinson (1985), where the poem is conceived as built up of sets of apposed units at every level from the compound word to the major structural divisions of the narrative. Indeed, the *Beowulf*-poet's treatment of chronology should be seen in the context of his wider use of an "appositive" or "paratactic" style; see further Irving 1989:16-17, 22-23, 27 *et passim*, and Gillian R. Overing's "metonymic" reading of the poem (1990:espec. 1-32).

[37] Leyerle discusses the four scattered references to Hygelac's raid as an example of structural interlace (1967:7-8). On Wiglaf's sword, see the semiotic analysis in Overing 1990:52, 54.

This emphasis on the narrative work as a cultural totality seems to me potentially immensely fruitful, yet difficult to apply to a poem such as *Beowulf*, which is almost totally bereft of the kind of context that a folklorist or ethnologist would find useful. Yet by careful examination of the poet's recurrent thematic concerns and his stated attitudes and responses to the events, phenomena, and entities (animate and inanimate) that constitute the poem, we may form some impression of a distinctive outlook and mind-set, a view of "the world represented in the text," to use Bakhtin's phrase.[38]

The subject matter of the two narrative episodes from *Beowulf* treated above is by no means arbitrary; both deal with notable treasures—a legendary neck-ring and a famous weapon. One important symbolic meaning of such treasure has been widely noted: artifacts in general and weapons in particular are very much seen as a measure of the status and prestige of their owners, and often receive extended treatment as a consequence.[39] The further significance of such crafted objects is treated by Fred C. Robinson in his recent book *Beowulf and the Appositive Style*; Robinson draws attention to the way in which in the poem the natural world is seen as implacably hostile; a hostility that is confronted by human beings not only by means of their cultural institutions and social organization but also—perhaps preeminently—by the creation and use of human artifacts (1985:70-75).

If the monsters are the symbols of a hostile Nature, then artifacts, things created by human skill, are potent symbols of the human world. Emphasis is given to their character as hand-made objects: the mailshirt Beowulf wears for his descent into the mere is *hondum gebroden* (l. 1443; cf. ll. 321b-22a), and his helmet is richly ornamented, "as the weapon- smith had made it in far-off days" (ll. 1451b-52a; cf. ll. 405b-6, 453-55a and 1681a). The incandescent golden banner that lights Wiglaf's way into the hoard is characterized as "hondwundra mæst, / gelocen leoðocræftum" (ll. 2767-71a, "the greatest of hand-wonders, woven by the skill of limbs"). Further reference to the process of manufacture of metal artifacts (here iron swords) is conveyed in phrases such as *fela laf* (l. 1032), *hamere geþruen* (l.

[38] Bakhtin 1981:255, quoted in Bauman 1986:112.

[39] On treasure (and weapons in particular) as a symbol of human worth, see Niles 1983:213-23, espec. the references cited at 213, n. 2.

1285) and *homera lafe* (l. 2829).[40] Robinson's emphasis on the value of artifacts as a means of asserting human dominance over the menacing forms and forces of wild nature is particularly apposite in the case of metal weapons, for they are the means *par excellence* of extending control over a hostile environment. Their value in this process is both symbolic and real. Weapons—and swords in particular—are continually invoked in the poem as efficacious instruments; for example, Beowulf's "boasts" before his descent into the mere (ll. 1490b-91), and his attack on the dragon: "Nu sceall billes ecg, / hond ond heard sweord ymb hord wigan" (ll. 2508b-9, "Now shall the blade's edge, hand and hard sword fight for the hoard"; cf. ll. 2562b-64a, 2498b-2502 and 2659b-60). The poem is full of references to swords and to the performance of their function as offensive weapons, "when the bound blade, forged with the hammer, a sword shining with blood, powerful in its edges, shears through the opposing boar-crests above the helmets" (ll. 1285-87). We think of the hero's own achievements with the sword, of his dispatching of a group of sea-monsters during his swimming-contest with Breca (ll. 548b-75a), or indeed of his killing of Grendel's mother; or of the crippling sword-blow delivered to Wulf son of Wonred by the aged Swedish king Ongentheow, a blow repaid with deadly force by Wulf's brother Eofor (ll. 2961-81). But the poet is keenly aware of the destructive effects of swordplay on the fragile fabric of his society: Unferth "was not honorable to his kinsmen at the swordplay" (ll. 1167b-68a); and the tragic events at Finnsburh culminate in the slaying of Finn who is "in his turn" a victim of "sweordbealo slíðen æt his selfes ham" (l. 1147, "cruel sword-evil in his own home"). The sword thus becomes both the means and symbol of such devastating internecine strife, a warfare that originates from the primal fratricide, when Cain became "to ecgbanan angan breþer" (l. 1262, "the sword-slayer of his own brother").

This inchoate consciousness of the sword as an ambiguous instrument is reinforced by deeper uncertainties regarding the efficacy of weapons. As an extension of the warrior's own powers, weapons are a crucial aid; Hrunting, for example, is described as "not the least of aids to strength" ("Næs þæt þonne mætost mægenfultuma," l. 1455) that Unferth lent to Beowulf for his adventure beneath the mere, and the weapon is later

[40] These phrases are discussed in Brady 1979:108-10. Brady's discussion of swords in *Beowulf* (90-110) illustrates the poet's very detailed knowledge of swords and sword-lore. For further discussion of this subject, see Hatto 1957 and Davidson 1962.

characterized as a *guðwine* ("warfriend," l. 1810).[41] The hero's parting resolution sets out the stark alternatives as he perceives them: "I will get glory for myself with Hrunting, or death will take me" (ll. 1490b-91). Either the technology of iron will prevail, or the hero will face annihilation. Success—indeed survival—in this environment is balanced on the edge of a sword. There is a sense that against such opponents as the Grendels and the dragon the technology of weaponry is being pushed to its limits. Beowulf brings to Heorot his full complement of armor and weapons, including his "hyrsted sweord, / irena cyst" (ll. 672b-73a, "ornamented sword, best of irons"), but vows not to use it against Grendel, who is ignorant of such *goda* ("good instruments"?, l. 681), "although I certainly could" (l. 680b). But it later becomes clear that the monster is immune to weapons; the warriors who come to Beowulf's aid during Grendel's night attack are unaware that "not any of the choicest of irons on earth, no war-sword, would touch the evil ravager: for with a spell he had made victory-weapons [*sigewæpnum*] useless, every sword-edge" (ll. 801b-5a). And those who marvel at Grendel's hand and arm displayed on the gables of Heorot after the batttle "said that no hard thing would reach him, no iron good from old times [*iren ærgod*] would harm the bloody battle-hand of the fearsome one" (ll. 987b-90). Such an observation emphasizes the limited efficacy of even the most valued and proven artifacts. Likewise the sword Nægling fails the hero in his struggle with the dragon, and the poet comments that "it was not ordained for him that iron edges might help him in the combat" (ll. 2682b-84a; cf. 2904b-6a). An explanation follows: "The hand was too strong, so I heard, that overstrained with its stroke every sword, when he bore to battle a wound-hardened weapon; he was in no way the better for it" (ll. 2684b-87). If Grendel, by his monstrous nature, is impervious to iron weapons, then, by one of the strange parallels linking monster and hero, Beowulf himself becomes the cause of the failure of weapons. The instruments of warfare are rendered useless in his hands when confronted with an enemy of superlative strength, for the paradoxical reason that his own physical might simply overtaxes them. There could be no clearer illustration of the limits of these "good instruments" in which so much trust is placed. It is even possible to find in the poem two formulaic systems that link swords to the concept of failure: cf. l. 2577b ("þæt sio ecg gewac"), l. 2584b ("guðbill geswac"), l. 1524b ("ac seo ecg geswac"; cf. also l. 1460b); and cf. l. 2681a

[41] For a discussion of these terms as applied to Hrunting, see Brady 1979:103-5. The intimate bond between a hero and his weapons and the personification of a weapon (especially a sword) as a warrior's retainer in the heroic literary tradition is discussed in Cherniss 1973.

("geswac æt sæcce") and l. 2629a ("gewac æt wige"; cf. *The Battle of Maldon* 10a, "wacian æt þam wige").

But the situation is more complex than this discussion might suggest, and the poet does not fail to reflect the positive evaluation of weapons and other artifacts sanctioned by his culture and embedded in the traditional vocabulary of heroic verse—as in the designations *sigewæpnum* and *iren ærgod* cited above. Thus the value of weapons is reaffirmed even in the moments of their most signal failure. Nægling's failure to perform the function for which it was created is rendered especially poignant by its characterization as *iren ærgod,* the same epithet used with reference to Grendel's immunity to weapons at 989a:

> guðbill geswac
> nacod æt niðe, swa hyt no sceolde,
> iren ærgod. (ll. 2584b-86a)
>
> [The war-sword failed, naked in battle, as it ought not to have, iron good from old times.]

The element of personification is strongly felt here—Nægling is seen as in a sense a traitor or deserter (perhaps on a par with Beowulf's cowardly warriors), terms which, with an animate referent, would be included in the meaning of the verb *geswican*. The poet's ambivalent attitude to the sword is perhaps best shown in his complex and nuanced treatment of Hrunting, the ancient and battle-tested weapon lent to Beowulf by Unferth for the hero's second great fight (see ll. 1455-64). Hrunting's failure to harm Grendel's mother is underscored by its proven efficacy in conventional combat: "it had endured many hand-battles, had often sheared through the helmet, a doomed man's battle-dress; this was the first time for the precious treasure that its glory had failed" (ll. 1525b-28). Even in the act of being discarded, the sword retains its character as an elaborately crafted artifact—an artifact that is explicitly set in opposition to the hero's unaided physical strength (ll. 1531-34a):

> wearp ða wundenmæl wrættum gebunden
> yrre oretta, þæt hit on eorðan læg,
> stið ond stylecg; strenge getruwode,
> mundgripe mægenes.
>
> [Then, angry warrior, he threw down the [sword with] twisted pattern, bound with ornaments, so that it lay on the ground, hard and steel-edged; he trusted in his strength, a hand-grip of might.]

Beowulf's verdict on Hrunting is similarly even-handed:

> Ne meahte ic æt hilde mid Hruntinge
> wiht gewyrcan, þeah þæt wæpen duge. (ll. 1659-60)
>
> [I could not achieve anything with Hrunting in the battle, although the weapon is an effective one.]

And on having the sword returned to Unferth, he did not disparage the weapon in any way, but "said that he considered the war-friend to be good, strong in battle [*wigcræftigne*]" (ll. 1810-11a). Hrunting is still here designated as *leoflic iren* ("precious iron," l. 1809).

Two further examples of the use of iron as a defense against elemental powers provide telling illustrations of the limits of this early technology. Eschewing military assistance in his attack on the dragon, Beowulf nevertheless orders the construction of "a wonderful war-shield all of iron" ("eallirenne. . . wigbord wrætlic," ll. 2338-39a). The poet's explanation reveals the astute technical assessment behind this decision: "he knew clearly that wood from the forest would not help him, linden against flame" (ll. 2339b-41a). Beowulf's action is a calculated and pragmatic one—such a device will give only a slender and temporary advantage over his powerful fiery opponent; and so it proves: "the shield gave good protection to the life and body of the famous prince for a shorter while than his purpose required" (ll. 2570b-72); and the poet goes on to say (in a passage whose meaning and syntax are far from clear[42]), that Beowulf had to suffer defeat in battle for the first time in his life (ll. 2573-75a). Caroline Brady's discussion of the noun *searo*, and the relation between its meanings as "arms/weapons" or "something crafted by skill" is relevant here (1979:118-21). Her characterization of Beowulf facing the dragon brings out well the relation between these two senses (119): "in 2568b Beowulf *on searwum* (his defensive arms of *hiorosyrce*, *heregrima* and the iron shield and his offensive weapons of Nægling and *wællseax*) awaited the dragon's attack. . . ." Human strength and courage are to be supplemented by the most advanced technology of the day—but with results that are far from decisive. For all his war-gear Beowulf remains a small vulnerable figure in face of the dragon's onslaught, and the outcome of the hero's final combat is scarcely a triumphant victory for humankind.

My second example of the use of ironworking technology in the poem is the threefold reference to the double iron bracing that reinforces the wooden structure of Hrothgar's hall. Narrating the events of the great fight in Heorot, the poet expresses wonder that the hall survived the

[42] See the discussion in Wrenn 1973:191.

encounter of the two formidable antagonists (ll. 771-73a); "but it was so firmly made fast with iron bands inside and out, forged with ingenious skill" (ll. 773b-75a). The poet adds that the Scylding *witan* had considered the building indestructible, "unless fire's embrace should swallow it in flame" (ll. 778-82a). In the poet's reference to the "irenbendum / searoþoncum besmiþod" (ll. 774b-75a), one might be forgiven for detecting a hint of pride in a substantial technical achievement, an architectural refinement of note.[43] But in a later passage, reporting on the restoration of Heorot after the battle, the poet emphasizes the damage sustained by the building, an emphasis that suggests—the syntax is uncertain—some doubt as to the efficacy of the iron bracing (ll. 997-1000a):

> Wæs þæt beorhte bold tobrocen swiðe
> eal inneweard irenbendum fæst,
> heorras tohlidene; hrof ana genæs
> ealles ansund. . . .
>
> [The bright building was greatly shattered, the whole interior firm with iron bands, the hinges sprung apart; the roof alone survived wholly undamaged. . . .]

The third reference to the ironwork, at ll. 721b-24a, similarly hints at the limitations of the technology: the hall-door, although *fyrbendum fæst*, yields "immediately" to Grendel's touch. Like the iron shield, the iron bracing on the hall is a real though tenuous technological achievement, giving some limited security in normal circumstances, against human enemies, but offering only marginal protection against powerful external forces that place the hard-won achievements of human civilization under constant threat.

We are all familiar with the critical analysis of *Beowulf* that opposes the world of the hall, a precarious oasis of light, warmth, and human community, against the dark, savage, and (above all) solitary world of the monsters, who threaten to destroy the fragile works of humankind at any

[43] Cf. Cramp 1957:72-73. On the rarity, value, and uses of iron in the early Middle Ages, see Le Goff 1988:205-7; the use of iron to brace wooden buildings is one of his examples (207). See also the glossary to Klaeber's edition, *s.v. iren* (as noun and adjective) and the compounds in which *iren* is the first or second element (cf. *isern-*). It is significant that swords are often designated metonymically as "irons" (e.g. ll. 802, 1809, 1697, 2050, and 2778).

moment.[44] If not actively inimical to people, natural phenomena are only barely under control. The fire that consumes Hnæf's funeral pyre is characterized as "gæsta gifrost" ("greediest of spirits," l. 1123a), and will rise in its full destructive potential in the burning of Heorot. Beowulf's own pyre is described in language that borders on the anthropomorphic, emphasizing the fire's inexorable destructive power: this element will devour (*fretan*) the warriors' chief (ll. 3114b-15) and concludes its work by breaking open the prince's *banhus* (ll. 3143-48a). In the final section of *Beowulf*, the poet gives great emphasis to the dragon's destructive fire in its feud against mankind: "bryneleoma stod / eldum on andan" (ll. 2313b-14a; "blaze of fire rose, to the horror of men"); and "fyres feng" is listed as one of the means of death in a rhetorical catalogue that forms part of Hroþgar's "sermon" (ll. 1762b-68). Fire must have been greatly feared—and respected—in Anglo-Saxon England.[45] An anxious sense of balance is preserved in Exeter Riddle 50 ("fire"), where the subject described is simultaneously inimical to humans and benevolent; this is the paradox on which the riddle turns.[46]

In summary, the technological skills possessed by the early Anglo-Saxons must have been barely adequate to the task of controlling—or even modifying—a perenially hostile environment.[47] The fragility of human tenure on the world is acknowledged repeatedly within the poem: joy is

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[44] See espec. Haarder 1975:205-42 and Halverson 1969. See also Hume 1974 and 1975, where the poem's controlling theme is characterized as "threats to social order," specifically "troublemaking, revenge, and war."

[45] See the extracts collected in Blair 1976:199-200.

[46] Aldhelm's riddle XCII ("Scintilla") emphasizes the immense destructive power of something (fire) that begins as a tiny spark:

> Nam saltus nemorum densos pariterque frutecta
> Piniferosque simul montes cum molibus altos
> Truxque rapaxque capaxque feroxque sub aethere spargo. (ll. 6-8; Pitman 1925:54-56)

[47] On the rudimentary character of medieval technology, see Le Goff 1988:195-221. For a recent assessment of early Anglo-Saxon technology (and its social and political implications) from an archaeological perspective, see Arnold 1988. Rosenthal (1979) claims that a marked improvement occurred in material culture and communications toward the end of the seventh century. The introduction of mortar to enable permanent building in stone from the 670s was restricted to church building and would not have affected the mass of the population (on the early stone churches see Blair 1976:122-26 and Cramp 1976).

inevitably succeeded by sorrow and *edwenden* ("sudden change," "reversal of fortune") is a constant theme. Here I believe we gain a powerful insight into the traditional mentality, the thought-world of an oral culture, as the poem reflects it. In the heroic world there seems no such thing as an unmixed blessing; in Book 24 of the *Iliad* two urns are said to stand on the door-sill of Zeus, one full of evils, another of blessings: the urn of sorrows is dispensed to some undilute, but those more fortunate receive a mingled brew, when "Zeus who delights in thunder. . . shifts, and moves now in evil, again in good fortune" (ll. 527-33; cf. *Beowulf* 1057b-62).

Further implications flow on from this. In cultures that are incapable of producing permanent monuments (e.g., stone buildings), the kind of "portable property" we have discussed achieves great significance. Great artistic skill is expended in creating and embellishing these objects and they are transmitted from one generation to the next as priceless heirlooms. They reflect the status, the *mana* of their owners. Thus by a kind of heroic metonymy a warrior's prowess and prestige are conveyed directly in terms of his weapons (see, e.g., ll. 330b-31a, 368-69a and 1900-03a); the man is made "worthy" by possessing worthy things. This attitude to material possessions is found everywhere in the poem. The emphasis on the dragon's hoard, for example, goes deeper than merely a Christian scepticism about the value of hoarded wealth. The poet's emphasis is on the failure of the treasure—a collection of artifacts—to fulfill the purpose for which it was created, and not merely in a functional sense; for in its inability to circulate and form the material of mutual exchange and gift-giving it denies the ethic of reciprocity on which Anglo-Saxon social relations were based.[48] The treasure in the hoard falls into a state of desuetude, its rusting cups and mail-shirts lamented eloquently by the "last survivor" who commends it to the earth from which it was first obtained (the decaying state of the hoard is noted again at ll. 2756-64a and 3047-50). The hoard passes into the control of hostile Nature (symbolized by the dragon), is liberated by Beowulf (through his proxy Wiglaf), and is finally buried, as grave-goods to accompany Beowulf, "where now it still remains, as useless to men as it was before" (ll. 3167b-68).[49]

[48] See Niles 1983:213-23.

[49] Precious armaments are also loaded onto the funeral pyres of Hnæf (ll. 1107-13) and Beowulf (ll. 3137-40). Niles (1983:216, 222) points out that grave-goods buried with nobles—a sign of the deceased's prestige—were irrecoverable. And Arnold notes that early Anglo-Saxon society "was prepared to consign large quantities of precious metal to

This concern with the social and symbolic meaning of artifacts is then intensely revealing of "the world represented in the text"; in particular, the poem's emphasis on weapons, power, status, and control is vital to our understanding of *Beowulf* as an expression of a traditional culture and its anxieties. The French cultural historian Jacques Le Goff (1988:244) considers that the material insecurity of the Middle Ages goes a long way toward explaining the intellectual insecurity of the age. He adds that, "according to the Church, there was only one remedy. . . to rely on the solidarity of the group, of the communities of which one formed a part, and to avoid breaching this solidarity by ambition or derogation. It was a fundamental insecurity which boiled down to a fear of the life to come" (325). We might add that in the heroic world of *Beowulf*, the need for social cohesion is determined not so much by the fear of hell (although the Grendels' associations with the underworld are not irrelevant to the terror they inspire) as by the sheer exigencies of survival in an unremittingly hostile environment. Grendel is most fearful and threatening, not so much in his strength or malice, but by virtue of the fact that he is (as we have seen) impervious to weapons—and thus, in terms of our analysis, beyond normal human means of control. But Beowulf is no ordinary man; he scorns to use weapons against Grendel and, in a magnificent display of arm-wrestling, succeeds in defeating his monstrous opponent by wrenching his arm off at the shoulder. He defeats Grendel's mother in a parallel virtuoso performance; although unscathed by Hrunting (ll. 1522b-28), she is finally felled by the *giganta geweorc*, a great sword made by the giants (the Grendels' collateral ancestors) stored in her lair. Although this is not a human artifact and "was larger than any other man might bear to battle-play," the hero is able to wield it successfully against his formidable antagonist.

Beowulf is successful because he is able to meet the monsters on their own terms. It has often been noted that Beowulf himself has more than a little of the monstrous about him. Both he and the monsters are characterized as *aglæca* ("awesome one," "formidable one"), and the poet shows no reluctance in relating his many superhuman feats—e.g.,

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the ground" in this way (1988:xiv). Such serious depletion of resources often led to warfare.

swimming back from a batttle with thirty mail-coats slung over one arm.[50] Locked in fierce combat, Beowulf and the dragon are characterized as *ða aglæcean* (l. 2592), a use of the expression that gives weight to Peter Clemoes's observation that "a poem such as *Beowulf* deals with mighty beings in collaboration or conflict" (1986:10). Here the figure of Beowulf is seen to be crucial, speaking directly to the anxieties and insecurities of early Anglo-Saxon civilization. In face of the monsters' incursions, mere human leaders can offer only limited protection. Although in his role as protector of his people Hrothgar is termed *eodor Scyldinga* (literally "fence of the Scyldings," ll. 428 and 663; cf. l. 1044), he is not equal to his opponent Grendel, who in his fearsome depredations is described by the aged Danish king as *ingenga min* ("my invader," l. 1776). The twelve-year reign of terror to which Grendel subjects Hrothgar and his people—the king despairs of ever seeing an end to it—is a powerful expression of the fear of untamed natural forces experienced by many small tribal societies. Grizzly Woman, the sinister and powerful ogress who figures in tales of the Clackamas Chinook indians of the Pacific Northwest coast of North America, is likewise a pitiless and insatiable destroyer of humankind. Of her role in the story of "Gitskux and his Older Brother" Dell Hymes comments (1981:379-80): "The plot is extended. . . by the repeated return of the Ogress thought safely dead. The drama, perhaps nightmare, of the monstrous figure who comes uninvited, kills the proper wife and dons her skin, comes back and comes back." Yet even the most formidable enemies of the human race have weaknesses that can be exploited by human courage and resourcefulness, and in this tale Grizzly Woman is first checked as a result of her own error and is finally caught offguard and killed for good (347-53). And in the powerful story entitled "Grizzly Woman Began to Kill People," the "forgetting" by the ogress of some crucial details leads to her downfall at the hands of the young girl Water Bug (373-74). In desperate settings such as these, reassurance is offered by the figure of the "hero"—in the case of Water Bug, an exemplar of the native tradition of "youngest smartest," and in the Old English poem one who by his superhuman strength and prowess will stave off the forces of primal nature and tip the balance decisively in favor of the precarious human community, or at least hold out the possibility of a more equal contest. At the risk of sounding portentious, I see Beowulf as a savior or wish-fulfillment figure,

[50] On the marvelous in *Beowulf*, see Niles 1983:3-30. For the suggestion that Beowulf's retreat from Frisia was undertaken in a rowboat, see Niles 1983:5, n. 3 and Robinson 1974:124-26. Robinson's skepticism has been convincingly challenged by Greenfield (1982).

the embodiment of the power and control over wild nature that the early Anglo-Saxon community was unable to achieve in and of itself.

The insights of structuralist anthropology seem to me to offer us a useful model here; for Beowulf can be seen as an instantiation of Claude Lévi-Strauss's characterization of the hero (or god, or folktale protagonist) as the mediator between the worlds of nature and culture.[51] (One crucial aspect of the hero's potency that we have identified in the present discussion could be expressed, in the terms of a Lévi-Straussian structural homology, as weapons : (human) enemies :: Beowulf : monsters, thus establishing, by a process of analogy, the hero himself as a special kind of weapon.[52]) The Cambridge anthropologist Edmund Leach applies the structuralist theory of liminality to the area of religious belief, seeing the binary opposition between this world and the "other world" as mediated by a zone of overlap redolent with "tabooed ambiguity." He observes (1964:39): "The gap is bridged by supernatural beings of a highly ambiguous kind—incarnate deities, virgin mothers, supernatural monsters which are half man / half beast. The marginal, ambiguous creatures are specifically credited with the power of mediating between gods and men."[53] One sees how readily such a theory could be applied to *Beowulf*, where, as we have seen, the term *aglæca* is applied equally to the hero and to the monsters. The Grendels are manlike beasts who may be said to form a link between the natural world and the "underworld" of demonic beings (the unknown realm of *helrunan*, "those skilled in the mysteries of hell," ll. 162b-63).[54] Beowulf the hero, in some senses a "beastlike man," mediates between the hostile world of nature (symbolized by the monsters) and the world of men who struggle

[51] See, e.g., Lévi-Strauss 1987:espec. 75-85 and 202-3; more generally, the four volumes of his *Mythologiques* (1964-72).

[52] Robinson (1985:73) draws attention to the poetic device of referring to a king by such metaphoric terms as *eodor*, *helm*, and *hleo*; cf. Irving 1989:141. Another such analogy is suggested by the inscription on the hilt of the "giant-wrought" sword, describing God's destruction of the race of giants in the Deluge; as Michael Nagler puts it (1980:146; cf. 148): "The runic inscription on the hilt is no mere decoration. It tells us iconographically just what this weapon is: God's instrument for quelling the forces of disorder."

[53] See also Leach 1976:71-72.

[54] On Grendel's affinities with hell and the demonic, see Chadwick 1959:173-75 and Niles 1983:11-12.

continually to wrest from nature a small outpost of civilization and security (symbolized by the hall).[55]

In many ways of course, the hero's death marks the definitive limit of his success; yet Beowulf's approach to the dragon does not differ in essence from his stance against the Grendels. In his valedictory *beotwordum* he says that he would gladly have laid aside his sword against the dragon, had it been possible, "as I did long ago against Grendel" (ll. 2518b-21), and dismisses his *comitatus* in order to meet his opponent alone. Yet although the dragon is killed, Beowulf dies as well and his people are left exposed to their traditional enemies—hardly the actions of a national savior, as Wiglaf's muted criticism implies at ll. 3077-78.[56] But Beowulf is driven by forces too powerful to be outweighed by considerations of social prudence (ll. 3085b-86) and holds to the *heahgesceap* ("high destiny") of the traditional hero; as many commentators have noted, two conflicting thematic impulses are at work here, and they are not neatly resolved. One of these asserts Beowulf's unequivocal heroism, presenting the dragon-fight as his "siðas[t] sigehwile sylfes dædum" (l. 2710, "last achievement of victory through his own actions") and demonstrating that the traditional statement of martial intent ("death or glory") need not be a choice of exclusive alternatives but is capable of being fulfilled *in toto* (ll. 2535b-37); his winning of the gold for his people (in exchange for his life) is seen as the crowning achievement of his career. This final part of the poem is consciously shaped as an "exit-piece"; Beowulf's death is far from sudden or unexpected and is several times anticipated by the narrator in language that relects the hero's own dark musings.[57] In a poem that presents the hero's achievements in the context of a full biographical cycle (like the Lianja "epic") an account of his death is inevitable, and may well stem from a narrative tradition that diverges thematically—and psychologically—from other episodes in the cycle.

In a wider perspective, Beowulf's death can be seen as a temporary (if significant) reversal in the eternal struggle of the emergent human

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[55] On the symbolic value of the hall in Old English poetry, see Hume 1974 and Irving 1989:133-67, espec. 142.

[56] Irving considers Wiglaf's criticism here to be a "nonce-effect." In these lines "it is enough for the words to fit a local emotional context. They need not fit into some larger context that demands a consistent viewpoint, whether of approval or disapproval or. . . some neat balance of attitudes" (1989:161-62).

[57] See ll. 2309b-11; 2341b-44; 2419b-24; 2573-75a; 2586b-91a, and 2725b-28.

community against its elemental adversaries; one hero falls, but others will surely come.[58] Here one may ponder the significance of Sigemund; established early in the poem as an exemplary parallel to Beowulf, he yet differs from him in one important respect, for Sigemund's solitary expedition against a hoard-guarding dragon is eminently successful and brings him wide and lasting fame (ll. 884b-97); significantly, he too is characterised as an *aglæca* (l. 893). Heroes may rise and fall; they are manifestly different from ordinary folk, yet on their actions hang the fates of whole communities. They, like Beowulf, are ever desired, ever mourned.[59]

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[58] Cf. Nagler 1980:147, n. 7, 156.

[59] An early form of this paper was given at the fifteenth conference of the Australian and New Zealand Association for Medieval and Renaissance Studies held at the University of Otago, Dunedin, NZ from 29 January-2 February 1990. I am very grateful to Dr. Patrick Wormald, Dr. Greg Waite, and John Caygill for reading the paper at a later stage and for their many helpful comments.

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Innervision and Innertext: Oral and Interpretive Modes of Storytelling Performance

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Introduction

Within the past twenty years there has evolved a national—even, to a limited extent, an international—community of performers who position themselves under the sign of a self-conscious revival of traditional storytelling. Although their actual practices cover a wide range of performance conventions—from a variety of ethnic traditional storytelling styles, to stand-up comedy, to theatrical impersonation, to autobiographical performance art, to oral interpretation—these contemporary performers share in the invocation of ancient traditions and roles as a common signifying framework.

In the proliferation of storytelling festivals around the country we find the image of the fireside folkteller projected onto a popular stage, framed by tents and spotlights, magnified by public relations machinery, amplified by the latest sound technology, all to satisfy mass hunger for a restored sense of rootedness. "The Storyteller" has developed a certain iconic resonance in popular culture, more as a poetic conceit than as an anthropologically specific role, much as "The Folk Singer" did in the early sixties. Yet the conceit depends for its emotive force on the idea that somewhere, sometime, there is, or was, such a role—a role with expressive, didactic, oracular, and community-binding functions. Enough people have resubscribed to the idea over the last twenty years to have created little subcultural pockets of "restored behaviors" (Schechner 1985:35-116). These subcultural pockets, taken collectively, constitute what is emically known as "the storytelling community."

A good deal of this activity is suspect or alien to folklorists, whose

passion is for the unvarnished stuff. Yet our occupational boundaries should not bar us from observing the occupational and listening communities that have grown up among professional storytellers and enthusiasts; nor from studying the ways their inherited and invented traditions, contexts, and performance conventions reflect, refract, and transform traditional storytelling practices. By doing so we may learn a great deal about how oral and literate strata of communication interact within a particular hothouse laboratory of contemporary performance, under the evolutionary grow lamps of secondary orality.

A more thorough examination of contemporary storytelling in the light of its constituent traditions is in preparation (Sobol forthcoming). I will focus here on constructing a polarity of communicative models within the practice of professional storytelling, and using this polarity, then, to reflect on the movement's sources, its place, and its prospects: I will call these models the *conversational* and the *literary*, or the *oral traditional* and *oral interpretive* modes.

The Issues

In lieu of reviewing the broad scholarly debate that has grown up in recent decades over the nature and implications of orality and literacy in culture, it will suffice to say here that, ever since Milman Parry's groundbreaking work with oral epic singers in the Balkans in the 1930s, scholars from an impressively wide range of disciplinary perspectives have seized on the oral/literate polarity as a field for the modeling of culture and communication. Havelock in classics, McLuhan in literary history, Ong in theological history—all have been inspired by the ideas of Parry and Lord to move beyond the received boundaries of their fields. Scholars of folklore (Bauman, Finnegan, Hymes, Tedlock, Toelken), literature (Foley, Zumthor), speech communication (Fine, Speer), cultural anthropology (Goody), cultural history and criticism (Sayre, Trinh), sociolinguistics (Chafe, Lakoff, Polanyi, Tannen), cognitive and educational psychology (Olson, Stein and Trabasso), and other fields have contributed to the interdisciplinary ferment. Their multifarious writings do not lend themselves to neat summary. I will content myself here with drawing a set of five key propositions that can be applied to the performance of contemporary storytellers.

First, there is the proposition that the storytelling revival movement,

along with the performance-based approach to folkloristics,[1] the move among practitioners of oral interpretation towards truly oral, folkloric sources,[2] the movement among contemporary poets towards oral and performative modes of literary expression,[3] and the movement among theatre artists towards orally-created, narrative modes of performance as opposed to conventional textual and dramatic methods, constitute a range of synchronistic and in many ways synergistic phenomena.

In the introduction to her important synthesis, *The Folklore Text*, Fine points out that the performance approach, "which views folklore as a dynamic communicative process rather than an artifact from the past, has attuned folklorists to the significance of studying performance," while in the same period "oral interpretation has turned its attention to its historical roots in folklore" (2). As folklorists like Dell Hymes and Dennis Tedlock pondered the lessons that only live performance could teach, they began not only to seek more accurate ways to notate performances, but also to attempt to interpret their collected texts through the act of performance, to experience in their own bodies the ways these stories might live in the performative moment. In Hymes's breakthrough into performance of one of his Northwest Indian stories during his 1974 presidential address to the American Folklore Society, lay a similar reoralizing impulse to that animating the first fledgling storytelling festivals across the country at that time.

Hymes and Tedlock were major influences on the oral poetry movement of the seventies, particularly through Tedlock and Rothenberg's *Alcheringa*, a journal of ethnopoetics. Henry M. Sayre (1989:181) writes, ". . .the political thrust of ethnopoetics entails an alignment against the homogeneous, single world which is imaged in the essentially imperialist concept of the 'melting pot' and the advocacy, instead, of a plural world of distinct, coequal, and balanced 'ecosystems'"—a world, in other words, of many dialects, as opposed to the single, hegemonic "grapholect." This is a cultural political agenda that has long been enacted on the stages of the storytelling "circuit" as well. Paul Sills' production of Brothers Grimm tales, *Story Theatre*, itself a popularization of academic oral interpretation techniques like Robert Breen's "Chamber Theatre," toured the country in

[1] See Bauman 1977, 1986; Paredes and Bauman 1972.

[2] See Fine1984, Speer 1978.

[3] See Rothenberg and Rothenberg 1983, Sayre 1989, and Tedlock 1983.

the seventies, bringing a major new technical resource to the popularizing of folktales in performance. Sills' mixture of narrative and freely shifting characterization was adopted by regional-activist theatre companies and professional storytellers alike in turning previously overlooked folklore and oral history material into effective populist theatre. All of this performative ferment between oral and literate expressive dominants is crucial to the theme that I am developing here.

When we turn to examining the texture of oral traditional and oral interpretive modes of performance, we find the proposition advanced by Chafe (1982) concerning the very different *tempos* natural to the different uses of language: face-to-face conversation, writing, and reading. Speaking, he notes, is far faster than writing, if only because of the physical mechanisms involved; but speaking and listening are both slower than reading. In spontaneous conversational speech, we become accustomed to a certain rhythmic fit between the pace of our thoughts and that of the language in which we express it (37):

> Observation of spontaneous spoken language has led various investigators independently to the finding that it is produced in spurts, sometimes called idea units, with a mean length (including hesitations) of approximately two seconds or approximately six words each. Idea units typically have a coherent intonation contour, they are typically bounded by pauses, and they usually exhibit one of a small set of syntactic structures. They are a striking, probably universal component of spoken language.... If that is true, then when we speak we are in the habit of moving from one idea to the next at the rate of about one every two seconds. Perhaps that is even our normal "thinking rate," if language reflects the pace of thought.... If that is our temporal baseline, the activity of writing presents a problem. If we write more than ten times more slowly than we speak, what is happening in our thoughts during that extra time?. . . In writing, it would seem, our thoughts must constantly get ahead of our expression of them in a way to which we are totally unaccustomed when we speak. As we write down one idea, our thoughts have plenty of time to move ahead to others. The result is, we have time to integrate a succession of ideas into a single linguistic whole in a way that is not available in speaking.

Chafe uses this distinction to account for the the far greater syntactic density and complexity commonly found in written, as compared to spoken, discourse. The writer, poking over his typewriter or pacing, like Flaubert, around his garden pulling out his hair over one choice word, "loads" his semantic units with surplus information, so that the reader, skimming along in his armchair free of the complexities of face-to-face interaction, can have

plenty of material to take up the communicative slack. These same informational riches in the restored performative context can overload the communicative channels, unless the right rhythmic fit can be discovered between voice, breath, utterance, and audience.

Next, there is the proposition, advanced by both Chafe and Tannen in *Spoken and Written Language* (1982) and elaborated by Tannen in *Talking Voices* (1989), that conversational discourse is characterized by linguistic, paralinguistic, and kinesic "involvement strategies," designed to create interaction and integration between speaker and listener. Linguistic involvement strategies, such as repetition, constructed dialogue, and representational imagery, are common to oral and literary storytelling, though originating in speech. Paralinguistic and kinesic involvement strategies can include variation in pitch and tempo, gesture, physical and emotional mirroring, as well as the vast register of implicit information that constitutes the *relationship* of conversational partners. None of these are available to the writer, except in a refracted and distanced form. He has to rely instead on a range of "contextualizing" conventions to fill in what is sacrificed to print. Thus it has become a byword among linguists and literary scholars to say that writing aims at the status of "autonomous discourse," or "context-free communication" (e.g., Olson 1977, Rader 1982). As Walter J. Ong (1982:78-79) puts it,

> Oral cultures know a kind of autonomous discourse in fixed ritual formulas. . . as well as in vatic sayings or prophecies, for which the utterer himself or herself is considered only the channel, not the source. The Delphic oracle was not responsible for her oracular utterances, for they were held to be the voice of the god. Writing, and even more print, has some of this vatic quality. Like the oracle or the prophet, the book relays an utterance from a source, the one who really "said" or wrote the book.

Fourth, there is the proposition that takes up much of McLuhan's later work, and is developed in various ways by Heim (1987) and Lakoff (1982), among others: that the accelerating transformation in the dominant media of culture toward electronic information-processing is tilting society dizzyingly quickly away from literacy and towards what McLuhan calls "secondary orality"—media that are based upon the analytic capacities born of print, but that return the sensory load to an aural, or a mixed aural and concrete visual dimension (as opposed to the abstract visual processing required by alphabetic writing). In her contribution to *Spoken and Written Language*, Lakoff (1982:259) attempts the extreme view:

> Now access to all the information one previously gained through literacy can be gained by other means, via newer media, and we see that it is the younger people who are the first to recognize this and become able to take advantage of it. Literacy will shortly not be essential for simple survival anymore, nor will there be any need to preserve it except as a curiosity or an atavistic skill, like quilt making, learned and proudly practiced by a few.

One can disagree with this rather parodic scenario and still accept the important points: that cultural canons based on Eurocentric fixations on the divine status of literacy are bound to be relativized by omniverous new global technologies; and that, barring some final catastrophe, we can have no idea what new human sensory adaptations future media may bring into play.

Finally, there is the proposition, argued by Ruth Finnegan in her opus-contra-Ong, *Literacy and Orality*, and implied in many of the essays in *Spoken and Written Language* (especially those of Heath, Polanyi, and Rader): that the very notion of an oral/literate continuum is an empirically problematic one. While oral and literate modes of language do unquestionably exist in functioning communities, including communities of professional performers, the ways in which these modes interact are multifarious and protean—certainly far, in practice, from the linear image of a continuum. Finnegan shows by examples from ancient Ireland and contemporary Africa and Polynesia that modes of composition and performance of traditional poetry and story can vary widely from culture to culture, though each may be broadly classed as non-literate. And in cultures where literacy is dominant, there remain realms of practical resistance and residual orality, from jokes, urban legends, or personal experience narratives to the domains of manual skill and apprenticeship. Similarly, Heath concludes her study of the uses of oral and literate modes (which she calls speech events and literacy events) in an African-American textile-mill community with this cautionary note (1982:111):

> Descriptions of. . . literacy events and their patterns of uses in Trackton do not enable us to place the community somewhere on a continuum from full literacy to restricted literacy or non-literacy. Instead, it seems more appropriate to think of two continua, the oral and the written. Their points and extent of overlap, and similarities in structure and function, follow one pattern for Trackton, but follow others for communities with different cultural features.

Since these models are constructions in any case, related to but in no way identical with the linguistic systems to which they refer, we might

allow ourselves to reach for something more poetically ample to replace altogether the stick-figures of continuum or continua—something along the lines of Yeats's pair of intersecting gyres, one widening as the other narrows, revolving together in phases like the moon in relation to the earth and sun, and pouring their changing, refractive light over the living fields of human communication.

The Action

The distinction between oral traditional and oral interpretive modes of storytelling is based on the way the teller learns and prepares to retell her stories. In the conversational or oral traditional mode, the teller hears the story from another teller, or, in the case of stories based on personal experience or invention, experiences the story in the flesh, in the ear, and in the imagination. She then proceeds to retell it *without the intervention of a written version*. She develops and polishes the performance, in the mode by which the story was originally conceived, in the flesh, the ear, and the imagination—that is, in the experience of retelling and rehearing the story with audiences. In the literary or oral interpretive mode, on the other hand, the teller begins with a written text, whether of her own or another's devising, and commits this text to memory. She then overlays paralinguistic, performative elements of facial, vocal, and kinesic expression and timing upon the preset verbal scaffolding, whether in the rehearsal process or in the heat of performance.

It is obvious that only in a Platonically ideal performance could either of these polar paradigms be realized. The purest "traditional" tellers today are likely to have had some contact with written versions of their own traditional yarns (Oxford 1987:190-93). Tellers who develop their own original stories in conversational performance can yet find themselves shaping phrases and passages with a lapidary precision that implies some "visual" relationship to the contours of the language itself. And tellers with the strictest reliance on literary norms may be forced to adapt their words to the momentary inspiration of performance. Examples of these kinds of intersections are given below. There is an identifiable weaving, a gyring, between these polar fields of language-performance, and tellers on the revival circuit can generally be identified by a gravitational tilt towards one or the other. I will concentrate here on a pair of seasoned professional tellers, Jim May and Syd Lieberman, to show how their performances have evolved from their positions along the widening and narrowing gyres of

orality and literacy.

The Actors

I first heard Jim May and Syd Lieberman tell stories one right after the other, during an open swap at the National Conference on Storytelling in Jonesborough, Tennessee. They were friends, both schoolteachers from upstate Illinois working their way into the burgeoning profession of storytelling. They were egging each other on, and their performances that night marked a crystallization for each of them of a new dimension of personal voice. Working my way into the art form myself, I was struck that night by what seemed a polarity between their styles. Whatever Jim said, even when he was actually reciting, seemed conversational, emergent, spontaneous to the point of a certain appealing hesitancy. Whatever Syd said seemed by contrast recited, shaped, and polished, strongly sensible of the literary arc of his words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs. The occasion crystallized an awareness that had been growing in me of divergent modes within what presented itself as a united movement. Jim May and Syd Lieberman have helped me, since that night in 1984, with my own developing understanding of the complex interrelationship of these performance modes. The brief comparative study of their performing styles essayed below is based on personal acquaintance, on encounters with their live and taped performances over a six-year period, and on recent telephone interviews with each.

May and Lieberman are both full-time professional storytellers born, reared, and based in upstate Illinois. They are both in their forties, and both are former teachers who used storytelling as a teaching tool. Each discovered from his own experience, as well as from observing other revival tellers, that storytelling could also be a path of self-expression, and, not insignificantly, of self-employment.

Jim May is of German Catholic descent, raised in the tiny McHenry County village of Spring Grove, on a fourth-generation family farm. Personal and family memoirs of rural and small-town life form a large part of his repertoire. He often introduces a set of stories by saying that he grew up on a dairy farm, population nine; then moved into Spring Grove, population two thousand; as soon as he could he went off to the University of Illinois, population thirty thousand, to major in Russian history and urban problems; and now, in his forties, he is back living in Spring Grove, collecting and telling stories about it. It is a modest, stand-up comic echo

of Eliot's famous coda to the *Four Quartets*:

> With the drawing of this Love and the voice of this Calling
> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive at where we started
> And know the place for the first time.

It is the nature of oral transmission, when a performance is truly received, to be not simply oral, but a full-body imprinting, a human technology of which video-recording is a pale imitation. In experiencing a particular storyteller's style, one can usually sense the echoes in her bodily memory of the kinds of tellers and settings that have imprinted themselves upon her. The first professional tellers to make a strong impression on Jim were Ray Hicks and Jackie Torrance, both rural North Carolina tellers based in the oral conversational mode. After hearing these two during his first trip to the National Storytelling Festival in Tennessee, Jim came back Monday morning to his history class and decided to do something different: he threw away his lesson plan and told a folktale, "Soldier Jack," which he had heard both Ray and Jackie tell over the weekend. It was certainly not a memorized telling, but an oral re-creation. Elements of both versions mingled in his mind and fused with his own laconic, midwestern vocal rhythms to produce a spontaneous piece of verbal art, based on the old motifs. "Those kids had never listened to me that way before," he says.

It was the beginning of a performing style. But behind that there is a deeper imprint of family oral tradition. The running joke in a bar he sometimes visits in Spring Grove goes, "Who would believe that Jim May makes a living telling stories? Everybody knows that his brother is the real storyteller in the family." Jim's older brother runs a local construction company, for which Jim used to work during the summer. "I guess a lot of my real storytelling education came on coffee breaks with those guys," he told me. "It was like a constant audition. You couldn't *impress* those guys. You had to learn restraint."

Jim's brother was a trickster character, a self-employed liar who created his own exploits for the telling, sometimes after the fact, often without recourse to fact. "He would drive up in the truck and you'd ask him where he'd been, and he'd say Afghanistan. Things like that. He would talk in a made-up language. Long strings of nonsense words." Jim tells of a time his brother told the principal of their parochial school, Father John, that he'd seen a fox run under the chicken house. Father John ran to get his shotgun, and the whole school watched out the school windows

while Jim's brother stamped on the floor of the chicken house, Father John circling outside, shotgun at the ready. Of course the only fox was inside the chicken house, dancing.

Events like these, enacted and retold, form the thread out of which Jim weaves his own stories. His speaking style is low-key, almost flat, like the midwestern landscape it represents. He stands with his head slightly bowed, eyebrows arched, like the ex-altar boy that is his narrative persona in many of his personal stories, standing before the altar screen that divides innocence from irony. His personal stories are germinated from seed-memories that spring to life suddenly in a conversation or a workshop, and they are shaped in the retelling—he already knows them, as one knows one's own experience, but performance reveals their shape, their moments, and their momentum.

Jim expects his stories to vary from telling to telling. Sometimes a performance will seem halting, as the conversational teller gropes for new images, and new words to convey them—these hesitations would be damaging to the trust engendered by the performer-audience relationship, were it not for the fact that *words*, in the textual sense, are not the primary standard by which the oral performer builds that trust. He works instead by the standard of involvement and interaction—eye contact, solicitations of agreement, spontaneous remarks to and about the listeners, the feeling that each listener is being directly, excitedly, conversationally addressed, without the performer's attention being diverted by the superego-like intervention of a text. On the other hand, an oral story may become so smoothed by frequent repetition that hesitations and interjections disappear, and its performance assumes the character of a recitation. It may gain then in verbal fluency, and yet lose in communicative force. Some of the tension of Jim's storytelling comes from his navigation between these opposing shoals.

Syd Lieberman grew up on the northwest side of Chicago, in what at that time was a largely Jewish neighborhood. His grandparents were immigrants from Eastern Europe, merchants, traders, and peasants who scrambled for a niche in the new world, laying foundations for their children to build professional careers. Syd's Jewish heritage provides the subject for most of his repertoire: stories of immigrant experience, folktales from Yiddish and especially Hasidic sources, and personal stories that reflect in various ways on the Jewish-American journey from precarious urban refugee to bemused suburban professional.

When asked about the evolution of his storytelling style, he quickly said, "Well, aside from being an English teacher for twenty years, I used to

write feature pieces for local newspapers." His writing was not fiction—he declares that he has never been capable of that—but what might be called in the trade "color pieces," character portraits, and reflections on events or themes from his own or his community's experience. The first stories he told were Jewish folktales, encountered in books or in other told versions. But Syd's learning process was, and still is, crucial to his performing style. He would write out his own adaptation of the story, shaping it through his literary sensibility to his own developing sense of performative speech. It was this version that he would subsequently learn, adapting it again from his own literary "voice" to his speaking voice.

A professional storyteller who had a major impact on his artistic direction, Syd says, is Jay O'Callahan, a masterful teller from New England who was also a writer before he began performing his own stories. Hearing O'Callahan encouraged Syd to use his own original writing as performance material. Syd is most comfortable thinking of his pieces as writing, as performable literature. Writing them out beforehand gives him space to polish the language within a piece, and to shape the whole so that it feels "finished." Ong points out that the notion of completion or closure is, excepting only certain ritual contexts, primarily fostered by cultures based on writing (1982:132): "By isolating thought on a written surface, detached from any interlocutor, making utterance in this sense autonomous and indifferent to attack, writing presents utterance and thought as uninvolved with all else, somehow self-contained, complete." It is part of Syd's cultural set that he is most comfortable creating an autonomous, closed structure of this kind before bearing it forth into the open, contingent zone of performance.

Jewish culture has traditionally, of course, for millennia been a culture of the Book. But it is a Book relentlessly re-oralized, by recitation, cantillation, disputation, and exegesis. The result is that, in the Talmudic tradition, the biblical text retains its central place, but in tiny dollops of original wisdom, while on all sides sprout chirographic, residually oral thickets of marginalia: "Rashi said thus, but Simeon ben Yochai said thus," and so on off the four edges of the page. The process of re-oralizing a lovingly "finished" text opens the interpretive storyteller to a similar inrush of "marginal" responses, which gradually fight their way into a new equipoise with the original. Syd told me:

> For a long time after I start to perform a story, the piece keeps changing on me. I'm always shocked when I go back to the written piece a year or so later, and I see how different it's become with my telling it. Then after a while it begins to settle down again as a told piece, and it stops changing.

> The words stop changing. It becomes pretty much the same from one performance to another. And I'm comfortable with that.

When Syd begins a story he has a distinctive preparatory "set": he plants his feet, looks down at the ground and flexes his knees, like a football running back getting ready for the snap (it happens he was a star halfback in high school). Then he takes a deep breath in the same motion as he raises his head, squints at the audience—and speaks. It is a personal physical ritual, which he repeats not only at the beginning of each program but at the beginning of each piece within the program. His voice is a powerful tenor instrument, punching out with cantorial force his Yiddish-American colloquial rhythms, studded with midwestern dipthongs that break so sharply they seem to crack.

By way of illustration, brief excerpts are transcribed below from two of these tellers' personal stories. This version of Jim May's story is titled "Most Valuable Altar Boy" (he usually tells it, coupled with another section, as "Horse-snot, or Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex Education at St. Peter's"). Syd Lieberman's story is called "The Italian T-Shirt." These were the same two tales that I heard them tell back-to-back that night at the storytelling conference. The recordings from which the transcriptions have been done were made within a year of the conference, and both were released in 1985 on self-published cassettes. Jim's was recorded in front of a large group of Catholic church workers, at an early stage in the development of the piece when it still had much of its exploratory feel. Syd's was recorded in front of a neighborhood audience at his own Jewish Reconstructionist Congregation synagogue in Evanston.

Following Chafe, audible "idea units" are numbered and separated by paragraph breaks; laughter is marked by parenthetical exclamation points (!!!), applause by asterisks (***), pauses by ellipses (. . . .). Four idea units in the Jim May excerpt are represented entirely by ellipses—these indicate pauses in which the ideational content of the previous unit was developed by the teller in concert with the audience, entirely by paralinguistic means.

From "Most Valuable Altar Boy," by Jim May

1. At least in our parish, Heaven had sort of layers,
2. or. . . or, it was sort of like theater tickets. (!!!)
3. And you had the people like, way in the back, kind of the second balcony, you know, they—
4. they just—just barely made it in, they—
5. they led *holy but boring lives*. (!!!!)
6. But—but they got to be with God forever, and so that was good, but—
7. closer up front, you know, the mezzanine maybe, or, or about halfway up there were the—
8. the martyrs. (!!!)
9. Of course that meant you were killed for professing your faith, and that was no small thing, and they had more jewels in their crown and so forth—
10. But—
11. right up there in the first row, you know,
12. the best place in Heaven,
13. were the virgin martyrs. (!!!!!!!!!!)
14. . . . . .
15. I don't know how many of you still have a shot at that, but—(!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!*****!!!!!!!!!!!)
16. . . . . .
17. I got away with that, you might not be able to stop me now. (!!!!!!!!!)
18. Um, but, but the, uh—and of course that meant that—that you were killed for professing your faith before you had sex.
19. . . . . (!!!!!!!!!)
20. It didn't give you much to look forward to....
21. . . . . (!!!!!!!!!!!!)
22. But—we were told this life didn't matter anyhow, you know. (!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!)
23. So that's what I was going for—I was—
24. I was nine years old, a certified virgin, I figured I was halfway there. (!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!)

From "The Italian T-Shirt," by Syd Lieberman

1. I was babysitting for my two kids. . . . . that day.
2. They were two and four at the time.
3. It was a normal day.
4. The usual things were happening: my two year old. . . . . was beating his sister over the head with a toy hammer. (!!!)
5. Now he wasn't picking favorites, he had beaten himself over the head for a while too. (!!!!!!!)
6. My daughter, the more artistic type, was squeezing margarine into Henry Moore-type sculptures, (!!)
7. or sandpainting with the sugar she had spilled all over the kitchen floor.
8. I tried to get some work done—
9. I kept getting calls:
10. An insurance company, they wanted to sign me up, a car agency had a good buy, they were gonna fix me up, a heavy breather wanted to pick me up— (!!!!!)
11. Huh! Huh! Huh! I thought he had emphysema when I got on the phone.
12. As I said, normal things were happening:
13. a five hundred-piece-puzzle fell off a shelf, got mixed up with another five-hundred-piece puzzle. (!!!)
14. A faucet sprung a leak,
15. and a quart of milk spilled—
16. in the refrigerator.
17. And then things got worse.
18. I took out the garbage, and the bag broke.
19. I stood there, like the man in the Glad Bag ad, watching dirty diapers blow all over the backyard.
20. How much would it take to set me off? Not much.
21. My wife came home, she began to yell at me, "Clean this, and clean this, and how could this happen, and—and look at this!"
22. I ran out of the house like a crazy man,
23. I knocked a bag of groceries down the steps,
24. a trail of eggs followed me down the street. (!!!)

Discourse Analysis

Even a cursory look at these two samples in the light of the four propositions given earlier show obvious and significant differences in the fabric of their discourse. A few that we may mention include:

Syntactic autonomy: Idea units in the Lieberman excerpt (L.) are far more likely to be framed linguistically in complete sentences. Twenty-three of the idea units clearly marked as what Chafe colorfully calls "spurts of language production" possess the formal arrangement of subject, verb, and object—an unheard-of level of syntactic autonomy for spoken oral discourse, but of course not at all unusual for written language. The May piece (M.), on the other hand, has only eleven units containing all the elements of a sentence. This is still a high proportion for spoken discourse, according to Chafe, but not when one considers that the performance context demands some elevation of autonomy: an audience, at least verbally, is not a full partner in the discourse.

Intonational autonomy: L. contains fifteen units that end in the intonational dip characteristic of a spoken period. M. contains ten. This difference is still significantly higher, but not as high as the discrepancy in syntactic autonomy. The nature of performance has apparently driven the teller to run several of his crafted sentences together intonationally, a discourse strategy that Chafe calls...

Integration: Nearly all of the units of discourse in M. are integrated—syntactically, intonationally, or both—with those before and after. Even units with all the syntactic elements of a sentence are preceded or followed by conjunctions (and, but, or, so). There are sixteen units linked before or behind by conjunctions in M. compared with six in L. (Strikingly, three of the six idea conjunctions in L. appear in reported dialogue [#21], which is the performed construction of oral discourse, clearly and precisely set off linguistically from the more literary language in which it is embedded.) This is a clear marker of the emergent, paratactic quality of oral, as opposed to written, speech. It is also a natural involvement strategy, born of holding onto a listener's attention in the time-flow of performance, as opposed to the frozen, autonomous present of print.

Imprecision and repetition: M. is full of the kinds of linguistic markers (sort of, kind of, and so on, like, you know) that Chafe calls "fuzziness" (1982:48). Although these may look weak on the page to an eye used to the precision of print, Chafe actually numbers them with other involvement strategies of conversational discourse. He suggests that they

express "a desire for experiential involvement as opposed to the less humankind of precision which is fostered by writing" (*ibid*.). M. is also sprinkled with repetitions and hesitations that indicate the emergent language process in action. L., on the other hand, contains none of these conversational markers.

Spontaneous side-comments and response units: My transcription of M., as noted above, contains four non-verbal idea units. This is my own way of notating those beats in the performance in which the storyteller pauses to let the audience catch up with the implications of what has gone before, and anticipate what may be coming. Jim was dealing with the most volitile possible combination of ingredients for his committed Catholic audience—sex and spirituality—so there were major opportunities for this kind of telepathic conversation in his piece. Oral interpretive performers may be able to create these kinds of beats—but it takes a special effort to move away from the autonomous flow of language into the flow of non-verbal, imaginative conversation. Jim's spontaneous comment to the audience, "I got away with that, you may not be able to stop me now!" (#17) is no more than a verbal eruption out of this flow of pleasurably negotiated tensions.

Open and closed elements in conversational storytelling: This passage from Jim May's storytelling, though conversational in tone and in the strategies of style, is far from random in construction. The conversationally indeterminate segments generally lead up to a phrase, a passage, or an image that is set, and that varies little or not at all from performance to performance. Such set units in this excerpt would include nos. 5, 15, 20, 22, and 24. I have heard the story performed many times, and these are always present, in the same order. They seem to me to be in the same words as well—but they may be more in the nature of oral-formulaic elements, which link and structure an improvisational chain. They are like proverbs, or the punch-lines of jokes, fixed nodes within a freer discursive web. More exploration is due into the ways in which these set beats function in contemporary orally-created storytelling discourse.

Conclusions and Inconclusions

The work of contemporary storytellers offers a rich field for discourse analysis of subtle variations in oral traditional and oral interpretive performance. For now, these small excerpts will have to stand as tokens of the cultural and stylistic multivocality that expresses itself even

in one small garden patch of the contemporary storytelling scene. It is clear that this movement, with its interdisciplinary cross-currents and its complex artistic and cultural agenda, is not a revival of oral tradition in any simple sense; nor is it an uninflected valorization of literature in performance. It is a significant amalgamation of these modes that comes at a crucial evolutionary moment in our technologization of culture.

The storytelling movement represents to me a conscious and unconscious effort to heal the wounds that the orality/literacy split has left in the constitution of our multicultural society, even as the remaining oral cultures of the world are being absorbed at an unprecedented rate into the electronic global village. Although orality tends to get first billing in the rhetorical framing of a contemporary storytelling event, the literary element is neither slighted nor divided against its elder. But they are often invoked in common cause against the electronic media, which are framed as the usurpers, the Darth Vaders, the dragon that the storytelling revivalist has been summoned to slay.

This observation reminds me of Ong's reading of the *Phaedrus*, in which he catches Plato's Socrates arguing against writing in a dialectical discourse of which writing is the generative matrix (1982:80). Whether we consider the outdoor festivals and indoor concerts in which microphones, P. A. systems, and sound engineers conspire to create electronic analogues for conversational intimacy; or the audio and video cassette recorders and players that make it possible for us to study not just the texts of folktales but their performative dimensions as well; or when we open ourselves to the novelties of isolation created by modern urban society, by endless mobility and the temptations of rootlessness, by living in cells connected only by the pulsating glow of the tube, this permanent floating existential crisis in which orality, literacy, even identity as we have traditionally constituted it seem pale and uncertain and bled of meaning; and when we hear how insistently the storytelling movement positions itself as an answer to this isolation—from any angle except the most naive, the electronically processed world is the performative context of this revival. What it will grow into as we bypass the naivete of the first crusading decades and find that storytelling is no answer—only a heartfelt and powerful means of asking questions—and what questions we will ask about orality and literacy and performance and the world—is a story that remains to be told.

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The Production of Finnish Epic Poetry— Fixed Wholes or Creative Compositions?

Lauri Harvilahti

One meets again and again in studies of epic singing among various peoples accounts of singers who are able to repeat a long narrative poem after only a single hearing, reworking or improving the original version in their own renditions, or rapidly producing a new poem on a given theme.[1] The repetition of a song on the basis of only a single hearing was also apparently not unheard of in the Finnish-Karelian song tradition. There were a number of singers who were able to repeat any song after having heard it only once, among others, Iivana Shemeikka, who—as has been reported—"after hearing a song but once knew it for good" (Virtanen 1968:42). Although the skill of the gifted singer made it possible to improvise on the basis of traditional forms and to repeat a song after hearing it only once, as a general collective expression it was obviously a

[1] Arash Bormanishov (1982:163) writes thus about Kalmyk epic singers: "It is a known fact that among the Kalmyks there were some who memorized separate epic songs right on the spot, after having listened only once to a bardic performance." Albert Lord (1960:78-79) mentions as an example of the learning capabilities of the Yugoslav master singer Avdo Međedovic a situation in which another singer—Mumin Vlahovljak— performed a song that Avdo had never heard before. After Mumin had finished, Avdo praised the song, but stated that he could perform it better. Although Mumin's version was already thousands of lines in length, Avdo's interpretation was even longer. Avdo's poem was more complete and richer than that which Mumin had presented, and made use of standard elements characteristic of Avdo's repertoire in its construction. Similar accounts have been given of Russian *bylina* singers. The *bylina* collector P. I. Ončukov recorded a performance of the *bylina* "Luka and the Dragon" by a singer named Durkin. Another singer, named Pozdeev, who was present at Durkin's performance but who had never heard the song before, was later able to reproduce the *bylina* himself after only the single hearing. A. F. Gil'ferding met an illiterate singer M. Menšikova who performed the Serbian epic song "Iova and Mara," having heard it read only once from a book, and in Russian translation (Sokolov 1924:42-46; cf. Arant 1967:11).

given that the widespread or well-known epic poems must be repeated in a traditional, standard form (Virtanen 1968:57-58). This kind of concept might dominate, but the study of collected epic poetry would nonetheless reveal signs of considerable variation.[2]

Evidence from the Finnish singers indicates that songs might differ from each other in terms of their variability. Senni Timonen notes Larin Paraske's explanations to the collector A. Neovius.[3] Paraske provided Neovius with some interesting and contradictory ideas on the relations of faithfulness to tradition and free license. On the one hand, Paraske maintained: "I have only heard from others, I sing what others have sung before, things of my own I do not sing." On the other hand, she explained: "This isn't the Gospel that it need be so exact; one can put one's own words in too" (Timonen 1982:165). As a singer trained in the song tradition, Paraske could transmit what were in her opinion faithful renditions of songs she had learned. On the other hand, she recognized that variation at some level was both natural and acceptable.

The academician Matti Kuusi has made similar observations. He demonstrated in his repertoire analysis of the Ingrian (Finnic) singer Maria Luukka that she had been in her youth an innovative singer who was able to synthesize isolated elements into new wholes—on the other hand, as an older singer devoted to the tradition and to preserving the poems in relatively stable form, she forgot some old elements and learned some new, but attempted to preserve her core repertoire unchanged through the decades. Her repertoire also showed the same kinds of variation in the

[2] One may find abundant examples of these concepts in studies of epic songs among various peoples. The Russian *bylina* singer Ivan Trofimovič Rjabinin became indignant when at one point he was asked to leave out a few seemingly unsuitable words from one of his songs: "How can I not sing them? Not a single word can be left out! As the folk sang, so must we sing; it is not our creation nor are we its end" (Ljackij 1895:14-15). This idea is described as well in the proverb "Leave no word unsung," which is found not only in Russian and Byelo-Russian traditions, but also in the Polish, Lithuanian, and Vepsian-Karelian material (Grigas 1987:168; Bogatyrev 1967:189; Hakamies 1986:98). The Russian singer F. A. Konaškov explained firmly that he sang his *byliny* in the form in which he learned them. When repeated recordings revealed clear variations, and these were brought to his attention, the singer responded by asking: "Did I really forget that then?" The collector A. M. Linevskij found it best not to let the singer know about these alterations, since awareness of them caused the singer to become bogged down in the subsequent recordings (Linevskij 1948:34; cf. Bogatyrev 1967: n. 14).

[3] Timonen 1982: 166-67. Paraske is famous as one of the most prolific and most gifted singers in the Finnic lyric and lyric-epic tradition.

extent of change that given poems underwent. Certain poems can be identified as relatively fixed or relatively prone to improvisation within the corpus of her repertoire (Kuusi 1983:181-84). This kind of shaping process within a poetic repertoire may underlie the preservation in relatively fixed form of poems in the repertoire of numerous other singers in the Kalevala tradition.

The above remarks may lead one to rather conflicting conclusions: singers could repeat songs after a single hearing, and compose new songs on a given subject. On the one hand, they claimed to retain their songs in the form they learned them, leaving nothing out and adding nothing new; on the other hand, they admitted as well that variation was permissible. Prominent singers could repeat very traditional standard narratives of the collective heritage, recast these as newer, somewhat more variable wholes, or even create new and original productions.

Paul Kiparsky has suggested that Finnish epic singers had at their disposal very little unattached thematic material they could incorporate freely at any suitable point in the narrative. He noted a lack of standard episodes for describing a battle, the forging of weapons, preparing for battle, and so on. Kiparsky further adds that every event is unique in poetry and most epic verses belong to a particular song.[4] Differing opinions have also been put forward.[5] It is a fact that in Finnish epic poetry there exist certain stereotypical poetic images than can be used in the most varied of contexts; the field covered by such images can be extended to comprise all Kalevala poetry.[6]

[4] Kiparsky 1976:95-96. Cf. also Oinas 1990:304.

[5] Jouko Hautala wrote in 1945: "The composer of a poem must first have a subject, secondly a tool in the form of a poetic meter, here conceived of in such broad terms that it includes all the traditional artistic means belonging to a particular type of poem. — It is only natural that the composer of a folk poem unsuspectingly and without more ado selects from his store of lines and complete verses any material that seems suited to his poem. — Carried to extremes, this procedure means that existing verses can be used to construct entirely new logical entities, poems, using existing episodes like building blocks. Assisting this is the meter, which is the same for all poems." (15-16; see also Hautala 1947:40 and Lehtipuro 1974:16-18). Hautala was presumably not familiar with the studies of Parry; at least no reference is made to them.

[6] Cf., e.g., Hautala 1945: 16.

Formula Families

There are systems of formulae in which the concept of sameness can be extended beyond mere similarity of meter and vocabulary. There are in Kalevala poetry some distinct categories of formulae, and we often encounter cases that call to mind the "families" formed on the basis of the preverbal gestalt.[7]

The line *taoit enne, taoit egle* ("you forged formerly, you forged in bygone days") used as a formula in West Ingrian poetry belongs to poems telling either of the origin of the world or of the birth of the *kantele*. In both cases it belongs to a similar contentual episode in which a smith is requested to make a magic tool or musical instrument (the kantele). As we can see, the formula relies on repetition of the verb in exactly the same form at the beginning of parallel half-lines. The second components of the half-lines, *enne* / *egle* (formerly / in bygone days), are furthermore analogically parallel adverbs indicating past time.

There are dozens of formulae and formula-like expressions using a similar construction. The identical repetition of the verb at the beginning of the parallel halves of a four-word line includes a large number of lines:

Takoi niitä, takoi näitä	He forged this, he forged that
Antoi niitä, antoi näitä	He gave this, he gave that
Tappo nuoret, tappo vanhat	Killed the young, killed the old
Käytii piispat, käytii papit	Came the bishops, came the priests
Etsin Suomet, etsin saaret	I sought Finland, I sought the islands
Kylpi Untoi, kylpi Ventoi	Unto bathed, Vento bathed
Niitti klaisat, niitti ruo'ot	Cut the reeds, cut the rushes

Such formulae are used in countless poems. The line *takoi niitä, takoi näitä* ("forged this, forged that"), for example, is to be found in the poems about the golden bride, courting the maidens on the island and courting the sun and the moon. They belong to different types of contexts in which their task is, by using parallel comparison, to indicate a large quantity of some property or phenomenon by means of synonyms (reeds / rushes), analogy (Finland / island), or antithesis (the young / the old).

We could continue the list. The same basic construction (Verb + X, Verb + X) also occurs so that the instead of a precise repetition of the verb form, another verb close in meaning and conforming to the rules of Kalevala parallelism is used:

[7] See the theory advanced by Michael Nagler (1974:espec. 5-12).

Souva laivoi, jouva laivoi	Row boat, hurry boat
Puri puuta, söi kivee	Bit wood, ate stone

The creation of poems is not tied to parts of speech, nor even to syntactic constructions. Thus the same principle as that outlined above is used to undergird a broad formula family without these formulae being identical linguistically. The guiding principle is that a line has four words and is divided into two halves. Some parallel half-lines or a parallel word is used. The other components in the half-lines are in most cases analogical or antithetical concepts; sometimes there is identical repetition.

Pronoun + noun / pronoun + noun

Kelle tyttö, kelle poika	To whom a girl, to whom a boy
Kello etso, kulle etso	To whom a search, to which (one) a search

Pronoun + verb / pronoun + verb

Mitä lauloin, kuta lauloin	What I sang, which one I sang
Sillä syötti, sillä juotti	This to eat, this to drink

Adverb + noun / adverb + noun

Mihi neito, kuhu neito	Where the maid, whither the maid
Siellä madot, siellä toukat	There are worms, there the grubs

This is just one example of the countless formula families we may find. We may, like Hautala, claim that formulae can very well be said to apply to all Kalevala poetry. But can we define the formula for the Kalevala epic? We may, in the manner of Joseph Russo, propose that most definitions of formula are right in their own way and reflect some fact about the phenomenon under study, some level of regularity (1976:35). It is indeed possible to define the concept of formula by resorting to various criteria and emphasizing various factors—from the phonetic and rhythmic to the semantic level.

Standard Sequences

Albert Lord, drawing on relatively slight material (three individual variants on different motifs sung by three singers), discovered repeated sequences that remain the same in different versions of the same theme. On the basis of these examples he concluded that keeping to a fixed text does not produce such versions; what it does produce are repeated sequences

adapted to the context of the poem being sung (Lord 1987a:249-51; 1987b:307-11).

A good example of a standard sequence attached to many poetic motifs is the description of how Väinämöinen carved himself a boat. This begins the poems about the boat journey, seeking timber to make a boat, the wooing contest, the visit to Vipunen, the visit to the Underworld, and also the Sampo episode, which begins with an episode taken from the visit-to-Vipunen motif. This opening theme usually describes how Väinämöinen makes a boat by singing (incanting), but notes that there were a few words missing.[8]

Oli vanha Väinämöinen.	Once there was old Väinämöinen
tietäjä ijän ikuine	sage eternal, very ancient
teki tiijolla venettä,	made a boat out of wisdom
laittoi purtta laulamalla;	shaped a sail by singing
uupui kolmea sanoa,	three words were missing
peähän purren peästäksensä	in getting to the end of the board
parraspuita pannessaha.	in making the gunnel.

Väinämöinen sets off to find the words, either from the long-dead Antero Vipunen, or from the Underworld, or sometimes from some other difficult place, such as a pike's head, a salmon's mouth, a swan's feathers, the top of a deer's head, and so on. The "seer's skills" theme is thus a fixed sequence typically used to begin a poem; it sets the scene and motivates the events proper.

An example of how a theme is adapted to different contexts is the poem about Väinämöinen's knee-wound, in which Väinämöinen strikes his knee with an axe as he carves his boat and sets off to find someone to staunch the bleeding. This time he was making a boat not by incanting but by carving it with a concrete axe.[9]

Itse vanha Väinämöini	The old Väinämöinen
vesti vuorella venehtä,	carved a boat on the mountain
loati purtta kallivolla,	made a sail on the rock
ei kirves kivehen koske,	the axe did not strike the boulder
eikä karska kallivohe;	did not crunch on the rock
kirves liuskahti lihahe,	the axe slipped into his flesh
Väinämöisen varpahase	onto Väinämöinen's toe

[8] SKVR I1, 507, no. 393, lines 1-7 and SKVR I1, 62, no. 42; also 62, lines 1-7.

[9] SKVR I1, 411, no. 306, lines 1-8.

polvehe pojan pätöisen	onto the poor boy's knee

In this case the alliteration using *t* in the second line is replaced by *v*; *teki tiijolla venettä* / *vesti vuorella venettä*; the word *laulamalla* ("by singing") is replaced by *kalliolla* ("on the rock"). The frame of the opening is, however, basically the same: Väinämöinen carving a boat. It is, furthermore, quite common for lines belonging in principle to different poetic contexts to be encountered in a single motif. Thus Väinämöinen's wound begins in one variant as follows[10]—

Tuopa vanha Väinämöini,	That old Väinämöinen
vesti vuorella venehtä,	carved a boat on the mountain
kallivolla kalkutteli,	beat it on the rock
luati purtta laulamalla	made a sail by singing

—and the visit to the Underworld, which is usually accompanied by making a boat by incanting, begins in a few variants in the manner familiar from the poem describing the wound:[11]

Vaka vanha Väinämöinen	Sturdy old Väinämöinen
ulkoinen umannon sulho	distant bridegroom from Umanto
veisti vuorella venettä	carved a boat on the mountain
kalliolla kalkutteli	beat it on the rock

We could, of course, speculate which motif this opening suits most naturally, but the poetic material itself proves that such a question is futile. We cannot search the nebulous history of a poem for an "original," so it is most natural to explain that as singers developed their own versions of themes, they made use of the line sequences commonly encountered in the tradition; some of them are suitable for setting the scene for several plot constructions or describing different events, others for relatively few situations.

Competent singers characaterize or recall first of all the poem's overall structure (the content and order of broad narrative wholes). These broad entities are in turn constituted from small, recurrent optional units, which vary in number with the tradition: precise descriptions of actions/events, frames/individuals, and characterizations. A third group is made up of recurrent units at the level of the line or below. The proficient

[10] SKVR I1, 406, no. 304, lines 1-4.

[11] SKVR I1, 457, no. 353, lines 1-4.

use of these units is the final and finest mark of the singer's art, the mastery of which makes it possible to perform long poems without interruption. Gifted singers are able to use these units at once to vary, compose, and learn long narrative structures.[12]

As a rough generalization it could be said that in some poetic cultures the performers generally produce relatively fixed entities (small-scale epic), while in others the singers compose poems by drawing on traditional devices in relatively free combinations (large-scale epic). Finnish-Karelian and Russian narrative poetry would belong normally to the former category, while the epic poetry of the Southern Slavs, especially the Bosnian and Hercegovinian Moslem singers, as well as numerous Mongolian and Turkic

[12] In Mongolian and Yugoslav traditions, the training of the performer took place over a long and protracted period, involving numerous developmental stages. The Russian Altaist B. J. Vladimircov (1923:29-31; cf. Kondrat'ev 1970:9-11) describes the learning process of epic songs in the Northwestern Mongolian tradition as follows: "In order to be able to retain the pattern, the singer becomes experienced in dividing the poem into its fundamental parts: the introduction, central plot, and interpolated episodes, and learns to differentiate different descriptive sequences from each other, separating for instance passages devoted to describing the beauty of some region, steed, or princess from the passages devoted to the principal plot, the hero's exploits. Having internalized this material, and having clarified in his mind the chain of events in the poem, the young apprentice begins to learn recurrent sequences of lines (literally "commonplaces," *loci communes*; author's note) and methods of embellishment, descriptive expressions. The would-be performer of Oirat heroic epics must learn that certain portions of the poem recur in a regular fashion, and that they may appear in other poems as well; the apprentice must also not fail to note, however, that a good, experienced singer knows how to add elements to these repeated portions, varying and enlivening them by doing so. The singer-in-training memorizes various recurrent sequences, for example opening passages in which the hero's homeland is praised, a steed is described, or man-to-man combat between heroes is recounted. Then he learns the mass of poetic expressions, figures of speech, and epithets as well, and seeks to fit them into the plot he knows."

Vladimircov goes on to say that a singer may know any number of poems, each of several thousand lines, may drop a given poem out of his repertoire, and may easily learn some other song. The true singer has a large store of narrative lines at his disposal, which he may use to his advantage as he sees fit at a moment of inspiration, and may lengthen or abbreviate episodes at will. An adept singer may perform a given poem in the space of a night, or he may stretch it out over three or four nights, preserving the fundamental parts of the narrative structure intact. This description of Oirat singers resembles in its essentials A. B. Lord's account of the Yugoslav epic "oral-formulaic" learning process (1960:ch. 2).

traditions, belong mostly to the latter.[13] This division is, however, not categorical.

Composition would appear to be represented in different ways in different poetic cultures and areas. What, then, is the reason why some specific methods of song composition are more common than others? The differences between the poetic devices used or the division into "small-scale" and "large-scale" epic do not provide a full explanation. One of the focal points is the concept of tradition-dependence, as presented by J. M. Foley, according to which allowance must be made for the idiosyncratic features of an oral tradition in devising an analytical model. Such features include the distinctive characteristics of the vernacular: meter and prosody in general, but also narrative practices, mythical and historical content—in fact anything that is peculiar to a tradition and fundamentally affects its definition.[14]

There are also differences in the way singers compose their songs. It is possible to distinguish in the Finnish tradition conservative singers, who repeat their poems as more or less fixed entities; innovative singers, with a tendency towards slightly freer and more personal composition; and compilers, who weave clearly distinct entities out of the relatively stable elements in their areas. Naturally, there are also some who fall in between these categories—from singers producing and repeating almost fixed versions to "mixers" who combine at random material taken from different

[13] V. M. Gacak uses the term small-scale epic for a type of narrative poetry of which "a tendency to compose" is not, with isolated exceptions, characteristic. He places in this category, e.g., the epic poetry of the Slav peoples, Finnish-Karelian epic poems, the songs of the Edda, and so forth. The second concept, large-scale (eastern) epics, applies to epic poetry marked by the wide use of situational improvisation; in this category he places the traditional poetry of the eastern peoples (judging from his sources he means Altaic) and the epics of Bosnian Moslems (1983:190, 195, note 4. Nekljudov (1984:83) provides an interesting picture of the Mongolian poetry tradition—the number of lines in the versions produced may range from more than 20,000 among western Buryats to less than a thousand in the epic poems of the Khalkhas. Buryat epic poetry has also more archaic, mythical features than that of the Khalkhas and Oirats.

[14] Foley 1985:68-70. Foley mentions three concepts that should be borne in mind when comparing poetic traditions. In addition to tradition-dependence he distinguishes *genre-dependence*, meaning that to be comparable different traditions must also be comparable in the genre-analytical sense. His third concept is *text-dependence*, meaning examination of the nature of the document or other source for analysis: whether it is definitely oral or based on oral tradition, recorded at a sung or a dictated performance, tape-recorded, or handwritten, and so on.

contexts.

Among the best known singers in the latter category were Sohvonja Simanainen and Elessei Valjokainen. Versions sung by them, differing from the normal local versions yet nevertheless employing the devices of Kalevala poetry, are to be found, in accordance with the respect for "original" variants at the turn of the century, under "miscellaneous formations" in the Ancient Poems of the Finnish People—or they are contemptuously called "fabrications." Compilers are clearly in the minority in the Finnish material. There may, however, have been more free composers than we know of (or at least singers capable of free composition), for collectors valued singers who kept to the fixed, "correct" versions (cf. Kiparsky 1976:97-98).

Formulas and Cognition

The most well-known theory on the epic singers technique of production is the one offered by the oral-formulaic school. In oral-formulaic theory the problem of epic poetry processing has been solved by creating a sort of grammar in terms of apt definitions of formulas, themes, story patterns, preverbal Gestalts, and so forth. The problem is that all different types and levels of recurrent units have been treated in a unified manner (cf. Miller 1987:360). For instance, the definition of formula by Parry and Lord—"a group of words regularly employed in the same metrical conditions to express a given essential idea"—contains only a few parameters: metrical conditions, lexical regularity, and essential ideas. The definition may act as a condition for selection, in other words for seeking items for analysis thought to be relevant to the study. What is found depends on the sorts of questions to which the material is subjected, the level of analysis, and the scientific framework. What we may need is a description of the whole system of reproduction that actually forms the basis of the process of creating epic poems.

Such reproduction requires parallel processing on various levels simultaneously: activating phonological, morphosyntactic, lexical, metrical storage, and primary poetic devices. The memory of a singer is not a network of stable elements, but a multidimensional grid.[15] The concept of formulaicity must be seen as a result of "covariation of form and meaning"

[15] Cf., e.g., Karlsson 1988:135; Jackendoff 1985:8-10; Miller 1987:111; Vīķis-Freibergs 1989:70.

(Hymes 1981:7; Briggs 1988:10), or as representations of both surface structure and meaning structure on various levels.

The process described above, as well as repetition of songs on the basis of a single hearing, gives us evidence that oral singers learn—and reproduce—songs using story schemas and macrostructural, propositional contents. These overall structures provide a basis for easy learning and recall.[16] As we know, among the features of epic poems (and indeed of folklore in general) is a tendency to preserve the linguistic and poetic conventions that have become familiar and primary in the community. On the level of microstructure the singer has at his disposal (apart from linguistic forms) the traditional means of epic poetry: metrical constraints, parallelism, alliteration, and other preferences of collective tradition.

During the verbalization (composition) process the singer can elaborate some details according to his own preferences and purposes. But in order to produce an entire epic song, he has to activate a number of systems simultaneously. He therefore employs material formulaically organized. This means (using the terms of cognitive science) that the memory of the singer works on multilevel representations containing features of surface and meaning structure. Formulas, ideas, and images cohere; certain scenes and contents tend to include certain details, clusters of forms, and so on.[17] Oral poetry is innovative and traditional at the same time.

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[16] Cf., e.g., Siikala 1990:18-22; Chafe 1977:235-45; Gülich/Quasthoff 1985:178-79; van Dijk 1980:49; van Dijk/Kintsch 1983:190.

[17] Cf. Fry 1981:285 and Fillmore 1977:92-93, 126-28.

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Song, Text, and Cassette: Why We Need Authoritative Audio Editions of Medieval Literary Works

Ward Parks

Since its inception, the medievalist's profession has always been centered around texts. The same could be said, of course, for most humanistic study. Yet for the medievalist, working in historical eras beyond the outreach of untextualized cultural memory, and in language dialects that, without texts, would have perished before the juggernaut of linguistic change, the inevitability of the text as the starting point of inquiry seems like a fact beyond dispute. The hazard that this state of affairs brings with it is that researchers may mistake the exigencies of their profession for the realities of medieval life. Texts and textuality played a dynamic and ever-increasing role in medieval civilization, to be sure. Yet we cannot take it for granted that the Middle Ages were textualized to that degree or in those ways that the textualized viewpoint of a modern print society might lead us to suppose. A spate of recent scholarship has indeed underscored the depth and complexity of orality-literacy relations in the Middle Ages and after.[1]

My purpose here is to advocate the use of these new facilities towards the better understanding of the past. Specifically, as a community of scholars, we ought to undertake systematic sponsorship and production of audio-cassette editions of medieval literature. This publication—and we should conceive of it in this honorific sense—should merely spearhead a comprehensive revamping of scholarly practice towards the recuperation of medieval discourse as sound. Audio editions, in conjunction with printed

[1] See, for example, Clanchy 1979, Ong 1982, Saenger 1982, Stock 1983, and Zumthor 1987, O'Keeffe 1990, and the recent anthologies of essays edited by Pasternack and Doane (1991). Representative of a growing interest in related problems in eighteenth-century studies is Carrithers 1989.

editions, should be regarded as primary sources on which literary critics can ground research and interpretation. In the domain of pedagogy, oral performance—both live and taped—should be incorporated into the medievalist's training, so that students become accustomed to *hearing* and *speaking* medieval literature in addition to reading it visually. The institution of these practices would benefit medieval studies in many ways. Not only would it open channels into a largely forgotten dimension of medieval experience and so stimulate fresh lines of inquiry, but it would make what is sometimes a rather arcane discipline more attractive to outsiders and newcomers. Indeed, in such innovative and forward-looking uses of the electronic media, medievalists, contrary to stereotype, are peculiarly fitted to march in the scholarly vanguard.

The medievalist's inauguration of serious scholarly research methodology into the world of electronic sound must, in the course of time, follow if we do no more than merely to accept the invitation of our subject matter. For several decades oral-formulaic scholarship has been arguing that epic poems such as the *Iliad* or *Beowulf* or the *Chanson de Roland* drew on oral traditions that entailed not merely live rendering of poetic composition before a listening audience but, to one degree or another, composition *in* performance.[2] While poetic extemporization might seem a forbidding task to textualized moderns, we know as a certainty, from Serbo-Croatian and other analogous material, that it can be done, not through bedazzling acts of creation *ex nihilo*, but through traditional processes—such as formulaic composition—that a poet has mastered over the course of a lifetime. Now it has not been possible to prove to the satisfaction of all that any extant medieval poem is itself the direct transcription of oral performance. Indeed, oral-formulaists today generally agree that no textual criterion or set of criteria—including Parry's "test" of orality—can differentiate unequivocally between an oral and a written

[2] This view, which was first fully articulated by Milman Parry (whose works are collected in *The Making of Homeric Verse*, 1971), received its classic formulation in Albert Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (1960). Because "oral studies" is only beginning to be recognized as its own discipline, oral-formulaic and related scholarship has long been scattered centrifugally through other fields, creating forbidding difficulties for the prospective researcher. In recent years these problems have been greatly alleviated, largely through the efforts of John Foley; see especially his annotated bibliography (1985) and introduction (1988). Annotated bibliographies now appear regularly in *Oral Tradition*. For bibliographic surveys of Old and Middle English respectively, see Olsen 1986, 1988 and Parks 1986.

poem.[3] Oral residue persisted long into the age of literacy, and oral-formulaic rhetoric, as Alain Renoir has argued at length, appears in a diversity of works, some of them unmistakably of lettered authorship.[4] At the same time, it would be unreasonable to deny that traditions of oral storytelling underlie much extant medieval poetry in some way; how else could the *Beowulf*-poet, for example, have become acquainted with his early Germanic legendry? And while no positive proof can be adduced, living traditions of oral poetic composition may well have persisted, in one sociological pocket or another, throughout the Middle Ages.[5] In either case, oral traditional models would have impacted on the phenomenology of medieval narrative discourse.

What would this impact have been? How does an oral traditional perception of literary discourse differ from that of a textualized society? The fundamental difference lies in the extent to which an oral poem is an *event* rather than a *thing*.[6] Now it is true that a text too must happen if it is to communicate. At the very least, an author must write it and a reader must read it. Yet the thingness of a book obtrudes far more that does the thingness of an oral performance. Indeed, a book stands between parties in a written communication act, in that such communication requires that they

[3] David Bynum has pointed out that, while many medievalists have engaged in formula-counting, few have followed the careful procedures that Parry himself observed (1978:3-13). Nonetheless, whatever might be said for the test's reliability regarding the Greek and Serbo-Croatian epics for which it was designed, it plainly does not work without modification for a poetic tradition like the Anglo-Saxon that has symmetrical half-lines and makes wide use of variation; on these matters see Fry 1967 and Foley 1981. For a moderate and perspicuous treatment of formularity in *Beowulf*, see Niles 1983:121-38. Old English studies remain, nonetheless, quite divided on issues of orality and literacy; for two recent books that illustrate opposite tendencies, see O'Keeffe 1990 and Lerer 1990.

[4] Explorations in oral-formulaic rhetoric, irrespective of the actual mode of composition, are the main concern in Renoir's *A Key to Old English Poems* (1988). Irving's *Rereading Beowulf* (1989) similarly stresses the importance of oral-formulaic backgrounds.

[5] In later medieval English, the poetry that most probably registers the imprint of such oral traditions, whether directly or at some level of textual remove, belongs to the so-called Alliterative Revival; for a review of pertinent scholarship on this issue, see Parks 1986.

[6] Much of the following draws on my fuller discussions in Parks 1986, 1989, and 1991.

do not interact with each other directly but rather with the text as a physical object intermediary. The writer's writing and the reader's reading unfold typically as solitary acts at different times and places; frequently these persons never meet face to face. An oral performance, by contrast, is spun out at a time and place common to singer and audience. A word or phrase grips the common consciousness for as long as it is physically voiced; when a singer moves on to a new word or phrase, the narrative present changes for all, or at least for all who are paying attention. The vocalization and the immediate linguistic deciphering of auditory sense impressions must occur with near simultaneity, that is, in common public time. Thus the eventuality of oral performance comes to the foreground as immediately shared experience, as it cannot for writers and readers, whose separate encounters are with the physical text.

Because humans are social creatures, the public performance model was liable to have environed the literary imagination to a greater or lesser degree long after writing and reading had come into play. Even solitary writers and readers, in their individual textual performances, may have imaginatively resurrected an oral performance as the optimal setting for the enactment and consummation of a literary text. And the writerly deployment of oral-formulaic rhetoric, as discussed by Renoir (1988), may have catered to precisely such a sensibility. Yet oral-formulaic matters aside, other new modes of reading and interpretive discourse that the Middle Ages gave rise to, though they entailed a degree of textual engagement far beyond what an oral *scop* would have envisioned, retained nonetheless vital links with the world of orality and sound. Until silent perusals became customary, for example, monastic *ruminatio* was commonly attended by undertone vocalizations.[7] This has the effect of

[7] Many contemporary discussions of this matter owe a debt to Jean Leclercq's *The Love of Learning and the Desire for God* (1982:espec. 15-17, 72-75), a work especially distinguished for its deep sensitivity to the monastic experience. For a highly informative and thoroughly documented study of oral and silent reading in the Middle Ages, see Saenger 1982. Saenger argues that silent reading originated at an earlier date and had a more pervasive influence than common scholarly opinion recognizes, though vocal reading played an important role as well. On the other hand, Zumthor in *La lettre et la voix* (1987) argues in detail for medieval literature's fundamental vocality. Undoubtedly we should resist reductive and unitary characterizations of medieval communications, since the situation was a complex one. At the same time, it is important to recognize that the literacy of the general populace lagged behind that of the most erudite, whose views, for the very reason that they were committed to writing, have survived to influence our perceptions of medieval communication today. Plainly some medieval authors, such as Dante, addressed themselves to the literati; yet we cannot assume that other great poets would have disdained

translating sight into sound, text object into auditory event. In the context of such reading habits, the book becomes the source and occasion of multiple performances that are simultaneously seen and spoken; the growing privatization of reading moves through stages of interaction and co-dependency between aural and visual phenomenologies. In another arena of medieval life, as Brian Stock has argued at length, the politics of heresy and the renegotiation of doctrine in the eleventh and twelfth centuries were galvanized by what Stock calls textual communities, centering on charismatic interpreters preaching before what were often illiterate or marginally literate *auditores*.[8] After the foundation of the great medieval universities in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the agonistic structure of medieval theology, reflecting the orientation towards debate and disputation in the educational system, recalls the live, ad hominem flytings of the heroic and courtly literary genres.[9] Thus, for the denizens of the world that created it, an intellectual dialectic that descends to us today as abstract arguments on a written page came surcharged with the recollection of human faces and human voices. Even to the medieval educated, the grapheme and its vocal enunciations were never far away from each other.

Now these observations are, in theory, easily enough grasped, although detailed study of the intricacies of orality-literacy relations in the Middle Ages has only begun. Yet the challenge that orality poses to modern-day academics goes beyond the mere formulation of new theoretical models. What our current methods of study lack is a programmatic grounding for the scholar-researcher's own, personal imaginative engagement with the oral resonances that bathe the written text. At present, our approach to such cultural resonance is predominantly intertextual: that is, we read out the cultural supplementarity of the target text through the medium of other texts (including the "texts" of archaeology

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a wider audience. And even literate people sometimes prefer the immediacy and seeming sociability of oral media: witness the success of radio and television, whose popularity has not been limited to the uneducated.

[8] Stock 1983:88-240; elsewhere in the volume he shows how growing medieval literacy covertly fueled the eucharistic controversy, the development of language theory, and changing views of ritual.

[9] On the agonistic heritage of the academy, see Ong 1982:espec. 119-48; I discuss heroic flyting in *Verbal Dueling in Heroic Narrative* (1990).

and the visual arts).[10] While the vocabulary by which we authorize such literary exegesis is often quite abstract, in fact most of us bring to these interpretive acts assumed scenes of reading and writing that are very concrete, human, and familiar. For these scenes are derived from our own lives, as when we pull books from the library, open them to parallel passages that we display side by side on our desks, thumb through our sheaf of xeroxes, compile note extracts, and engage in the diverse range of intertextual operations that a scholar's life entails. My point here is that intertextuality can exist only if specific people have intertextual experiences. Now there can be no doubt that the emergence of intertextual perspectives gradually revolutionized medieval intellectual life. Yet the manner and extent to which intertextuality shaped the medieval perception of a given work is bound up with such mundane considerations as the amount of bodily labor entailed in procuring and reviewing multiple manuscripts as a background to that reading and the likelihood that an author could assume readers willing to undertake such work. Print technology has made intertextuality more naturally accessible to us today than it was to our medieval ancestors. Moreover, quite apart from quantitative and qualitative distinctions between our intertextuality and theirs, the current theoretical ascendancy of intertextual models has almost entirely blinded us to interperformativity, by which I mean to designate that dimension of a spoken performance that resides in its relationship with other performances.[11] Interperformativity is not arrayed in visual space like open books on a table but unfolds in the play of memory as the performance is actively, presently going on. When hypertextualized literary scholars only understand orality and have not imaginatively grappled with it, they usually wind up reducing interperformativity to intertextuality, when it is not at all the same thing.[12]

[10] While these methods are not sufficient to medieval orality, they are essential movements in our approach to the textuality of a society that did, after all, try to ground itself in the authority of scripture. For a major study of texts and signification in medieval visual arts and language theory as well as medieval poetry, see Jesse Gellrich, *The Idea of the Book* (1985).

[11] For further discussion of this concept, see Parks 1989.

[12] The distinction between intertextuality and interperformativity is not a metaphysical one waiting to be deconstructed away. To the contrary, it originates in the kinds of concrete, pragmatic differences between written and spoken communication as

Thus modern critics routinely assign to medieval literary texts meanings that an aural audience could not possibly have inferred but whose uncovering demands instead a reader opening out a text through an intertextual frame of reference. Live auditors do not have time or mental leisure to trace consciously through long, sequential, multi-stepped interpretive maneuvers while a performance is going on. Spoken discourse can indeed evoke and resonate against a rich and complex cultural background. The spoken always occurs within the unspoken. Yet since the consciousness of listeners is occupied in the immediate act of auditory construal, the unspoken does not find articulation as conscious thought process but remains an inchoate potential empowering or resisting what is indeed said. The reader, by contrast, has the leisure and intertextual resources to engage in a more fully contrapuntal interaction with a phenomenologically stable text. Because the close reading practices to which our training has acclimated us were in large part developed amid the high textuality of a modern print society, the experience of an oral performance group becomes more distant from us with every onward step of our interpretive advance. Unfortunately, the recognition of this state of affairs seems at first to mandate a kind of *via negativa*, by which the positive content of oral discourse becomes construed as merely the impoverished remainder from a series of subtractions. Yet in actuality this paring away of the accretions of textualist hermeneutics merely brings us to the starting point; it is from here that the sensibilities of an oral culture take over. Yet what these sensibilities would have been and how they would reconfigure what presents itself to us as texts will remain largely opaque until the experience of these texts as performed utterance has registered within our sensibilities.

It is precisely this need that audio-cassette editions, as the featured tool in a broad-based attempt to resurrect the vocality and performativity of medieval literature, would address. Many recordings of medieval poetry already exist, of course; and some of these are highly accomplished, both aesthetically and linguistically. Further, a new interest in such recording

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were discussed above. It is true that oral and written interpretation ultimately approximate each other in many respects, but each must labor painfully to articulate what the other possesses as a part of its immediate phenomenology. On the relation between oral and literate models of interpretation, see Ong 1988.

projects seems to be burgeoning in many quarters.[13] Yet the profession as a whole does not yet take such ventures seriously, and this attitude is what we must change first of all. I repeat—and this is my essential thesis: such tapes should not be regarded as mere imitations of literary works whose primary and inviolable state is forever textual, but as editions and primary sources in their own right. If we recognize that audio editions are not mere frills but essential instruments of inquiry, we will endow their production with the kind of material and intellectual investment that will guarantee both their quality and their impact.

This process will be greatly facilitated if medievalists embark upon it in an organized and collaborative manner. Programs and institutes for medieval studies could follow the lead of the Chaucer Studio in sponsoring such recordings, starting with major works that would be of wide interest and generate good sales. If approached in a credible manner, front-rank scholarly publishers or other businesses catering to a scholarly and library market might want to become involved. For a successful revolution in the medium of scholarly publication would redound to the credit of a publisher imaginative and foresighted enough to embark upon it. At the same time, the name of a respectable press would lend dignity to an enterprise that is bound to raise eyebrows at first. Publishers could also provide skilled marketing. Libraries and other prospective buyers would soon come to expect new listings in a line of audio editions in spring and autumn catalogues; and the simplicity of such cassette productions, from the standpoint of recording engineering, would keep costs down.[14] In short, once the idea wins the endorsement of medievalists in general, there is no reason why the business world should resist its implementation.

The community of medievalists could further assist in upholding standards of quality control. Just as a book manuscript must pass several critical readings, so an oral performance, before it is accepted for recording, should be subjected to a rigorous review process. One part of this process

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[13] For example, an ongoing cassette recording program has been launched by the Chaucer Studio, which advertises itself as "a non-profit-making organization founded in 1986 to produce recordings of medieval English texts [both Old and Middle English] at moderate prices" (*Old English Newsletter*, 22 [1989]: 6). Betsy Bowden's *Chaucer Aloud* (1987), which deals in detail with the vocal performing of Chaucerian texts, comes with its own cassette; and her discography (1988) reviews 95 recordings of Old and Middle English. The cassette recording of medieval literature may be an idea whose time has come.

[14] The Chaucer Studio, for example, advertises its cassette recordings for $5.00 each for individual buyers ($10.00 for institutions).

should involve auditions by a panel of experts working either with live performers or, more practically, with inexpensively recorded submissions. Their evaluations should not neglect such technical points as correct pronunciation and mastery of dialect. Yet an oral rendering inevitably interprets, as any actor knows. How has the performer handled timing, tempo, poetic meter? How expressive are his/her intonational dynamics? Does a musical instrument (such as a harp or lyre) accompany the vocalization? Why so, or why not? What sense of space and audience involvement has the recording engineering created? Specialists in speech communications and musicology could provide valuable assistance in questions such as these. Yet we should not stop here. What scholarly interpretation of the poem does the performer endorse, and how does his or her rendering communicate this? Is the recitation historically sensitized? How does it register those textual sources or oral-formulaic backgrounds that bear on particular passages? Where and how does the singer or reciter ironize? How does he or she handle multiple voicings, whether literal, as in scenes of dialogue, or theoretical, as in utterances expressive of deconstructed, decentered personae or cultural heteroglossia? After all, if our critical insights have validity, we ought to be able to relate them to poems as vocalized events. To clarify the approach taken and to foster vigorous critical discussion, the performer or a cohort should provide a full written introduction to the poem and to his or her rendering of it, along with detailed "textual" notes relating to specific passages; and his material should ultimately be published along with the cassette. Because of the wide range of expertise entailed, perhaps these audio editions with their accompanying apparatus should be created by a team including, minimally, a scholar-critic and a trained performer.

Preferably major, scholarly audio editions would be published as companions to existing standard textual editions. Accordingly, the textual supplement to the audio edition of, say, one of the *Canterbury Tales* would refer, when relevant, to the *Riverside Chaucer*. Yet such authoritative and scholarly recordings of extant texts need not be the only genre of audio edition. The pedagogically minded, for example, might develop a dual-language recording of *Beowulf* with interlinear translations for students. The programmatic incorporation of auditory assignments and testing into *Beowulf* classes, alongside the usual work of translating Klaeber's text, might greatly speed up the mastery of Old English while enhancing the student's initial encounters with the poem. On the other hand, critics who wish to feature specialized interpretations of perspectives could tailor recordings to a more extravagant cut. One version might play the same

poem before diverse audiences—courtly, clerical, and popular. Another might reconstitute in the mind of a solitary reader whose ruminations supplement the voice of the text with recollected phrases from other works, vernacular or Latin, snatches from the liturgy or popular song, noises of daily life, and so forth. I know that these suggestions may seem outlandish at present. Yet this appearance of eccentricity is merely an effect of the entrenched textuality of scholarly habit. Once the aural phenomenology of medieval culture has been worked into our scholarly grain, its importance will be all too obvious to us, and we will devise means for its articulation and transmission that cannot be imagined now.

When new audio editions are released, they should be greeted with the same interest and careful scrutiny as is given to a new book. Major journals should run reviews; bibliographies should pick them up; and annotated discographies, such as Betsy Bowden's 1988 review of fully 95 recordings of Old and Middle English literature, should become standard reference tools. A favorable critical reception should carry with it such prestige as could legitimate, for example, an academic promotion or the awarding of grant funding. Conventional research scholars, for their part, could use such audio editions, in conjunction with printed editions, as a basis for their published research. For those scholars who develop their critical schemata through a series of *listenings*, rather than through a series of visual *readings*, will be far better attuned to an oral and vocal hermeneutic sensibility than will their text-bound counterparts. The habit of accessing medieval literature through the ears will enable them to discriminate interpretations a listening audience could derive from a live performance from those which it could not. At the same time, since acculturation in oral aesthetics need not precipitate a relapse into illiteracy, such scholars' ability to study medieval textual traditions would be unimpaired. The Middle Ages were a time of both intense orality and intense literacy. The future medievalist will need to be proficient in both media.

Though cassette performances recuperate the fossilized sonance of textualized discourse, they do not bring it back to the public domain. For most audiophiles today, if they are seriously listening to a recording and not using it as mere background, do so privately, on a car or home system or on a walkman; earphone auditing is already second nature to many of today's adolescents, who will undoubtedly infiltrate the ranks of academia in due course. Such private listenings are most analogous to the private replaying of discourse through the memory or through ruminative reading. Vital though such experiences are, they should be supplemented by live

performances at medievalists' conventions and gatherings, for by such means we can recover a sense of medieval literature as *public event*. I have often noted that, when a conference speaker has the gumption to launch into a dramatic rendering, much of the audience perks up; and while afterwards participants in the session usually treat the episode lightly, since it provided an enjoyable and therefore unscholarly pastime, they remember it better than the standard paper. This spontaneous interest, I admit, is born of the better instincts of medievalists whose intimate familiarity with and love for their subject discourse makes them want to experience it as much of it was originally meant to be. We should restructure our discipline so that this eminently healthy impulse can bloom to the fullest extent. Conferences with significant medieval representation should feature ongoing readings, perhaps with a touch of pageantry, costume, musical accompaniment, perhaps with interlinear translations, particularly for the more difficult dialects. If managed with an intelligent enthusiasm, such sessions might increase the popularity of medieval studies even while sparking new critical insights and lines of research.

The greatest impediment to the program of reoralizing medieval literature as I have been describing it here lies not in establishing appropriate theory but in overcoming the lethargy of old habits. And I will be the first to acknowledge that I don't practice what I preach: my own research and pedagogical methods are almost exclusively textual. Yet the potential gains for our discipline are such as to justify whatever steps we as a community can take, even if they must be, at first, baby-steps. But once the momentum has been established, we might find hidden reserves of talent coming to our aid. Indeed, in my observation medievalists' quarters are surprisingly well stocked with closet bards. As Sir Toby Belch said to Sir Andrew Aguecheek, "Wherefore are these things hid? Wherefore have these gifts a curtain before 'em?" Strike up the harp and let the song begin! *Why not*? There is nothing unscholarly about such practice. To the contrary, in an age when the electronic revolution is sweeping past and leaving us in its wake, it would be unscholarly *not* to make use of the tools that technology has thrust into our hands.

Literary scholarship today is still, in most part, clinging to a brink that society at large has already plunged across and found to be a gateway. To continue to take textuality as the measure of all things and possibilities would be to deny the world that is even now being born around us. Richard Lanham (1989) has recently argued that the digital revolution promises to explode our notions of what a text, and therefore what textual study, means. Audio and audio-visual recordings, however, will translate us beyond the

dominion of texts altogether, into a universe where textuality is one of several modalities and where texts are constituted substances, not the unique and constituting primal stuff. Embracing the new media will not only bring us face to face with the future but, ironically enough, will put us into closer touch with the past. It will restore to our awareness *as practicing scholars* that experience of the spoken word, unmediated by texts, that is the common inheritance of all people.

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Latin Charms of Medieval England: Verbal Healing in a Christian Oral Tradition

Lea Olsan

This is an essay to open a discussion of medieval Latin charms as a genre rooted in oral tradition. It will concern itself solely with materials drawn from manuscripts made in England from about A.D. 1000 to near 1500. One reason for setting such limitations on the materials is that restricting the study chronologically and geographically will facilitate identification of features peculiar to the insular English tradition of Latin charms.[1] For though Latin charms can be found throughout medieval Europe, to make cross-cultural comparisons prematurely might obscure distinctive regional features. To begin, it seems best to state what is meant by the word "charm" in this paper.

Carmen is the word that in classical Latin meant, among other things, "a solemn ritual utterance, usually sung or chanted in a metrical form" (*OLD*). The word denoted, on the one hand, a religious hymn, or on the other, a magical chant, spell, or incantation. Related words in late Latin are *incantamentum* and *incantatio*.[2] These words carry associations with magic due to the implications of chanting or incanting in pagan contexts. In the medieval manuscripts under consideration here, *carmen* is the word repeatedly used as a tag, a heading, or a marginal gloss to call attention to some kind of verbal cure. Its meaning is not confined solely to spoken remedies, since the directions often indicate that the efficacious words are to be written, nor is the term attached especially to poetic texts. The word

[1] A methodology for the study and comparison of oral literature that takes into account "tradition-dependence" as well as "genre-dependence" is described by Foley (1990:ch. 1).

[2] DuCange gives "*Incantamentum ad leniendum dolorem adhibere, apud Ammian. lib. 16 ubi Lindenbrogius*"; for *incantatio*: "Fredegar. Epist. cap. 9, *Mummolum factione Fredegundae, cui reputabant filium suum per incantationem interfecisse, iussit Rex suggillare*."

carmen, as well as Middle English "charme," indicates that a remedy works by means of words, rather than, for example, the application of plants.[3] In the early, Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, vernacular words also designate verbal cures: *galdor* and its verb *ongalan* come from the Indo-European root *ghel–*, which has two lines of semantic development, one of which gives rise to the English words *yell* and *yelp*, while the other is associated with enchanting and singing. The latter meaning survives in the word *nightingale*. Old English *gebede*, meaning "prayer," also appears with reference to healing formulas. In Anglo-Saxon vernacular charms one finds the directions "sing this gealdor" and "sing this gebede" accompanying the same kinds of formulas. By and large, the most salient feature of the short Latin texts that are denominated charms in this paper is their Christian character.

In what follows I shall address four elementary questions: (1) What are the near-allied genres? In other words, in what contexts do charms appear in the manuscripts? (2) In what sense can the genre be described as oral traditional? (3) What are the forms of language in which the genre coheres? (4) How, on what occasion, by whom, and for whom are charms performed, and how do they function within these situations?

Manuscript Contexts and Allied Genres

Charms, or verbal remedies, are closely allied with medical recipes (Anglo-Saxon *læcedomes*) and remedial rituals on one side and with prayers, blessings, and in some linguistic features with exorcism on the other, verbal, side.

One important manuscript context for charms, both during the Anglo-Saxon period and afterwards, is the category of manuscripts containing collections of treatments compiled for practicing healers, physicians, or leeches. Charms, intermingled with non-verbal prescrip-tions for various ailments, occur in these books both in the vernaculars (Old English, Middle

[3] When such verbal formulas are, however, employed in combination with herbal remedies or become associated with amulets and talismans, they appear in no way different from those unassociated with objects. It is the formulas, spoken and written, intelligible and unintelligible, that are the focus of attention here.

English, Anglo-Norman French) and in Latin.[4] The common purpose of such books is to satisfy the need for a sort of handbook of treatments for symptoms and maladies. Charms fall in among the various modes of curing. For example, in one cure for "the devil's temptations" from the Anglo-Saxon *Leechbooks*,[5] we can see traces of three curative genres combined—an herb-cure, a ritual employing holy water, and curative words, or a charm, in Latin. Most of the remedy is in the vernacular:

> Drenc wiþ deofles costunga. þefanþorn, cropleac, elehtre, ontre, bisceopwyrt, finul, cassuc, betonice. Gehalga þas wyrta do on ealu halig wæter and sie se drenc þærinne þær se seoca man inne sie. And simle ær þon þe he drince, sing þriwa ofer þam drence: Deus in nomine tuo saluum me fac. (B. L. Royal 12.D.XVII, fol. 125v-126r)
>
> [A drink against the devil's temptations. Tuftythorn, cropleek, lupin, ontre, bishopwort, fennel, cassuck, betony. Bless these herbs, put [them] in ale [and] holy water, and let the drink be within the room where the sick man is. And repeatedly before he drinks, sing three times over the drink, "God, in your name make me well."]

Although the Latin part of this remedy is very simple and slight, its power is implied by its incantatory function and by the directions that the drink (and the words) "be within the room where the sick man is." The shift in grammatical person from the prescriptive *sing* to *saluum me fac*, in which the speaker who is not the patient speaks for him, acts within the circumstances to coalesce the intent of the care-taker/healer and the patient. The source of power in the formula itself (*Deus in nomine tuo salvum me fac*) resides in its implicative weight. Textually, the formula derives from the first line of Vulgate Psalm 53; however, in this oral performance the single line evokes the entire psalm. John Foley's concept of "traditional referentiality" seems operative here, for the one line evokes "a context that is enormously larger and more echoic than the text or work itself" (1991:7).

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[4] Examples can be found in Grattan and Singer 1952 (Old English and Latin), Ogden 1938 (Middle English and Latin), and B. L. MS Royal 12.D.XXV (Middle English, Anglo-Norman, and Latin).

[5] In this paper the term *Leechbooks* refers to the entire contents of British Library MS. Royal 12.D.XVII, which is written in the hand of one scribe. It consists of three parts: the first two are commonly identified as *Bald's Leechbook* on the basis of the colophon at the top of folio 109r; the third scholars have designated a separate collection of recipes. See Wright 1955:13 and Cameron 1983:153.

The line from Psalm 53 either functions as a cue for recitation of the whole psalm, or it adverts to the known, but here unspoken, contents of the psalm. If the reciter here were a monk or priest, the psalm would have been a deeply ingrained habit of thought no longer tied to its textual source.[6]

Words play only a supporting role to the medicinal herbs, which have been blessed and administered with ale and holy water in the *Leechbook* charm. A different overlapping of genres occurs in B. L. Royal 12.B.XXV, fol. 61r.[7] In this fourteenth-century collection of remedial and utilitarian works, a remedy for toothache embodies prayer, which is termed a charm and directed to be tied to the head of the patient. The charm exemplifies the wide overlap between Christian charms and prayers:[8]

> Apud vrbem Alexandriam requiescit corpus Beate Appolonie virginis et martiris cuius dentes extraxerunt impii. Et per intercessionem Beate Marie virginis et omnium sanctorum et Beate Appolonie virginis et martiris, libera, Domine, dentes famuli tui a dolere dencium. Sancte Blasi, ora pro me. In nomine + patris etc. Pater Noster. Aue Maria. Et ligatur istud carmen super capud pacientis.
>
> [In the city Alexandria rests the body of Blessed Apollonia, virgin and martyr, whose teeth the wicked extracted. Through the intercession of Blessed Maria, virgin, and of all saints and blessed Apollonia, virgin and martyr, free, Lord, the teeth of your servant from toothache. Saint Blaise, pray for me. In the name of the Father, etc. Our Father. Ave Maria. And let this charm be tied upon the head of the patient.]

A similar combination of adjuration and intercessory prayers occurs in the medical collection known as the *Liber de Diversis Medicinis*, edited

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[6] See Dyer 1989 (535-36) on the universality of the psalms: "Every monk was expected to memorize all 150 psalms"; furthermore, "years of daily encounters with the prayers of the psalmist fostered a rich contextuality of associations, a private and interior exegesis of scriptural text in an ever-widening field of significance." These facts and the medieval *tituli psalmorum*, which designated some lines in the psalms as the *vox Christi* (538), deserve further consideration as partial explanation for why and how psalms came to be used in formulas for verbal healing.

[7] For a description of this manuscript and an account of the Latin charms, see Olsan 1989b.

[8] For a discussion of the theoretical problem of distinguishing prayers and charms as two genres of discourse and a proposed solution based on the structure of the invocation of the mediator in each, see Todorov 1978:255-56.

by Margaret Ogden (1938:18), where a marginal note reads, "a charme for the teethe." Instances such as these indicate that in the fourteenth century prayers were used as amulets—as above where the prayer is tied to the patient's head—and that charms, arising in the contemporary Christian culture and composed of Christian elements (fragments of liturgy, saints' legends, prayers) were accepted as effective remedial prescriptions (cp. Thomas 1971:42 and Olsan 1989b).

One explanation for the lack of practical differentiation between charms and prayers sees them both as forms of ritualism. Mary Douglas has remarked on the difficulty (even for a thoughtful theologian) of making a "tidy distinction between sacramental and magical efficacy," since both are "concerned with the correct manipulation of efficacious signs" (1982:9-10). Furthermore, it is but a short step from the evocation of powerful symbols in formal ritual contexts to the evocation of the same symbols, phraseology, and beliefs in essentially magical ways in the humbler circumstances of life when a person feels in distress or need. In Latin Christian charms used by medieval people in England (and elsewhere), the efficacy of the remedies lies, in part, in the patient's response to the powers associated with symbols evoked from the Christian tradition. Nevertheless, understanding that medieval charms generally appropriate Christian symbols and beliefs leaves the question in too broad a frame to tell us much about how they work and how they might be best understood as a healing genre. A more productive strategy is to ask whether we can speak of medieval Latin charms as constituting a traditional oral genre of some sort and thereby attain some insights not available under the aegis of previous categories, such as "popular religion" or "superstitious medicine."

Orality

The evidence for defining charms as an oral genre presents a varied landscape in which we can locate objects of different kinds. Every judgment concerning what species of thing we have in a particular charm—whether it be oral, oral-derived, or whether it be conceived as or copied from a written text[9]—must carefully take into account the character

[9] On the principle of "text-dependence," see Foley 1990:11 ff.

of its textualization.[10] In some cases, a charm is written carelessly in a margin of a text or the text bears signs of its having been recorded directly from aural memory. The following charm for childbirth was added at the bottom of an unfilled leaf (fol. 129v) in B. L. Sloane 3160 by someone not fully literate in Latin. In the representation below, parentheses have been put where brackets appear in the manuscript text to designate units of speech. In the manuscript, the narrative section of the charm through *Christus regnat* is underlined and the whole charm roughly boxed in. Capitals used below to distinguish the words containing power are mine.

> (In nomine patris LAZARUS) Et filij VENI FORAS)
> (et speritus scantus [sic] CHRISTUS TE UOCAT)
> + CHRISTUS + STONAT [sic] +)
> (IESUS PREDICAT +) CHRISTUS REGNAT) + EREX + AREX +
> RYMEX + CHRISTI ELEYZON + EEEEEEEEE +.
>
> [In the name of the Father LAZARUS and of the Son COME FORTH and of the Holy Spirit CHRIST CALLS YOU + CHRIST + SHOUTS + JESUS PREACHES + CHRIST RULES + EREX + AREX + RYMEX + CHRISTI ELEYZON + EEEEEEEEE +.]

Errors in the Latin ("speritus scantus" and "stonat") suggest how little experience the recorder of the charm has had writing Latin. The spoken form of the charm is suggested by the alternation between the framing *In nomine* formula and the words borrowed from the Gospel of John (11:43). Each part of the *In nomine* formula prepares for the following words of power: "Lazarus," "ueni foras," then "Christus te uocat" with its appositional elaborations "Christus tonat" and "Iesus predicat." In terms of speech-act theory (Austin 1975:99-102), the power of these gospel-based formulas is constituted in their illocutionary force, which will bring about the delivery of a child. Then a different kind of compositional unit follows. The nonsense string "EREX + AREX + RYMEX +" is probably generated on the sounds of the morpheme *rex* (king), which derives semantically from the last formula in the preceding unit ("Christus regnat").

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[10] For a careful study of the implications of manuscript texts for understanding how a vernacular poem was received, see Katherine O'Brien O'Keeffe's study (1987) of the manuscript contexts of "Cædmon's Hymn." She concludes that "the differing level of and nature of linguistic cues in Latin and Old English imply that Cædmon's *Hymn* was read with different expectations, conventions, and techniques than those for the Latin verses with which it traveled" (20). The manuscript evidence of Latin charms suggests that Latin texts, as well as vernacular texts, display various degrees of orality.

Another mark of orality in the Lazarus charm, that is, apart from its utilization of sound patterns and its direct recourse to the power of Christ's spoken words,[11] is its evocation of an untextualized communal tradition in which the resurrection/rebirth of Lazarus is symbolically identified with the birth of a child. In the charm, the identity is entirely implicative. However, other instances of the same motif reinforce the sense of its traditional character.[12]

Charms tend to be relatively short pieces, yet frequently we find directions for performance inscribed with the text. Where the verb *dic* or *dices* occurs, the words are meant to be spoken, that is, the written charm is a kind of script for oral performance. Its textualization is somehow incidental. This situation raises the prospect that in medieval charms we can directly observe the textualization of an oral tradition. There is some truth to this statement. That is to say, some charms like the Lazarus charm above seem to have been recorded from aural memory, and others, although neatly textualized, are clearly meant to be performed orally. In addition, incantatory speech, challenges to disease-causing agents,[13] and narrative and dialogue forms[14]—all of which are marks of orality[15]—perdure. Yet a detailed mapping of the orality of charms presents a more complicated picture than these facts at first suggest.

One complicating factor is that writing, including written performance, appears as an integral part of the tradition of insular Latin charms even in the earliest records, just as it did in ancient magic.[16] For

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[11] See Ong for a still useful description of the distinctive perceptual and cognitive impact of spoken words (1967:ch. 3), especially in Christian tradition (179-188).

[12] For example, B. L. Sloane 2584, fol. 25v.

[13] Verbal challenges to disease-causing agents correspond to the "agonistic dynamics of oral thought processes" as described in Ong 1982:43-45.

[14] Stories are a fundamental way of organizing knowledge in oral societies and a mode for bringing the past into the present. See, e.g., Ong 1982:140-41.

[15] See Ong 1982:38-39 and espec. 43-46.

[16] Goody (1968:16) notes the antiquity of the use of writing in magical texts, which he identifies as a separate category from "Books of God that form the core of world religions." He observes: "This tradition of magical texts goes back to the beginnings of

some charms in medieval manuscripts consist solely of graphic symbols or letters, which were never meant to be spoken. In addition, directions to write formulas down and carry them on the person occur in the oldest insular manuscripts.[17] Furthermore, charms written on objects (leaves, communion hosts, virgin parchment, knife handles, sticks, and the like) have an extended symbolic significance.[18] Such uses of writing in connection with charms do not signify that charms should be understood as if generated primarily as written texts. Rather, writing as a technology was very early adapted to the rituals and tradition of curative magic.

The point needs clarification. In medieval society, even in early Anglo-Saxon society, we are already confronted with a mixed culture in which we find both oral and literate registers. Functionally, however, charms remain closely tied to social contexts in which traditional attitudes, values, and habits of thought predominated in the contexts of human (and animal) illness, childbirth, and protection of property. Furthermore, charms, in fact, live only in performance. Whether the performance is written or oral, it is conceived as an efficacious action and often operates in combination with physical rituals involving face-to-face human interactions characteristic of oral societies.[19] But this picture changes. The interface between written and spoken, literate and oral modes in verbal healing adjusts with cultural shifts in the dominant media. In the later centuries of the period under consideration, that is, by the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, Latin charms are not only being written in a more regular clerkly Latin, but some charms appropriate highly literate textual interpretations, for example, the use of Biblical types.[20]

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writing itself, stemming as it does from the Mesopotamian world where writing itself developed."

[17] For example, ligatures, *Himmelsbriefe*, and *breves*. On the authority of the breve that "speaks to its hearers," see Clanchy 1973:204-5.

[18] On the interpretation of writing as symbolic object, see Clanchy 1973:205-8.

[19] Cf. Goody and Watt 1962-63:307, Goody 1977:ch. 3, and Ong 1982.

[20] Brian Stock (1983:527) has said of the new categories of thought developed in the eleventh and twelfth centuries: "The effects were not only felt in intellectual domain, where one saw a proliferation of exegesis, historical writing, philosophy, and theology. As noted, the new structures also fed into and were in turn nourished by the world of lived

In the next two parts of this paper, the problem of defining the genre will be broached through analysis of structural components and performance contexts. Through these approaches other examples will emerge to clarify the nature and degrees of orality in the charms.

Linguistic Analysis

Latin charms display a variety of linguistic forms ranging from structural components, or "compositional units" (Halpern and Foley 1978:909) built on patterns of nonsensical sounds to Latin verse, strings of powerful names, narrative themes (including dialogues), and select syntactic patterns—such as performatives of adjuration and conjuration and prescriptives. Frequently, two or three such separable units are combined within one charm, although I have not found a single charm that contains them all.

Sound patterns alone serve as the effective source of power in some charms. In some instances, what have become nonsense syllables show traces of previous semantic structure or borrowing from languages exotic to the latest users. Two charms associated with snakes, one apparently for snakebite, the other for catching snakes, will illustrate:

> 1. Carmen
> PORRO PORRO POTO
> ZELO ZELO ZEBETA
> ARRA ARRAY P[A]RACLITUS
> Et pone predictam aquam in ore pacientis sive sit homo sive sit animal.
> (B. L. Royal 12 B.XXV, fol. 62v)
>
> [PORRO PORRO I DRINK
> ZELO ZELO ZEBETA
> ARRA ARRAY PARACLETE
> And place the aforementioned water in the mouth of the patient whether it be a man or whether it be an animal.]
>
> 2. Ad capiendum serpentes.
> In nomine patris etc.

---

experience. It was not only the educated, who were in direct contact with classical or Christian tradition, who began to adopt textual models for behavior." This explanation fits what we observe going on in the charms: when people learned in exegesis and theology employed charms, as they did, they infused those charms with elements deriving directly from exegesis and textual study.

ARAPS IASPER SCRIP
PORRO PONTEM
ZORO ZEHEBETE ZARAF
MARAS SPIRITUS P[A]RACLITUS
hic bubulla bimenna que iaces super petrum et herbas. Audi et intellige quia data est michi potestas super te per deum omnipotentem et per Adam et per Euam et illam maledicciionem in qua recepisti. Sta et noli suspirare quia basili[s]cus es.

[For catching snakes.
In the name of the Father, etc.
ARAPS JASPER WRITE?
PORRO BRIDGE
ZORO ZEHEBETE ZARAF
MARAS SPIRIT PARACLETE
Here two-fold? creature, you who lie upon the rock and grass. Listen and know that power was given to me over you through God Omnipotent and through Adam and through Eve and the curse in which you were caught. Stay and do not breathe because you are a basilisk.]

Looking for a moment only at the nonsense phrases in these two charms, which follow each other on a leaf devoted to cures for dogbites and snakebites, it appears that the nonsense strings are multiforms[21] of one another and that alliteration and syllabic echoes maintain the strings:

1. PORRO PORRO POTO / ZELO ZELO ZEBETA / ARRA ARRAY P[A]RACLITUS
2. (ARAPS IASPER SCRIP) / PORRO PONTEM / ZORO ZEHEBETE ZARAF / MARAS SPIRITUS P[A]RACLITUS

In the first charm, each three-stress string duplicates a syllabic pattern that varies at the third item. In the third element, ARRA ARRAY seems to be generated by reduplication from the first syllables of the word PARACLITUS. In the second charm, the first three words, which precede the three strings, play the voiceless stop [p] and liquid [r] and spirant [s]

[21] Albert Lord's concept of "multiformity" as observed in singers' performances of Serbo-Croatian epic (1960:119-20) provides one of the most useful strategies for understanding so-called "variants" of charms, since it does not privilege any one occurrence of a charm as "source" over any other. That is, it frees us from the constraint—the interpretive error, I would say—of choosing a single charm text as the standard, then assuming that all variations from that text were somehow corruptions of one kind or another.

against one another in the string ARAPS-IASPER-SCRIP as r-p-s / s-p-r / s-r-p. The pattern of the first line also finds a sort of "responsion" in the MARAS SPIRITUS P[A]RACLITUS as r-s / p-r-s / p-r-s. Further, is *ara-* in ARAPS connected to the ARRA patterns found in the first charm? Given only these two specimens, it is impossible to say with certainty; yet, had we other charms containing these elements it might be possible to confirm a connection. The second element in the second charm (PORRO PONTEM) is related to the similar PORRO-string in the first; the Z-alliteration in the second charm alternates with [r] instead of [l], a small phonetic shift in liquids, whereas ZEBETA and ZEHEBETE appear to be the reflexes of one another. In addition to the phonetic, alliterative, assonantal, and syllabic patterns, both strings contain traces of semantic material: POTO means "I drink;" the P[A]RACLITUS may well be Paraclete, the Holy Spirit; JASPER was an Arab magus; and I suggest that "SCRIP" may be the trace of the word *scribe*, as ARAPS may be *Arab* where the voiced bilabial fricative has undergone assimilation to the voiceless fricative.

Other strings that seem constructed on similar patterns in other charms are, for example, *rex pax nax* in a tenth-century toothache charm (B. L. Harley 585, fol. 184r), *max max pax pater noster* in a charm to stop bleeding (B. L. Sloane 122, fol. 48), and *arex, artifex, filia* in a charm to relieve insomnia (B. L. Harley 273, fol. 213v) or *bhuron bhurinum bhitaono bhitano* for childbirth (B. L. Sloane 2584, fol. 25v). Two other sorts of unintelligible strings occur repeatedly in charms: (1) the palindrome *sator arepo tenet opera rotas*,[22] which is often written in a word square and (2) the "*signum*" *thebel gut guttany* that someone attempts to represent in Greek letters in the margin of folio 7r of B. L. Sloane 56, where the fourteenth-century surgeon John Arderne says it is good for spasm. In B. L. Sloane 2584, fol. 31r, "Thes names schul be write in parchemyn with crosses": *thebal ech guth et guthanay*. The "names" are prescribed for "the cramp"

[22] Susan Stewart points out that "[t]he palindrome is perhaps the most perfect linguistic reversal, equivalent to being able to turn the whole body upside down" (1979:70). The magical efficaciousness of the *sator* square, which surpasses the palindrome in reversibility by being readable from the right to the left and from the bottom to the top as well as left to right and top to bottom, probably has to do with reversing circumstances, not with hidden meanings or sound patterns. See Forbes 1966:86-93 for a review of its general purposes and Moeller 1973 for a theory of pre-Christian origins and possible number symbolism.

and attributed to the physician "Maistre Ion Cattesdene."[23]

Only a few Latin charms display poetic structures. Below are two closely related examples, which seem to constitute multiforms of a charm for joint pain. These are found in the Anglo-Saxon collections of remedies.

1. Ad[24] articulorum dolorem[25] constantem[26] malignantium
diabolus ligauit[27]
angelus curauit
Dominus saluauit
in nomine medicina. Amen. (B. L. Harley 585, fol. 183r)

[For persistent debilitating pain in the joints
The Devil has bound
An angel has cured
The Lord has freed [made well]
In (his) name (is) the remedy.]

2. Wiþ liðwærce
Sing viiii siþum þis gealdor þæron þin spatl spiw on.
Malignus obligauit
angelus curauit
Dominus sanauit. (B. L. Royal 12.D.XVII, fol. 116r)

[Against joint pain.
Sing this charm nine times thereon thy spittle spew on.
The Evil one has tied
An Angel has cured
The Lord has healed.]

Both have a kernel three-line structure composed of noun-verb and seven syllables in the first line and six in the two subsequent ones. All three lines

[23] This John Cattesdon is probably the well-known John Gaddesdon, the fourteenth-century physician who wrote the *Rosa Anglica,* mentioned by Chaucer (*CT* I. 434 "Gatesden"). See Talbot and Hammong 1965:145-50 and cf. Kieckhefer 1989:72-73.

[24] Ad] ab MS.

[25] dolorem] dolorum MS.

[26] constantem] constantium MS.

[27] ligauit] lignauit MS.

in both charms show end-rhyme on the perfect tense morpheme *-auit* and a mid-line rhyme on the masculine noun ending *-us*; furthermore, each line has two stresses. What is interesting and suggests oral composition is that within these limited patterns the vocabulary and, in the first line, even the word boundaries differ. For although both initial lines contain seven syllables, in the first one the division is 4-3, in the second 3-4. In the last line the first charm gives *saluauit*, while the second gives *sanauit*. These charms show good internal evidence for oral composition, because the same rhythmical, phonetic, and morphological constraints have generated different lexical items that fit the patterns.[28] These instances of a multiform also argue against the widespread notion that magical formulas will always be the same word-for-word.

Evocation of powerful words, names, and titles constitutes a third kind of compositional unit. Examples range from the use of the name "Ishmael" on a laurel leaf to cure lack of sleep due to elves, to a list of types of Christ in a charm against death and danger, part of which is given below:

> Praeterea quicumque homo super[29] se portauerit non morte mala morietur nec in aliquo periculo peribit. Et si mulier in partu torquetur et arma del viderit sito deliberabitur. Et est visio infra s[c]ripta longitudinis domini nostri iesu christi.
> + In nomine patris et filij et spiritus sancti Amen. +
> + MESSIAS + SOTHER + EMANUEL + SABAOTH + ADONAY
> + OTHEOS + PANTON + CRATON + ET YSUS + KYROS + MEDIATOR + SALVATOR + ALPHA ET O + PRIMOGENITUS + VITA + UERITAS + SAPIENCIA + VIRTUS + EGO SUM QUI SUM + AGNUS + OMNIS + UITULIS + SERPENS + AVIS + LEO + VERMIS + YMAGO + LUX + SPLENDOR + PANIS + FLOS + MISERCORS + CREATOR + ETERNUS + REDEMPTOR + TRINITAS + VNITAS + AMEN + ADHONAY + FLOS + SABAOTH + LEO + LOTH + TAV + . (B. L. Sloane 2584, fol. 45v)
>
> [Moreover whatever man will have carried it written on him will not fall into an evil death or any danger. And if a woman is tormented in childbirth and has looked upon the instruments of the passion of God, she will be quickly delivered. And an image is written below of the length of Our Lord, Jesus Christ.+ In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit Amen.

[28] Halpern and Foley, working with variants of charms in a living tradition, observe, "variations depend upon identity of the frame [of the individual prosodic units], the immediate textual environment, and the performance situation" (1978:909).

[29] super] suis MS.

MESSIAH + SOTHER + EMANUEL + SABAOTH + ADONAY +
OTHEOS + PANTON + CRATON + ET YSUS + KYROS + MEDIATOR +
SALVATOR + ALPHA ET O[MEGA] + PRIMOGENITUS + VITA +
UERITAS+
SAPIENCIA + VIRTUS + EGO SUM QUI SUM + AGNUS + OMNIS +
UITULIS + SERPENS + AVIS + LEO + VERMIS + YMAGO + LUX +
SPLENDOR + PANIS + FLOS + MISERCORS + CREATOR + ETERNUS +
REDEMPTOR + TRINITAS + VNITAS + AMEN + ADHONAY + FLOS +
SABAOTH + LEO + LOTH + TAV +]

That the list constitutes an expandable compositional unit is suggested by the fact that the list of names has been extended after the word CREATOR by a second scribe into the bottom margin of the manuscript leaf. Moreover, although the directions may once have preceded drawings of the instruments of the Passion (especially the nails, cross, and crown of thorns) that are employed elsewhere,[30] in this charm "length of our Lord" refers to the names from Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Space does not allow a detailed discussion of the symbolic significance of these names here, but I would point out that some of the names—for example, UITULIS + SERPENS + AVIS + LEO + VERMIS + YMAGO + LUX + SPLENDOR + PANIS + FLOS ("bull-calf," "serpent," "sheep," "lion," "worm," "light," "splendor," "bread," and "flower")—reflect a learned tradition of types that is especially developed in twelfth-century sermons and mystical thought.

Verbal remedies that employ narratives, allusion to narrative themes or motifs, and dialogue constitute an interesting category of charms from the point of view of oral traditions, because events involving biblical figures depicted in charms often have no scriptural sources (canonical or apocryphal), although a biblical narrative may supply a cue or kernel, sometimes a model.

Two general observations about narrative motifs in charms can be made. First, the number of themes or motifs is limited, so that although any or every narrative in the Old or New Testament or Apocrypha, not to mention the saints' legends, might potentially generate a charm, the generation of the narrative motifs associated with scriptural and other written sources derives from the genre itself in its functional aspect as remedy for specific human ills. Charms, which address the sicknesses, needs, and anxieties of medieval people, *tap into or find remedies in* Christian lore. So specific are the curative *loci* developed in the charms that a survey of some of the purposes of charms can function as an index to

[30] Glazier MS 39-G contains such illuminations. See Sheldon 1978:139,143. So also B. L. Sloane 3160, fol. 168v.

narrative motifs.

Purpose	**Narrative Motif**
headache	Susanna-Mary Magdalene-Jonah-Daniel-three boys-others
toothache	St. Apollonia, St. Blaise, St. Peter's complaint to Christ
fevers	St. Peter's complaint to Christ, Seven Sleepers
eye spot	St. Nichasius and St. Blaise
blindness	Tobit
bleeding	Longinus, Christ in the River Jordan
wounds	Longinus, Christ's wounds, Three good brothers
childbirth	Anne-Elizabeth-Mary, Christ to Lazarus, Arcus
worms	Job
an evil death	Jonah-Daniel-three boys-others
controlling snakes	Adam and Eve
insomnia	Seven Sleepers
fires of lust	St. Agatha, St. Laurence, St. Columquille
thieves	Dismas and Gesmas, Jerusalem
dwarf	St. Macutus, St. Victoric[us]
vermin	Christ in Jerusalem
poison or venom	St. John

The interconnection among need, purpose, and narrative motif is integral to understanding how charms of this kind are generated.

The second observation that can be made is that these motifs, which constitute both whole charms and parts of charms, can also be evoked by mere mention of core elements. For example, worms in a person or in a horse can be ameliorated by the phrase "Job habuit vermes" (B. L. Sloane 122, fol. 113v), because invocation of Job, who is called in the charms "Holy" or "Saint," establishes the speaker's connections to the special power of the holy person, that is, to the *potentia*, which extends between the presence of the saint and the mortal who seeks relief (cp. Brown 1981:ch. 6). The act of naming, or calling, carries with it a constellation of

associations, such as: Job, as a Holy Man, suffered this way, loved God, was loved of God; Job, as a Holy Man, has power from God and as a Holy Man dispenses that power to those in need, so that help in this circumstance, which is his special concern, can be assured.

Another feature of narrative charms is that although some compositional units in the narrative charms persist, others change. The effect of changes is often to bring into operation different symbolic associations. For examples, the *virgo* of the Anglo-Saxon *Arcus* charm shifts to *virga*, an exegetical type of the Virgin, in a late fourteenth-century version of the same charm (Olsan 1989a). In late antique charms, mimetic patterns—such as "Flee, flee barley bit, another one pursues you," spoken in Greek while one holds a barley seed to a sty (Niedermann 1916: VIII.193)—operate on what Peter Brown (1981:118) has called a "horizontal model of healing," the efficacy of which lies in virtues of natural phenomena. In Christian charms this pattern shifts to a "vertical model," which draws its power from Christ in Heaven, as, for example, in a Christian charm to chase away a swelling, "Fuge, diabolus, Christus te sequitur" (Storms 1948:41). This capability for metamorphosis of a motif is one reason why it is useful to focus on the charms of a single tradition. We then have the opportunity to map the forms of a motif over time within one region.

The following examples of narrative charms containing a dialogue between Peter and Christ are intended to illustrate two features: first, that the same motif can serve two different purposes, curing both toothache and fevers; and second, that different kinds of compositional units have attached to each charm. This feature of adding and substituting secondary parts operates just as readily in charms used for the same purpose.

1. Another for the same euel of aking of teth.
Aue rex noster. Aue spes nostra. Aue salus nostra.
Adoramus te christe et benedicimus tibi.
Dominus noster iesus christus noster omnipotens
super mare sedebat. Et Petrus tristis ante eum erat.
Et dixit Dominus Petro, "Quare tristis es?"
Respondit Petrus et dixit, "Domine dentes mei dolent."
Tum Dominus ait, "Adiuro te migranea et maligna per patrem
et filium et spiritum sanctum et per duodecim apostolos
et quatuor euuangelistas, Marcum, Matheum, Lucam, et
Johannem, ut non habeas potestatem nocere N[omen] hoc breve
portanti." + AGIOS + AGIOS + AGIOS + PATER . AUE . CREDO.
TORAX CALAMITE. TORAX RUBEE. TORAX LIQUIDE. OMNES
GUMME. (B. L. Sloane 2457, fol. 19v)

[Another for the same evil aching of teeth.
Hail our King. Hail our Hope. Hail our Salvation.
We adore you Christ and we bless you.
Our Lord, Our Jesus Christ, Our Almighty
was sitting upon the sea. And Peter, sad, was before him.
And the Lord said to Peter, "Why are you sad?"
Peter answered and said, "Lord, my teeth hurt."
Then the Lord said, "I adjure you ache and evil through the
Father and Son and Holy Spirit and through the twelve
apostles and four evangelists, Mark, Matthew, Luke, and John,
that you not have the power to harm *Name* who is carrying this
narrative. + HOLY + HOLY + HOLY + FATHER + HAIL + I BELIEVE
+ TORAX CALAMITE. TORAX RUBEE. TORAX LIQUIDE. ALL GUMS.]

2. Pro Febrebus.
In nomine Patris et Filij et Spiritus Sancti Amen.
Petrus autem iacebat febricitantibus[31] super petram
mormoriam. Et super veniens illi Iesus dixit, "Petre quid
iacis?" Et respondit ei Petrus, "Domine iaceo de febre mala."
Et dixit Iesus, "Surge et dimitte illam, et continuo surrexit
et dimisit." Et dixit Petrus, "Domine, rogo te vt quicumque
haec verba super se portaverit scripta quod non n[o]ceat ei
febres frigide nec calide, cotidiane, biduane, triduane, nec
quartane." Et ait Iesus, "Petre, Fiat tibi sicut petisti
nomine meo." Amen. (B. L. Sloane 122, fol. 163r)
[For fevers.
In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit Amen. Then Peter was lying feverishly upon a marble rock. And above him Jesus said, "Peter, why are you lying down?" And Peter answered him, "Lord, I am lying down with fevers." And Jesus said, "Rise and let it be gone." And immediately he rose and the fever was gone. And Peter said, "Lord, I ask you that whoever should carry these words upon them written that fevers not harm him [whether] cold, hot, daily, two-day, three-day, or four-day." And Jesus said, "Peter, let it be for you just as you have asked in my name Amen."]

Despite a core of stable elements, narrative details can change, *mare* / *mormoriam*, *Dominus sedebat* / *Petrus iacebat*, command / adjuration. Scholars like Giangrosso (1988) have remarked differences in patterns of detail and emphasis in charms based on the same motif, but deriving from different geographical areas. Because of the core of stability in a motif, a sense of the traditional associations can be built up through encounters with multiple texts. Thus, cryptic and allusive references in one charm can be

[31] febricitantibus] MS *sic*.

understood by reference to the matrix of traditional associations provided by other charms employing the motif. But here too it can be important to maintain a sense of the specific tradition within which one is working.

The last type of structural component to be discussed here is a certain kind of speech act, that is, performatives.[32] A formulaic pattern that distinguishes Christian Latin charms is the extensive use of the performatives "conjuro" and "adjuro" ("I conjure" and "I adjure").[33] The usual pattern, "I conjure / adjure A by the power of (*per virtutem*) B that C (or A) not have the power to harm this person" can be seen in the toothache charm above: "Adiuro / te migranea et maligna / per patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum et per duodecim apostolos et quatuor euuangelistas, Marcum, Matheum, Lucam, et Johannem, / ut non habeas potestam nocere N[omen] hoc breue portanti." Various parts of this performative formula are amenable to contraction and expansion. In the toothache narrative, the second part ("by the power of B") is greatly expanded. It can also be omitted, as it is in a conjuration against demons, thieves, elves, and epilepsy: "Coniuro vos demones et latrones, elphos et morbum caducum vt non habeatis potestatem nocere hunc famulum dei .N[omen]." ("I conjure you demons and thieves, elves, and epilepsy that you not have the power to harm this servant of god, Name.")[34] In a charm for the earwig, we find an unusual conjuration in which the formula that the worm not have the power to gnaw the man is matched by the reverse that it *does* have its freedom (*licencia*) to depart—exhausted (B. L. Additional 33996, fol. 104v).

Performance Contexts

The circumstances of performance, including what can be observed about who recited or provided charms, about the audience, and about the phenomenology of the situation in which charms were performed, constitute

[32] A performative is an utterance that is equivalent to an action, one in which "to say is to do," e.g., "I give and bequeath..." or "I pronounce you man and wife" or "Let there be light." Both the authority of the speaker and the circumstances in which the words are uttered determine the effectiveness (Austin's "felicity") of a performative utterance. For an extended discussion, see Austin 1975:6,12-38.

[33] The "adjure" and "conjure" performatives also occur less commonly in the Greek magical papyri; for examples, see Betz 1986:57, 123, 125, 149, 155.

[34] B. L. Sloane 2584, fol. 73v-74r.

the most distinguishing feature of this genre. Charms are unique in that performance is typically private; the audience is often only one person—someone sick, injured, anxious, suffering some pain, or some mental distress. Unlike performances of other traditional genres, performance of a charm is occasioned by a specific, experienced need. When a medical problem or other distress arises for which effective remedial measures are lacking, a charm may provide efficacious words.[35] For perennially risky situations, such as childbirth and journeys, charms are perennially available. A man wishes to avoid a toothache. He may desire to recover a lost horse or cure his ailing pigs, or for that matter, he may be worried about his failing eyesight or his bowels. A woman has a fever or suffers from joint pain or worries about someone on a journey. Thus, when charms are performed, a direct reciprocity obtains between need and the occasion of performance, as well as between the specific character of the need and the choice of the work performed. A heading or tag designating the purpose of a charm in a manuscript is an integral part of any charm text because it explicitly denominates the occasion for performance.

When we seek to know who performed charms, the evidence of the texts gives us partial answers. A spectrum of performers is implied in the directions incorporated in Anglo-Saxon charms. Charms seem to be performed by those who wish to take action regarding a specific concern—the landowner and his community interested in insuring the fertility of the fields,[36] the person who has lost livestock or property, the pregnant woman, the horse-leech. Some people seek long-term prophylactic measures for toothache and the like by carrying the words with them. Despite this diversity of individual users, a large group of performers of verbal cures were leeches and others to whom care for the sick normally fell.

In addition, Anglo-Saxon charms that employ sacramentals (salt, holy water, blessings by priests)[37] and rituals carried out within the precincts of

[35] Cp. Cameron 1988:194: "It is noteworthy that magical remedies are most common for diseases which are intractable to rational treatments, as many of the same diseases are today."

[36] For an extended discussion of this charm, see Niles 1980.

[37] See Storms' edition (1948) of 86 charms from Anglo-Saxon manuscripts, of which 68 contain Latin of some sort, not to mention his appendix of 16 Latin blessings, prayers, and charms.

the church suggest that priests performed charms.[38] An herb drink for *lenctenadle*, fever, requires that masses be sung over the prescribed herbs before the drink is concocted and that afterwards "the names of the four evangelists, and a charm and a prayer," be sung ("feower godspellara naman and gealdor and gebed") (B. L. Royal 12.D.XVII, fol. 53r). Similarly, in an herb salve prescription in the *Lacnunga* (fols. 146v-148), we find the following steps: (1) the herbs used are recited in rough Anglo-Saxon verse (Grattan and Singer 1952:122); (2) then follow instructions in prose for a butter base, compounded with the herbs and hallowed water, to be stirred with a four-pronged stick, carved with the names of the four evangelists. (3) The directions say next, "you sing over [the mixture] these 'psalms'" (*sealmas*)—*Beati immaculati*, the *gloria in excelsis deo*, the *credo in deum patrem*, litanies (*letanias*) of holy names, the *deus meus et pater*, the *In principio*, and the "wormcharm" (*wyrmgealdor*). (4) After this procedure, we find the words, "and this charm (*gealdor*) sing (MS *singe*) over [the mixture]," where a nonsense incantation follows in the text. (5) The Old English directions continue:

> Sing this [the incantation given] nine times and put in your spittle and blow and lay the herbs beside that container and *then [let] the mass-priest bless them.*

It is not clear in this long rite exactly where the acts of the leech leave off and the words of the priest take over. In steps (2) and (3), the instructions seem directed to the compounder of the salve. In step (4), the intended incantor of the nonsense charm is less certain, since a subjunctive form of *singan*, which might indicate third person ("may he sing"), appears at that point. The "mass-priest" (*mæssepreost*) who blesses the herbs in step (5) is not distinguished by this act, because of the long string of liturgical forms already prescribed in step (3) and because the second person imperative form *gehalga* is used, instead of the third person *gehalgie*, which would confirm an explicit third-person subject ("let the mass-priest bless"). Nevertheless, whoever the intended speaker of each section of this charm is, it seems clear that a priest plays a part and that the herbalist, who recalls his ingredients in alliterative fashion, recites Christian "psalms" while he stirs the butter.

One other point deserves mention. Although Grattan and Singer suggest that the worm charm mentioned in the list of "psalms" is "presumably that beginning *Gonomil*" (1952:125, n. 4), a nonsense

[38] Cp. Niles 1980:49-50, Jolly 1987:90, and Kieckhefer 1989:58.

incantation in the *Lacnunga* (fol. 136v), the worm charm probably meant here is the Latin Christian one "Job habuit vermes" discussed above, since it more readily fits in with the overtly Christian formulas linked together in this ritual. In either case, *sealmas* and the *wyrmgealdor* are mentioned in the same breath. In the two richest Anglo-Saxon medical collections, the *Leechbooks* and the *Lacnunga*, then, the evidence of the instructions suggests that, in practice, not only the *medicus* (OE *læce*) but not uncommonly the priest (OE *mæssepreost*) performed words and rituals associated with charms. In the Anglo-Saxon charms, traditional magical healing and Christian faith coalesce with one another, functioning together to one purpose (cp. Jolly 1980:ch. 4).

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, charms were performed as before by individuals in need of relief from certain ailments or distress, as well as by unlearned healers and professional surgeons and physicians. Householders might seek out and use a charm in the same manner they might use a recipe to make a certain color dye or follow directions for building a dovecote on a manor. For charm remedies are collected in utilitarian manuscripts, medieval how-to books. Charms also appear in medical recipe books, where verbal cures usually constitute a small proportion of the medical remedies. The healers most likely to employ verbal remedies are the marginal, but active "unlicensed and unaffiliated practicianers," among whom we know of "amateurs, *leches*, bone-setters, toothe-drawers, midwives, *treaclers*, *blodleters*, herbalists, 'wise women,' quacks" (Ussery 1971:21-24).[39] Professional physicians and surgeons employed charms at least occasionally (*ibid*.:7). For example, John Arderne recommends a charm for spasm in B. L. MS Sloane 56, fol. 7r-v, while the same charm is attributed to John Cattesdon in B. L. MS Sloane 2584, fol. 31r. John Arderne takes care to warn the person who wishes to use the charm to keep the words of the incantation secret by folding it tightly in parchment, lest some lay person acquire it. In B. L. Sloane 2584, fol. 68r-v, prayers are prescribed to be recited by the patient three times for three days or three times until the physician returns.[40] For the duration of the treatment under the direction of the *medicus* who will return in three days or less, a certain emotional or conative state conducive to healing is

[39] Keith Thomas (1971:178) catalogues healers who were viewed as disreputable during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries because they used magical methods—"'cunning men,' 'wise men,' 'charmers,' 'blessers,' 'conjurers,' 'sorcerers,' 'witches.'"

[40] "Et dicat eger ter Pater Noster et Aue Maria. Et medicus similiter. Et sic fiat per tres dies vel ter antequam medicus recedat."

maintained through the remedial words of the charm. This belief in the power of the words to change the circumstances or reality lies at the basis of the use of a charm. The words might be spoken in a patient's ear, written on bread or hosts and ingested, or carried on the person as a preventative. The directions for performance of the charm not seldom include specific accompanying acts, which in late medieval manuscripts are often simple tasks of caretakers, on the one hand, or acts intended to strengthen the sufferer mentally by means of evocation of deeply felt religious symbols.

Three remedies to stop bleeding found in B. L. Sloane 122 (fols. 48r and 49r) will illustrate three different modes of managing the same medical crisis with verbal healing. The first charm relies on the direct effect of Psalm III and powerful letters (ms. *has caractas*) written down and placed upon the patient. Their efficacy can be verified by writing them on a knife, then killing a pig, which, as a result, will not bleed. In the second charm, the charm speaker not only speaks the words (MAX MAX PAX PATER NOSTER) but also rubs the patient's hands and feet with an herb unguent, actions that would probably prevent the patient from going into shock. The third charm binds the bloods "through the blood and water of the side of Jesus Christ, namely the blood of our redemption and the water of our baptism." This charm relies on Christian belief and the powerful symbolic identification of the blood and water that flowed from Christ's side with the blood of redemption and the water of baptism. The patient is psychologically fortified by the certainty of Christian salvation through the blood and water to expect, indeed, to intend a physiological result that stops the bleeding. The patient's conative response takes precedence here over the physical action taken in the second charm or the pseudo-scientific proof in the first charm.

The purpose of this paper has been to define the genre of medieval Latin charms as found in English manuscripts dating from about 1000 until nearly 1500. The strategies adopted toward this purpose have been (1) to delineate the genres closely allied to charms, (2) to describe the character and degree of the orality in charms, (3) to analyze typical compositional features, and (4) to describe the circumstances in which charms were performed.

The evidence of the manuscripts suggests the following conclusions: first, that charms, as a genre, occupy a place between non-verbal plant remedies and prayers for healing but overlap both. A particular charm may align more closely with one or the other of these other curative modes, depending on its compositional constituents. Anglo-Saxons, for example,

seem completely unconcerned with maintaining divisions among these different sorts of curative measures, referring to "charms," "psalms," and "prayers" interchangeably.

Second, the answer to the question "What degree of orality do charms display?" turns out to be complex. That is, the degree of orality displayed in charms varies through a continuum that includes invocations of holy names and recitation of nonsense strings, Christian narratives and dialogues (sometimes modeled on textual sources), repetition of well-known Christian prayers and litanies (in part and in entirety), and reproduction in writing of purely visual signs and symbols. Furthermore, it is true that the psychodynamics of charms seem dominated by attitudes, beliefs, habits of thought, and responses especially characteristic of traditional oral societies; nevertheless, when a range of charms dating from Anglo-Saxon times to the fifteenth century is considered, a pattern of progressive textualization can be traced. Signs of residual orality and of an increasing textuality appear in the way charms are recorded in manuscripts. Other late features, such as appearance of a more learned variety of Latin and more theologically sophisticated vocabulary appear after the twelfth century.

Third, when charm structures are approached from the point of view of oral theory, some apparently chaotic features begin to present a shape. To recall two examples, the great multiplicity of similar, but not verbally identical, charms can be understood through the notion of multiformity. Likewise, the additive feature of stringing different kinds of compositional units together is also characteristic of oral traditional style.

Finally, I have suggested that the circumstances of performance distinguish the genre of Christian charms from other oral traditional works and also from much of the praxis of magic. Charms (which may be quite brief) are usually performed only one at a time (although one formula may be repeated several times) on the occasion of a specific medical or psychic distress by or for some person (or persons) who suffers some harm or faces some risk to body or property. The choice of the work to be performed relates directly to the distress to be relieved. The circumstances of performance in addition to the language of the formula, usually presuppose a certain *auctoritas* in the charm speaker. Christian charms identify the ultimate source of power with which the charm speaker aligns himself or herself as Christ or Mary or some saintly mediator. The operation is intended to effect a conative response toward health in the Christian on whose behalf the charm is performed. Yet the overwhelming dominance of Christian symbols and ritual in medieval charms does not preclude the continued use of remedies that do not exhibit Christian features. The

healing stream carries along some old formulas as it adds new ones. The tradition forgets and drops charms that people no longer value and conserves some old ones that people credit as effective, at the same time turning to and borrowing from formal religious and ritualistic words of power that speak to specific needs.[41]

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The Combat of Lug and Balor: Discourses of Power in Irish Myth and Folktale

Joan N. Radner

If you stand on the northwestern coast of Ireland's County Donegal and look out across the North Atlantic on a clear day, you will see like "a castellated mirage on the horizon"—Tory Island, one of the world's most barren inhabited islands. Two and one-half miles long and three-quarters of a mile wide, Tory is windswept and has no trees. Its two tiny towns and their surrounding fields and bog are dwarfed by gigantic rock formations and dramatic ocean inlets, just as the names of Tory's towns—East Town and West Town—fade to cartographic blandness next to the vivid, evocative names of its natural crags and harbors.

Like so many other environments of potent oral cultures throughout the world, Tory's named landscape is the visible and significant record of its layers of oral history. Among the stories told by and among these rocks is a very ancient one. Dún Baloir, Balor's Castle, the high rock at the eastern end of the island, is the legendary home of King Balor, a monstrous oppressor whose single, poisonous eye is said to have withered permanently all the vegetation on Tory and on the visible mountains of the nearby Donegal coast. Balor had a single daughter whom he kept imprisoned in the crag of An Tor Mór (The Great Tower), near his castle, isolated from all men because of a prophecy that Balor could be killed only by his own grandson. Another island placename, Port na Glaise (The Harbor of the Gray Cow), commemorates Balor's predatory jealousy of the mainlanders, evoking the story of how he stole from a Donegal blacksmith a magical cow, An Glas Gaibhleann, that gave an endless supply of milk, and by her tail dragged her ashore onto the island at Port na Glaise. The young hero, Ceannfhaolaidh (Kineely), who came to rescue the cow also gained access to An Tor Mór and left Balor's daughter (and in most versions of the tale her twelve serving maids as well!) pregnant before he made his escape the next day. Returning nine months later, he escaped in his little boat with all

thirteen infants, wrapped up in a cloak fastened with a thorn; the name of Portdellig (The Port of the Thorn) commemorates the offshore spot where the thorn broke, casting the infants (all but Balor's grandson) into the sea, where in some tellers' renditions they became seals.

Balor's grandson, in many folktale versions named Lugh Lámhfhada (Lugh of the Long Arm), grows to be a righteous youth, standing against Balor's oppressions. When Balor's mainland agents show up at a wedding to demand of the bride the traditional *droit de seigneur*, Lugh maims or kills them; when Balor himself comes to the mainland and kills Lugh's father (thereby originating the name of the entire district, Cloghaneely, Ceannfhaolaidh's Stone) in revenge for the repossession of An Glas Gaibhleann, Lugh swears revenge. Seizing a red-hot staff of iron from the smith's forge, he drives it through Balor's poison eye. Realizing that the prophesied end has come, Balor tells his grandson to behead him and to place his severed head on top of his own to gain his power; wisely, Lugh places the head on a rock instead, and the drop of poison that falls from it shatters the rock and digs a cavern in the earth into which the deepest of the local lakes is said to have arisen.

Celticists and Indo-Europeanists will immediately recognize the story behind this inscribed landscape as a descendant of one of the most famous texts of early Irish literature, *The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*, the story of the mythic battle between the Túatha Dé Danann, the pagan Irish gods, and their (also supernatural) enemies, the Fomorians. Although *The Second Battle* is a far more complex narrative than the nineteenth- and twentieth-century folktales whose versions I have summarized above, it shares several features with the modern tale. The ultimate hero of the gods is a young warrior-king named Lug of the Long Arm. He is in fact the grandson of Balor, one of the champions of the Fomorians, who, to seal an earlier alliance with the Túatha Dé Danann, has given his daughter in marriage to them. In addition, Balor in the myth does have a "piercing eye" (*Birugderc*), which is opened only on the battlefield. In the final moments of the great battle, young Lug faces and challenges Balor's terrible eye (Gray 1982a:61):

> Four men would raise the lid of the eye by a polished ring in its lid. The host which looked at the eye, even if they were many thousands in number, would offer no resistance to warriors.... Then he and Lug met.
>
> ... "Lift up my eyelid, lad," said Balor, "so I may see the talkative fellow who is conversing with me."
>
> The lid was raised from Balor's eye. Then Lug cast a sling stone at him which carried the eye through his head, and it was his own host that

> looked at it. He fell on top of the Fomorian host so that twenty-seven of them died under his side; and the crown of his head struck against the breast of Indech mac Dé Domnann [King of the Fomorians] so that a gush of blood spouted over his lips [and he died].

Taking their lead from Georges Dumézil, Indo-Europeanists and Celticists have drawn comparisons between this Irish battle and that between the Asuras and Devas in Vedic mythology and the Aesir and the Vanir in Scandinavian lore (Dumézil 1948). *The Second Battle of Mag Tuired* has become one of the pillars of the reconstruction of the early Indo-European narrative tradition (Gray 1981, 1982b, 1983; Ó Cathasaigh 1983). It has been suggested that *The Second Battle* constitutes a conceptual exploration of the bases of Celtic kinship relations, kingship, and social roles, and that the battle between the Túatha Dé Danann and the Fomorians reflects an early stage of the expansion of the Indo-European peoples, when aristocratic warrior invaders were conquering, intermarrying with, and coopting the agricultural skills of indigenous peoples.

It is clear that the myth, including the alliance between the Túatha Dé Danann and the Fomorians symbolized by the marriage between one of the gods and Balor's daughter, and ending with the battle in which the Fomorians are subjugated, has from its origin carried concepts about the power relationships between two political groups (Gray 1981:192-93), and has presented a strong paradigm of Túatha Dé Danann (and thus Irish) victory. While these elements have remained constant in the story's popular evolution, however, the tale of the primordial conflict of Lug and Balor has changed dynamically through history to comment on the direct experience of its makers and re-makers. In fact, when the episode first appears in *The Second Battle of Mag Tuired*, it is obviously in the process of adaptation. We do not have any pre-Christian text of this supposedly "pagan" myth. Ireland was converted to Christianity in the fifth century; the earliest surviving version of *The Second Battle* does not seem to go back before the ninth century, and was probably written in the eleventh. It bears many marks of Christian imagination, including the fact that the encounter between the archetypal young hero and the gigantic champion of the enemy army seems modeled upon the Biblical David's slaying of the Philistine champion Goliath (McCone 1989:138-39).

Furthermore, if the story behind *The Second Battle of Mag Tuired* began as an Indo-European myth of conquest of indigenes by outsiders, in Ireland—a country historically much plagued by outsiders—it early changed into a myth of the defense of the country *against* outsiders. Significantly, in the earliest surviving version Balor is identified as *rí na*

nInnsi, King of the Hebrides, a title that came into being only during the Viking period: in other words, the sinister Balor is imagined as one of the Vikings whose major impact on Ireland coincided with the centuries during which this version of the battle story took shape. The Fomorians are portrayed as both indigenous and alien, a population both inside and outside Ireland—just as the Vikings were both settlers and raiders.

The fact that this paradigm exactly describes later colonialists as well was not lost on the Irish men of learning. In a late sixteenth-century praise-poem addressed to a chieftain of the O'Byrnes, the English occupation of Ireland is metaphorically referred to as "Balor's bondage" (*broid Balair*), and Balor (the image of the rack-renting English planter) is said to have demanded a tax of one ounce of gold from each Irishman, on pain of the loss of his nose. The O'Byrne chieftain, hyperbolically compared to Lugh Lámhfhada, is called on to save his people from servitude (Mac Airt 1944:132-33).

Such explicit equation of Balor with the English colonizers is rare. Implicitly, however, as the story develops orally and in manuscript through the centuries of English occupation, it comments precisely on the nature and progress of colonialism itself. Lugh's origins, for example, as the offspring of a liaison between gods and demons, natives and invaders, point to the historical Irish tradition of intermarriage with settlers, "the classical weapon with which medieval Irish aristocrats intuitively countered cultural domination," and one that succeeded against the Vikings and the Normans, but failed from the Tudor period onwards when the arriving colonizers became too numerous (Ó Tuama 1988:29). Significantly, as the Lugh and Balor narrative evolves over time into a folktale of the English landlord era, the early versions' motif of open intermarriage, intended to neutralize the foreign threat, is replaced by the hero's stealthy tryst with Balor's daughter in an isolated tower.

It seems to me no coincidence, furthermore, that the tale gains a new closing motif—the so-called Episode of the Head—during the period at which the English conquest of Ireland intensified. In this motif, Balor, his evil eye already knocked out, urges his grandson to behead him and place his head on top of his own. If Lug does this, Balor promises in a poem, he will "earn my blessing" and inherit "the triumph and the terror that the men of Inis Fáil [that is, Ireland] found in me" (Mac Neill 1908:34-35; Murphy 1953:135); in a seventeenth-century version of the tale, Balor promises his grandson "my prosperity and my great luck, my horror and my valor"; in a nineteenth-century folktale version, he promises that Lugh "will know everything in the world, and no one will be able to conquer you" (Ó Cuív

1945:54). The temptation that he holds out, in other words, is that the Irish hero will learn to behave like his oppressor. And this was precisely the goal of the English occupation of Ireland in and after the sixteenth century: not only territorial conquest of the country, but also *cultural* domination that aimed to eradicate the native laws, literature, Catholic religion, and language itself and replace these with English institutions and language. Irish heads were to be filled with English thoughts. Lugh's instinctive resistance to Balor's stratagem figures forth what Seán Ó Tuama has called the Irish "cultural will to survive," which "remained both flexible and obstinate for some three centuries after the initial [English] programme for destabilisation began" (1988:29).

Read through the same lens, Balor's behavior in the folktales of the past two centuries metaphorically dramatizes the Irish view of the English colonizers. (I am here referring chiefly to folktales from Donegal and Tory Island, although many versions have been collected from other areas of Ireland as well.) The tales represent Balor as rapacious, greedy, demanding. He is often unmistakably a landlord—in fact, an absentee landlord who demands impossible rents, deploys his hated bailiffs to represent him on the mainland, and steals his tenants' means of subsistence (the miraculous cow, An Glas Gaibhleann). According to one teller, when Balor would open his eye, nothing could survive, "men or beasts or birds or fish"; his glance would burst rocks and trees and dry up wells and rivers (Mac Gabhann 1944:335-36). Despite Balor's acquisitiveness and his agents' licensed rape of Irish women, his world is barren. The landscape carries the story of Balor's negation of life, in the places named after his story, in the withered vegetation of Tory and the mainland mountains, and in the shattered rocks, trenches, and bottomless lakes created by the poison drops from his head. In contrast, in local folk tradition the green fields of the mainland are said to attest to the lactiferous bounty of the smith's cow (Therman 1989:17), and the very presence of seals in the sea commemorates the fertility of the young Irish hero who fathered Lugh on Balor's daughter.

Over the past millennium, and probably much longer, the combat of Lug and Balor has been told and retold, written and rewritten, revised constantly in order to present in fictive form the key political and economic configurations of the day, and to demonstrate that even invasion and cultural imperialism can be resisted. The validity of the narrative, for those who tell it, is borne out by its inscription in the very landscape of Ireland and in each placename that, as Seamus Heaney puts it, "succinctly marries the legendary and the local" (1980:131). Volatile imagination informs the

solid rock. To quote Henry Glassie, "History makes the locality rich. Its names become cracks through which to peek into excitement . . . , a way to make the small place enormous, complete, inhabitable, worth defending" (1982:664).

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The Narrative Presentation of Orality in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*

Willi Erzgräber

The Milman Parry Lecture on
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Among twentieth-century writers James Joyce is unsurpassed in the diverse kinds of learning that he brought to his work. Using a phrase that Hildegard Tristram has taken from Irish literature, he can be characterized as a writer "who lost his brain of forgetting."[1] Everything that Joyce heard or read was imprinted so deeply in his memory that even without jottings or notebooks, which he liked to use, he always had at his command an impressive amount of encyclopedic knowledge. The first two paragraphs of *Finnegans Wake* will serve to illustrate the range of knowledge present in his memory and the special way he weaved the elements of it into his narrative:

> riverrun, past Eve and Adam's, from swerve of shore to bend
> of bay, brings us by a commodius vicus of recirculation back to
> Howth Castle and Environs.
> Sir Tristram, violer d'amores, fr'over the short sea, had passen-
> core rearrived from North Armorica on this side the scraggy
> isthmus of Europe Minor to wielderfight his penisolate war: nor
> had topsawyer's rocks by the stream Oconee exaggerated themselse
> to Laurens County's gorgios while they went doublin their mumper
> all the time: nor avoice from afire bellowsed mishe mishe to
> tauftauf thuartpeatrick: not yet, though venissoon after, had a

[1] Tristram (1989:230) comments on the phrase "brain of forgetting" in the following way: "the *brain of forgetting* is a splendid image for their authors' intensive concern to preserve in writing at an advanced stage of cultural interaction what would otherwise be irretrievably lost. So James Joyce *also* had to lose his brain of forgetting in order to be able to *complete* his *Finnegans Wake*."

> kidscad buttended a bland old isaac: not yet, though all's fair in vanessy, were sosie sesthers wroth with twone nathandjoe. Rot a peck of pa's malt had Jhem or Shen brewed by arclight and rory end to the regginbrow was to be seen ringsome on the aquaface.[2]

These lines touch upon the following areas of knowledge:

1. The Old Testament
   "past Eve and Adam's" (1): the beginning of human history; "old isaac" (11): a concealed reference to Jacob and Esau, whose brother conflict is one of the main themes of *Finnegans Wake*.

2. Roman history
   "commodius" (2): allusion to the Roman emperor Commodus.

3. Irish history
   "thuartpeatrick" (10): Saint Patrick's mission to Ireland. "Sir Tristram" (4): allusion to Sir Almeric Tristram, who with Henry I conquered Ireland and built Howth Castle. The name "Tristram" also refers to the Breton epic cycle and the story of Tristan and Isolde.

4. Dublin's history
   "nathandjoe" (12) is an anagram for Dean Jonathan Swift; "sosie sesthers" (12) are the two women, Stella and Vanessa, who were close to Swift and were both called Esther.

5. Dublin's topography
   A reference to Dublin's topography is included in the phrase "Eve and Adam's" (1); there is an Adam and Eve's church on the bank of the river Liffey.

6. Vico's model of universal history in *Scienza Nuova*
   This model underlies Joyce's entire novel; the epic events of the novel pass through Vico's four phases of history four times. According to Vico history unfolds itself first in the age of the gods, followed by the age of heroes and the age of man, which leads finally to a dissolution of the respective level of attained civilization and begins anew in a *ricorso* (Joyce devotes the last, the 17th episode, of the novel especially to this theme). Vico's view of history is already

[2] I quote from Joyce 1975:3.1-14.

pointed to in line 2 of the novel in the phrase "vicus of recirculation."[3]

Although it is clear that Joyce obtained his knowledge of Vico's philosophy of history via the printed word, in other cases it will have to remain an open question whether Joyce was initially acquainted with an oral or a written source. In several cases we must assume that there is an inseparable relationship of mutual exchange between the oral and written traditions, as, for example, in the stories from the Old Testament, which Joyce undoubtedly heard in his earliest childhood before he was able to read.

Apart from the areas already indicated in the first two paragraphs of the novel, Joyce's encyclopedic store of knowledge also includes a comprehensive knowledge of classical and modern European literature from Dante to Ibsen and from the Greek tragic poets to Shakespeare. Furthermore, there are references to esoteric knowledge, such as the Egyptian Book of the Dead; to ethnological and historico-religious literature, such as Frazer's *The Golden Bough*; and to modern natural science and psychoanalysis. Joyce alludes to both Freud and to C. G. Jung, the latter of whom he was personally acquainted with in Zürich. Finally, Joyce's extensive knowledge of languages should be mentioned, which he superimposed in "portmanteau words," and which can often only be analyzed with the help of linguistic commentaries. In this novel Hebraic and Finnish, Celtic and Slavic, Hungarian and German vocabulary enter into a synthesis and make it the first linguistic representative of a multicultural society, but also into a document in which the consequences of the mythical tower of Babel can be seen. Many of those who read Joyce long enough tend to see a linguistic as well as a thematic connection between the noun "Babel" and the verb "to babble."[4]

It would be one-sided to interpret *Finnegans Wake* purely as an esoteric creation, an ingenious, artificial, and manneristic construction of a *poeta doctus*. *Finnegans Wake* has these features, but at the same time it is based squarely on the rhythms of the spoken language. As I have already emphasized in a 1988 study of aural and visual effects in *Finnegans Wake*, we should remember "that Joyce wrote this novel in exile, that he is

[3] For an interpretation of the beginning of *Finnegans Wake*, see Campbell and Robinson 1947:28-38.

[4] *OED*, sub. "to babble: Perh. affected in sense by *Babel*."

recalling the milieu in which he grew up, that in his faculties of perception and memory the acoustic side was more pronounced than the visual. . . . *Finnegans Wake* is the sum total of the sounds and voices of the Dublin environment in which he grew up and lived until his emigration, and which remained vivid for the rest of his life. The memories originated, in other words, in the oral character of everyday life in Dublin and form the acoustic foundation for his description of human destinies insofar as they are preserved in human dreams" (112).

The oral forms of knowledge handed down in Joyce's speech community that he used in his novel come from two sources: the spoken word and song. The experiences of the Anglo-Irish found expression in the realm of the spoken word above all in proverbs and proverb-like expressions, which also include phrases from the Bible that entered into the general language and the nursery rhymes. The best example of the importance of the song in Irish oral tradition is the folksong, in addition to which the Scottish, English, and American folksongs should also be mentioned. These songs are comparable to those from the English music hall and the arias from Italian operas that were so popular in Ireland. Thomas Moore's *Irish Melodies* (written between 1801 and 1834) were especially well-known; this collection was owned by most middle-class families in Dublin. An indication of how strongly Joyce was influenced by this popular folksong tradition can be seen in the fact that of the 124 songs in Moore's collection 122 are quoted in *Finnegans Wake* (Hodgart and Worthington 1959:9). As demonstrated by "The Lass of Aughrim" in "The Dead," the last short story in Joyce's collection *Dubliners*, the song was not only a source of entertainment: for Gretta the song evokes the memory of her first love, Michael Furey; for Gabriel Conroy it leads to an "epiphany," an experience that has a disillusioning effect on him.

The proverbs that Joyce worked into his novel *Finnegans Wake* have been compiled by Clive Hart in his monograph *Structure and Motif in "Finnegans Wake"* (1962). I would like to cite a few examples and to include the dates of their earliest recorded appearance in the language, as found in the *Oxford Dictionary of English Proverbs* (*ODEP* 1970). These dates, however, should be treated with caution, since they are most certainly not identical with their actual dates of origin, as is clearly indicated by occasional comments found in the *Dictionary* such as "an old doggerel." Finally, it should be noted that many proverbs only gradually took on the form in which they are known to us today. Here too there were occasionally preliminary stages; we shall, however, not go into these. The examples are as follows:

1. "Out of the frying-pan into the fire" (1528).
2. "Make hay while the sun shines" (1546).
3. "One man's meat is another man's poison" (1576).
   The entry from 1604 has the remark "old proverb," and the editor includes a corresponding proverb from Lucretius: "Quod cibus est aliis, aliis est acre venenum."
4. "Let bygones be bygones" (1577).
5. "You cannot make a silk purse out of a sow's ear" (1579).
6. "The pitcher that goes to the well"
   or
   "The pitcher goes so often to the well (water), that it is broken at last" (1591).
7. "Handsome is that handsome does" (1670).
8. "If ifs and ands were pot and pans there'd be no more work for the tinker's hands" (1850); designated in 1886, however, as "old doggerel."

What is striking in the above examples is that all but two have been recorded in the language and literature since the sixteenth century, and thus represent very old examples of popular wisdom that have continued to be used in the English and the Anglo-Irish speech community.

It is characteristic of Joyce's use of traditional songs and proverbs that he never incorporates them into his novel without changes. He presupposes the reader's knowledge of them (thus directly addressing the speech community with its commonly held store of knowledge) and transforms the traditional formulations, often in a very subtle and veiled manner. Traditional forms of popular wisdom do not remain sacrosanct, as though they represented some ancient authority, as can often be observed in medieval literature, which was fond of referring to the "authorities" and could, correspondingly, draw upon a comprehensive treasury of quotations. Joyce frequently adopts only the basic rhythmic structure and the syntactic pattern of the proverbs, allowing them to only slightly resemble the commonly known versions. Or he takes individual words out of a proverb and replaces them with others in order to give the familiar formulation a new sense. In this manner Joyce works against the tendency of the reader to adopt traditional verbal expressions uncritically and thus, via their stylistic form, to accept their content. By modifying the pre-established form, Joyce distances himself from knowledge already made rigid by tradition, and by means of his parodic transformation, induces a critical attitude in the reader toward traditional knowledge and the verbal form in which this knowledge is preserved. The reader is thus drawn into the dialogue that Joyce is conducting with the tradition of popular song and

storytelling.

The range and techniques of variation in Joyce's use of proverbs can be illustrated with the example "Boys will be boys" (cf. Hart 1962:218).

(1) At 11.08 the proverb appears in the form: "till byes will be byes." Here Joyce is also alluding to the expression "let bygones be bygones." The passage describes a hen that, during a moment of truce on a battlefield, is gathering up remains. The irony of this passage consists in the fact that the hen is after all not letting bygones be bygones. By collecting remains of the past the hen is—as it will later turn out—serving the future.

(2) At 245.04-05 the variation reads: "Brights we'll be brights." It is said in connection with children at play who have been called home for dinner. The meaning of the phrase: "Brights we'll be brights" is reinforced by the preceeding exclamation: "Lights, pageboy, lights!" and by the following statement: "With help of Hanoukan's lamp" (cf. McHugh 1980:245).

(3) At 246.21-22 in the same context the children are characterized by the phrase: "Childs will be wilds."

(4) 312.33: The fourth example is found in Book II, Chapter 3, in a scene that is set in a pub. The phrase "plubs will be plebs" marks the pub as a meeting place for the plebs; the form "plubs" is a partial anticipation of "plebs."

(5) 406.34: In a description of Shaun's eating habits in Book III, Chapter 1, Joyce uses the phrase "biestings be biestings," which, according to Clive Hart, can also be understood as a variation on the proverb "Boys will be boys." In Anglo-Irish "biestings" denotes "milk from a cow that has just calved" (McHugh 1980:406); at the same time, however, it contains an allusion to the English word "beast," and especially to its German equivalent *Biest*.

In addition to proverbs and nursery rhymes as examples of the simpler forms of popular oral tradition, the ballad can be mentioned as a form of oral tradition in which the mentality of the Irish people is reflected. At the same time it may also be understood as a storehouse for the basic individual, social, and historical experiences that Joyce was attempting to draw upon for his novel. A complex process of artistic creation and transformation can also be observed in Joyce's use of the ballad. In

Finnegans Wake the popular ballad literature is incorporated into a highly artificial system of references; but, since the memory of the ballad tradition is never completely obliterated, the skillfully constructed work never hardens into a manneristic, as it were, "bloodless" artifact. To remain with the circulatory image for a moment: the tradition of popular oral literature supplies modern art again and again with new life and allows the reader to feel the pulse-beat of the spoken and musical literature of the Irish people.

The best example of the importance of the popular ballad tradition in James Joyce's work is the ballad that gave the novel its title, "Finnegans Wake." In the edition from which I have taken the melody and text of this ballad, the following remark can be found: "Dedicated, no doubt, to the Irishman's love of funerals and Whiskey, this song is extremely well known on the British club scene" (Winter 1974:20). Jane S. Meehan, in a short essay entitled "'Tim Finigan's Wake'" (1976), was the first one to call attention to the fact that the author of this ballad on Tim Finigan, as it was originally called, was John F. Poole. Poole came from Dublin and in his early youth went to the United States, where he became a well-known theater manager and dramatist who distinguished himself by his "genuine Irish wit and humor" (69). He liked to write farces in which typical ethnic figures such as Irishmen, Germans, and blacks appeared. He was also active as a writer of songs, many composed especially for Tony Pastor, a popular music-hall singer. The ballad "Tim Finigan's Wake" can be found in the collection *Tony Pastor's '444' Combination Singer*. It speaks for the popularity of this ballad, which must have been written in 1861 or 1862, that during the 1870s in the United States, texts were circulated and modified, and the name of the author completely disappeared. Joyce may have heard this song in the 1890s in the Dublin music halls. It is noteworthy that this ballad also has a forerunner: John Brougham's song "The Fine Old Irish Gentleman" (ca. 1840). In outline this song tells the same story: an Irishman in his complete drunkenness is thought to be dead, but when a whiskey bottle is opened at his wake he revives. All in all the background history of this ballad shows similarities to the folk song: a clever writer of music and lyrics adapted already known material in such a skillful manner that it quickly became common property.

Here is the text (Winter 1974:20-21):

> Ah Tim Finnegan lived in Walkin Street,
> A gentleman Irish mighty odd,
> Well, he had a tongue both rich and sweet,
> An' to rise in the world he carried a hod.
> Ah but Tim had a sort of a tipplin way

With the love of the liquor he was born,
An' to send him on his way each day,
He'd a drop of the craythur ev'ry morn.

(Chorus:)

Whack fol the dah will ya dance to yer parner
Around the flure yer trotters shake
Wasn'n't it the truth I told you?
Lots of fun at Finnegan's Wake.

One morning Tim was rather full,
His head felt heavy which made him shake,
He fell off the ladder and he broke his skull,
And they carried him home his corpse to wake,
Well they rolled him up in a nice clean sheet,
And they laid him out upon the bed,
With a bottle of whiskey at his feet,
And a barrel of porter at his head.

Well his friends assembled at the wake,
And Mrs. Finnegan called for lunch,
Well first they brought in tay and cake,
Then pipes, tobacco, and brandy punch.
Then Widow Malone began to cry,
"Such a lovely corpse, did you ever see,
Arrah, Tim avourneen, why did you die?"
"Will ye hould your gob?" said Molly McGee.

Well Mary O'Connor took up the job,
"Biddy," says she, "you're wrong, I'm sure,"
Well Biddy gave her a belt in the gob,
And left her sprawling on the floor;
Well civil war did then engage,
Woman to woman and man to man,
Shillelagh law was all the rage,
And a row and a ruction soon began.

Well Tim Maloney raised his head,
When a bottle of whiskey flew at him,
He ducked and, landing on the bed,
The whiskey scattered over Tim;
Bedad he revives, see how he rises,
Tim Finnegan rising in the bed,
Saying, "Whittle your whiskey around like blazes,
T'underin' Jaysus, do ye think I'm dead?"

The following remarks can be made concerning the theme of the ballad with regard to Joyce's novel: Tim is an Irishman who earns his living as a hodman (a laborer who carries mortar) and who partakes freely of the bottle: "with the love of the liquor he was born." As a consequence of this, one morning he falls from a ladder and breaks his neck. He is brought home by some friends who according to Irish custom hold a wake. The men drink and the women quarrel with one another. A fight breaks out and a bottle of whiskey falls on the dead man, who is revived.

This ballad appears to be nothing more than a curious anecdote, but it contains two themes that were important for Joyce: (1) the rise and fall of a man and of humanity in general; (2) the death and rebirth of the protagonist. A characteristic of Joyce's treatment of the ballad in the novel is that he does not quote directly from the text. As in the case of the proverbs, he is assuming that the reader is already familiar with the ballad, since it is part of the popular oral tradition. Joyce begins with the fall of Tim Finnegan and remarks: "The fall"—here followed by one hundred sounds of an imitated crash—"of a once wallstrait oldparr is retaled early in bed and later on life down through all christian minstrelsy" (3.15-18). Joyce makes it clear in this sentence that Tim's fall is more than just a fall from a ladder. The fall is brought into connection with the Wall Street crash and the protagonist is called "oldparr" (i.e., "a centenarian accused of incontinence" [McHugh 1980:3]). The fall is thus placed in a moral and sexual perspective. The phrase "all christian minstrelsy" also relates it to the Christian, that is, the general religious tradition. The verb form "retaled" signifies the special manner of its transmission: "tale" refers to the telling of the story; "retale" suggests a retelling of the story, since the homonym "retail," which the reader is also intended to hear, means, among other things, "to recount the exact details." Thus, having given an indication of the large number of variations that have arisen from the ballad of Tim Finnegan's fall, we are ready for the appearance of the novel's protagonist HCE ("Humphrey Chimpden Earwicker"), who will take Tim Finnegan's place.

Let us stay for a moment with the figure of Tim Finnegan. The introductory remarks concerning him suggest that his death does not mean his absolute end, since it is said: "Hohohoho, Mister Finn, you're going to be Mister Finnagain!" (5.09-10). And it is immediately added: "Hahahaha, Mister Funn, you're going to be fined again!" (5.11-12). Tim Finnegan will be reborn, will incur new guilt, and for his guilt will again be punished ("fined again"). The ballad material can thus be connected with a view of history as the circular movement that Joyce adopted from Vico (perhaps

even the four "hos" refer to Vico's four cycles). In keeping with this view of history, it is reported that Finnegan is forced back into the coffin by his friends with the explanation that he would only lose his way in Dublin. The real reason for their action, which the Four Old Men reveal, is that his successor, HCE, has already arrived. This sequence of events could be explained according to Vico as the giant from the first age being replaced by a patriarch from the second.

In the second chapter of Book I the protagonist, HCE, moves into the center of the narrative along with the theme of guilt that, in respectively different accents, characterizes the individual episodes of the work. Repeated attempts are made by a very diverse group of people to find out something about a transgression that HCE is supposed to have committed one evening in Dublin's Phoenix Park. When we bear in mind, however, that the initials HCE can stand not only for an individual person but also for "Here Comes Everybody" (in other words, that in spite of being an individual, HCE also stands for the *humanum genus*, like the hero of a late medieval morality play), then we realize that what Joyce is aiming at (often without those who are asking questions, making inquiries, or carrying out investigations realizing it) is to discover something about the guilt that humankind collectively carries around with itself. Joyce makes the reader realize that it is not only impossible to attain a definitively clear picture of specific transgressions, but that all processes of inquiry and communication are themselves corrupted. The individual persons who relate detailed knowledge about Earwicker contribute to a constant distortion process, whose initial impetus may have been some fault of Earwicker's, but which increasingly evades the grip of language the further away the one who is reporting it is from the happening.

When we attempt to discover what actually lies at the basis of this entangled web of rumor, we can point to the following facts.[5] It is certain that Earwicker entered Phoenix Park one night (around midnight) and went into the bushes to relieve himself, where he was observed by two girls who laughed at him. They in turn were observed by three soldiers who further spread the story of this incident. It remains unclear whether Earwicker was urinating or masturbating, whether he wanted to provoke the girls, or they wanted to provoke him, that is, whether he was the tempter or they were the temptresses, whether they behaved in a manner similar to Gerty MacDowell in the Nausicaa-episode of *Ulysses* and HCE behaved like Leopold Bloom. Finally, the role of the soldiers, of whom it is said in the

[5] Cf. also Glasheen 1977 and McCarthy 1980.

novel that "They were watching the watched watching" (509.02-03), remains to be clarified. They are occasionally compared to the sons of Noah, Ham, Sem, and Japhet, who, according to the first Book of Moses (9, 21-23), covered their father's nakedness after Ham had discovered the drunk and naked Noah in his hut.

Another reminder of the Book of Genesis in the account of HCE's transgression can be seen in the name of Phoenix Park—which really exists in the center of Dublin. This park is compared to the garden of Eden; there are constant allusions in the novel to the biblical account of the fall of Adam and Eve. As (a possible) tempter Earwicker recalls Satan; as victim, the temptation of Adam. And when the first Book of Moses 3,7 is cited, "They opened their eyes and were aware that they were naked," it is alluding to the reports of Earwicker and the two girls. In the reports of Earwicker and the two girls, the motif of nakedness plays a continuing role (it finally remains open whether their intentions are exhibitionist).

It is important to keep in mind that Joyce, in spite of the many references he makes to the religious tradition that formed him since his early youth and from whose basic beliefs he could not entirely free himself for the rest of his life, did not intend to write a religious allegory. He was not interested in working out a modern version of the Old Testament, but rather in investigating the basic phenomenon of human guilt and sexuality. For Joyce the artist the basic question was to what extent something could be said in the appropriate form, how far one could find the truth with the help of language. In his description of the workings of oral tradition and through his narrative reflection on the nature of oral communication in his novel, Joyce came to hold a view similar to one that Chaucer had already expressed in an earlier work, *The House of Fame*, in the description of the "House of Tydings":

> Thus saugh I fals and soth compouned
> Togeder fle for oo tydynge.[6]

Truth and falsity, what men above all meet in oral reports, are inseparably bound together.[7]

In the description of the word-of-mouth reports being spread about HCE, the narrator of *Finnegans Wake* begins with the reports concerning Earwicker's name. One report traces the name back to a meeting of the

[6] Quoted from Benson 1988 (ll. 2108-9).

[7] Cf. also Erzgräber 1985.

protagonist with William the Conqueror, who asks Humphrey for an explanation of the numerous potholes that can be observed at a turnpike. Humphrey answers that he collects "earwigs." From "earwigs" developed the name "Earwicker" (the second part of the name refers to the Old Norse; cf. *OED*, sub. "wicker": "East Scandinavian: 1. A pliant twig or small rod, usu. of willow [...] 3. A basket, cradle, chair, etc. of wicker.") A second interpretation of the name is connected with an event in Earwicker's life that happened in Phoenix Park, where he is asked one day around noontime for the time by a cad, a fellow of low manners. Since Earwicker does not understand the Irish greeting—he regards it as the special slang of the English homosexuals—he begins to speak hesitantly, to stutter, and to protest that he is not a homosexual. The cad remains convinced, and later recalls, half aloud and without being very exact, what he remembers of Earwicker's statements. His wife happens to overhear what he is saying and confides it to Mr. Brown, a Jesuit priest, who in turn passes it on in a modified form to Philly Thursten, a teacher of agriculture and orthophonetics. Again, this report of the story is accidentally overheard by other persons, this time by Treacle Tom and Frisky Shorty. Treacle Tom repeats fragments of the story while sleeping off his drunk, so that it is now taken over by Peter Cloran, O'Mara, and the unsuccessful poet Hosty. Hosty first gives Earwicker the French name "perce-oreille," which he then transforms in the Irish manner into Persse O'Reilly. It is possible here that Joyce had an actual historical figure in mind; there was a John Boyle O'Reilly who lived in Dublin and who Roland McHugh informs us (McHugh 1974:28) "was in the Army as an agent of the Irish Republican Brotherhood. Many treacherous ballads proceeded from his unit. Because of this, it is conceivable that the *Ballad of Persse O'Reilly* takes its name from him."

This ballad, which Joyce wrote in the style of an Irish street ballad and presents in the novel *in extenso* along with the musical notes belonging to it (cf. 44-47), is conceived as a complement to the ballad of "Finnegan's Wake." It is a libel against Earwicker and presents a tissue of lies about him. It is the sum of all the rumors and slander that have been put into circulation and a perfect example of the gradual distortion of the originally questionable word-of-mouth reports on the protagonist. But the ballad does have some informative value (and paradoxically some truth content) in that it allows us to recognize the fictitious picture of the protagonist that has arisen in the consciousness of the Dubliners on the basis of rumor, gossip, and unscrupulous chatter.

At the beginning of the ballad, HCE is equated with Humpty

Dumpty. The motif that establishes the inner connection between both figures is that of the fall. The identification with Humpty Dumpty, however, is a preparation for a second motif: the figure once destroyed cannot be restored. So it is reported at the end of the nursery rhyme: "all the king's horses and all the king's men / Couldn't put Humpty Dumpty together again." And in Joyce's version Hosty's ballad ends with the following words (47.26-29):

> And not all the king's men nor his horses
> Will resurrect his corpus
> For there's no true spell in Connacht or hell
> (bis) That's able to raise a Cain.

Hosty gives the ballad its own particular twist by connecting phrases and ideas from the nursery rhyme with religious ideas: a resurrection is unthinkable for HCE. Here the contrast to the ballad of Tim Finnegan is clearly indicated, for there just the opposite possibility is opened up—the return to life. Hosty's ballad, by contrast, is a satire that wants to strike at and destroy its enemy and even mentions this intention.

The ballad of "Finnegan's Wake" could be described, using a term from Wolfgang Iser, as an "archetypal empty form" (*archetypische Leerform*), which includes the condition that the archetype can be developed in different ways. The empty form underlies all forms already realized and is at the same time the basis of their variation (Iser 1979:352). The motive that determined Hosty's particular version of the traditional archetype, namely the fall of the protagonist, in a way not suggested by the ballad of Tim Finnegan, must be searched for in the political realm. The name "Lord Olofa Crumple" in the first stanza refers to Oliver Cromwell, and it is to him that the saying "To Connacht or hell," which Joyce put into the last stanza of the ballad of Persse O'Reilly, is attributed. Just like Humpty Dumpty, Lord Oliver Cromwell is also an incarnation of HCE and of all the conquerors of Ireland, to whom Joyce refers with the phrase "that hammerfast viking" (46.12) and with the following lines (47.20-25):

> Then we'll have a free trade Gaels' band and mass meeting
> For to sod the brave son of Scandiknavery.
> And we'll bury him down in Oxmanstown
> Along with the devil and Danes,
> (Chorus) With the deaf and dumb Danes,
> And all their remains.

Joyce is alluding here to the conflict between the Irish and the vikings, who

had pillaged and plundered Ireland since 795 and then settled down there and remained an influence in Irish history until the thirteenth century.

HCE thus becomes the embodiment of all the oppression that Ireland has suffered from Scandinavia and England, and that extends to the political situation in the twentieth century. For, with the phrase, "saw his black and tan man-o'-war," Hosty is hinting at the English occupation soldiers, the "Black and Tans," who, at the beginning of the 1920s, were brutal in their suppression of Irish attempts to gain independence. And when finally the protagonist is called "fafafather of all schemes for to bother us" (45.13), the author of the ballad is referring to HCE's speech impediment, whose stuttering at the meeting with the cad betrayed his guilt. In the satire the homosexual and the heterosexual transgressions that the protagonist is said to have committed are also included. The name Oscar, which is meant to recall Oscar Wilde, who was born in Dublin, is an allusion to the homosexual behavior of which the Dubliners accuse him. And with respect to his behavior toward the female sex, the following stanza of the ballad reports (46.24-29):

> It was during some fresh water garden pumping
> Or, according to the *Nursing Mirror*, while admiring the monkeys
> That our heavyweight heathen Humpharey
> Made bold a maid to woo
> (Chorus) Woohoo, what'll she doo!
> The general lost her maidenloo!

HCE appears in the ballad as the scapegoat who must suffer for every kind of possible crime. Patrick A. McCarthy (1980:592) has called him accordingly "a scapegoat for all crimes committed against Ireland in all ages."

The motif of the scapegoat is also referred to in a very subtle way by the use of the substantive "the rann," which appears in two passages connected with the "Ballad of Persse O'Reilly." In the passage where the ballad and its composer are first introduced, it is said: "he's the mann to rhyme the rann, the rann, the rann, the king of all ranns" (44.16-17), and during a short interruption within the ballad, it is repeated: "Rhyme the rann, the king of all ranns!" (45.26). A "rann" is, according to Campbell and Robinson (1947:58, n. 1), "an ancient Celtic verse form," which they explain with the added remark: "There are many stories of Irish poets who revenged themselves against ungenerous or brutal kings by composing satires against them; and frequently (or so they say) the kings literally died of the shame." The motif of the scapegoat becomes apparent when we

understand "rann" as an allusion to "wren" and when we hear the verses that, according to a popular Irish tradition, are sung in memory of St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, who is honored on the 26th of December:

> The wren, the wren,
> The King of all birds,
> Saint Stephen's his day,
> Was caught in the furze.

On this day it was customary to kill a wren—as a kind of scapegoat—and to hang him on a stick and carry him through the streets. Like St. Stephen the wren and with him HCE are killed in order to cleanse the city from all its sins.

Hosty's ballad soon makes the rounds in Dublin and wins him great popularity, because, with his satire on HCE, who came from England and was a Protestant, he gave expression to the antipathies of the Irish people against the Protestant ruling class and released the pent-up feelings of hate against the oppressor. The ballad as an example of orally transmitted knowledge preserved in artistic form is not an instrument of documentary information, but rather the expression of an emotional reaction to actual conditions. At the same time it formulates an attitude that takes on archetypal characteristics, and for this reason it can be placed in the neighborhood of materials that have been investigated and interpreted by James Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, a work of fundamental importance for modern English literature.

The first ballad takes up the theme investigated by Frazer of the "dying and reviving god"; in the second ballad this theme is only pursued until the death of the protagonist. According to Frazer there are examples for both variations of the myth concerning the Egyptian gods Isis and Osiris. It is reported, among other things, that Osiris' corpse is torn into fourteen pieces and strewn over the earth. According to one version, Isis, who is at once both sister and wife to Osiris, found each piece and buried it where she found it. In a second version, which calls the ballad of Tim Finnegan to mind, Isis lamented the death of Osiris along with her sister Nephthys, whereupon the Sun-God Ra took pity on her and sent a jackal-headed god who, together with the two sisters and with the help of Toth and Horus, joined together the torn pieces of the murdered god; "Osiris revived, and thenceforth reigned as king over the dead in the other world" (Frazer 1922:13). That Joyce was well acquainted with Frazer's work can be seen in the veiled allusions to details of rituals described in *The Golden*

Bough that are contained in *Finnegans Wake*. In this connection I should mention James S. Atherton, who points out (1960:193) that "Joyce probably used Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, and seems, like his friend, T. S. Eliot, to 'have used especially the two volumes *Atthis, Adonis, Osiris.*'"

Whereas the second chapter of Book I of *Finnegans Wake* describes the labyrinthian path of the stories about HCE in Dublin, that is, from a spatial point of view, the third chapter is concerned with the equally labyrinthian path of the oral statements and reports about HCE from the point of view of time. The blurring of the names that are used in the oral reports mirrors the growing temporal distance between the original event and its oral transmission. Hosty appears after some time as Osti-Fosti (48.19), M'Mara as A'Hara (49.03; he himself adopts the name of Blanco Fusilovna Bucklovitch), Peter Cloran changes into Paul Horan—a transformation on which Bernard Benstock (1965:195) comments as follows: "born as St. Peter, he dies as St. Paul." As soon as the author of the ballad and his friends disappear from the Dublin scenery, all knowledge of details is lost. About Osti-Fosti we only hear: "no one end is known" (48.24); A'Hara is killed in action: "it came about that on the field of Vasileff's Cornix inauspiciously with his unit he perished" (49.12-14). Paul Horan ends in a lunatic asylum: "Poor old dear Paul Horan, to satisfy his literary as well as his criminal aspirations, at the suggestion thrown out by the doomster in loquacity lunacy, so says the Dublin Intelligence, was thrown into a Ridley's for inmates in the northern counties" (49.15-19). Nevertheless, people never forget Earwicker—this is mainly due to "Madam's Toshowus waxes," Mme Tussaud's waxworks, and the National Gallery that appears in Joyce's diction as "our notional gullery" (57.21).

The individual interviews with over twenty people reported in the third chapter of Book I offer all in all a many-sided picture of the public opinion that developed with respect to HCE after the disappearance of the author of the ballad of Persse O'Reilly. At the beginning of this colorful spectrum of viewpoints there stands the opinion of the three soldiers: "It was the first woman, they said, souped him, that fatal wellesday, Lili Coninghams, by suggesting him they go in a field" (58.28-30). The name Lili is meant to suggest Lilith, who in popular Jewish belief was an evil demon (cf. 34.14); according to Talmudic tradition she was Adam's first wife. Meager's opinion stands at the end of the series of interviews. Meager is a British seaman who suspects that the soldiers are behind all the stories: "but I also think, Puellywally, by the siege of his trousers there was someone else behind it—you bet your boughtem blarneys—about their three drummers down Keysars Lane. (Trite!)" (61.24-27).

The remainder of the opinions lie somewhere in between. As representative of these I should like to quote two examples:

1. A bar-maid says: “It would be skarlot shame to jailahim in lockup....” (60.04-05) and

2. Briam Lynsky remarks: “Them two bitches ought to be leashed, canem!” (60.14-15).

The greater the temporal distance between the original fact, that is, Earwicker’s “guilt,” and its oral transmission, the milder the judgment that is passed on Earwicker. A sentimental-nostalgic note creeps in, which Joyce also found in the modern renderings of Old Irish legends and heroic lays that were published in the nineteenth century and that he mostly criticized ironically. Benstock comments on this fact in the following way (1965:195):

> The series of reports on the happenings of the epic fall continues under a haze of time-obscured hearsay; there is never a single accurate account of the important occurrence. This handling of the material of the *Wake* attempts to present the contemporary epic as a version of the past as seen by the present; the nonheroic age retells the heroic story in its own versions.

The interviews as a whole also do not lead to an unequivocal judgment of HCE. What we possess are only variations of the original story and every new means of propagating it. The various media named in this chapter include newspaper, radio, film, telephone, and even television. The film mentioned in this chapter is about “an old geeser who calls on his skirt” (65.05-06), an allusion to a scandal from the 1920s caused by an American, Daddy Browning, “and his two peaches” (McHugh 1980:65). Here Joyce may also have had Swift and his two girlfriends, Stella and Vanessa, in mind.

In summary it can be said that orally transmitted knowledge such as Joyce describes with respect to HCE retains only isolated pieces of information, sometimes only isolated impressions. This information is in most cases not based on immediate experience or observation, but on reports from others. What originally happened remains questionable because each participant interprets the happenings in his or her own way, and either displaces the guilt onto someone else, or exaggerates his own guilt, as is the case with Earwicker.

In spite of the uncertainties inherent in oral tradition, one thing is clear, namely, that all human beings take part in some way in the guilt that is personified by HCE, even if it is only to the extent that they willingly or

unwillingly continue to falsify information that in itself already contains untruth. Margot Norris has described this state of affairs as follows (1976:45-46):

> An essential characteristic of both theological and psychoanalytic primal sins, the sin of Adam and the crime of Oedipus, is their legacy to progeny and populace: all men are born with the stain of Original Sin, and all will be guilty of oedipal wishes. An individual, private crime becomes a public, universal, and unconscious sin. This essential relationship between private and public acts, which is dramatized in the primal scene, forms a major theme in *Finnegans Wake*. HCE's sin is private and hidden, buried in the past, and perhaps even lost to consciousness. Yet the sin in Phoenix Park becomes a public matter, a "municipal sin business" (5.13), a scandal that dominates universal concern and conversation.

The inquiries into and the reflections on the nature of this guilt never come to an end in *Finnegans Wake*, so that one might say that this motif actually provides the motor for the epic events. A new dimension is opened, however, when the fragments of a letter, which a hen digs out of a dunghill, are called to our attention. The letter was written by Anna Livia Plurabelle, Earwicker's wife, and is supposed to contain information about him. The inquiry into the contents of the letter, their meaning and correct interpretation, lead us into another thematic area. Joyce moves into the realm of the written word. The question that he asks the reader to ponder is this: can the written word express the truth about HCE, that is, about human beings and humanity in general; is the written word superior to the inexact spoken word, or is the written word that Joyce has in mind an instrument of communication as fragile and thus problematic as the orally transmitted word?

The fifth chapter of Book I reveals that Joyce approaches writing with the same critical scepticism as oral expression. He parodies the methods that attempt to reconstruct unreadable passages in a manuscript with the help of chemical processes or ultraviolet light, and his satire is also directed against the psychoanalytic Freudian and the politico-marxist principles of interpretation (115.11-35 and 116.10), because their under- lying assumptions oversimplify the complexity of the text to be interpreted. Behind all of this there is doubtless also a reply to the censor who, during the First World War, was of the opinion "that '*Ulysses* was a prearranged pro-German code'" (quoted in McCarthy 1980:598).

The washerwomen dialogue in Chapter 8 of Book I points to a certain solution of the problem of guilt: Anna Livia Plurabelle, whose second name stands for the river Liffey, accepts HCE's sins (or rather dissolves them)

and thus cleanses him of his sins no matter how great they may have been, and no matter what may have been said about him, either by word of mouth or in writing. In this context a statement in ALP's concluding monologue is worthy of note: "I thought you the great in all things, in guilt and in glory. You're but a puny" (627.23-24). Be that as it may, the guilt will be taken up and dissolved in the river that symbolizes a continuous renewal of life. The solution to the conflict, which could be called a kind of worldly "salvation," is mediated by a woman. For this reason the first word of the novel is "river," and the first proper name that is mentioned is "Eve": "riverrun, past Eve and Adam's. . . ."[8]

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[8] A German version of this essay was published as Erzgräber 1990.

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Turkish Oral Tradition in Texas: The Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative

Warren S. Walker, Director

Located at Texas Tech University, the Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative is a research facility devoted primarily to the study of the oral tradition. It was opened to the public in 1970, at which time it was a privately owned collection that served as an adjunct to the Department of English. Rapid growth both in size and function required larger quarters, and in 1980 it was moved to the central library building. In that same year it was formally donated to Texas Tech University by its three founders: Ahmet Edip Uysal, Barbara K. Walker, and Warren S. Walker.

Its more than 3,000 folktales and related forms make it one of the largest collections of Turkish oral narrative in the world. Almost all of its holdings were collected by the donors between 1961 and the present. An exception to this is the set of valuable recordings donated by Wolfram Eberhard from the 1951 fieldwork that formed the basis of his important study *Minstrel Tales from Southeastern Turkey* (Berkeley, 1955). Other exceptions are the materials contributed by Saim Sakaoğlu (Erzurum), Tuncer Gülensoy (Elaziğ), Ahmet Ali Arslan (Kars), and Mehmet Yalvaç (Malatya).

From the outset two criteria were set for all narratives to be included in the Archive: (1) they were to be told in a Turkic language, and (2) they were to be derived not only from the oral tradition but also from an oral tradition demonstrably alive today. The first criterion may well seem too restrictive, but it provided a consistent linguistic framework in a complex polyglot culture. As far as we can determine, this control has not caused the exclusion of any sizable amount of oral material, for all of the larger ethnic minority groups in Turkey (Arabs, Armenians, Greeks, Jews, Kurds, Lazes) have long been bilingual. The second criterion prohibited the use of tales merely said to be of oral derivation. More than 90% of all Archive holdings were recorded on magnetic tape, and most of these recordings have been well preserved and are available for listening at the Archive. It should be noted at once, however, that these are not stereophonic or even studio-

quality recordings. Inasmuch as the great bulk of them were made in rural Turkey at a time when most villages had no source of electricity, the fieldwork was done using portable battery-powered equipment. If not acoustically gratifying, the results are, nevertheless, adequately clear and amply audible.

Because Turkish is not a commonly known language in the West, optimal utilization of the Archive will be realized only when its recordings are translated into a major Western European language. Accordingly, the staff has given priority to its efforts to provide English translations for all holdings. More than a third of them have been translated to date and bound (along with annotations) in easy-to-use typescript volumes. *Preliminary Catalogue II: The First Thousand Tales* (1988) provides basic data (including Aarne-Thompson and Eberhard-Boratav type numbers when applicable) for all entries. Resources permitting, *Preliminary Catalogue III: The First Fifteen Hundred Narratives* should be ready by 1993.

That Turkey was a vast and largely untapped reservoir of oral tradition began to be apparent soon after World War II, and the four international congresses on Turkish folklore held during the past seventeen years have left little doubt about that fact. Uncertain about how many oral narratives might eventually be collected, we divided the Archive (partly for the purpose of logistical manageability) into eight major sections. These divisions are by no means mutually exclusive, and anyone so minded might well quarrel with our taxonomy.

I. *The Supernatural*

This section includes the *märchen* and other stories set in the world of fantasy and make-believe. Tales that contain the impossible (from a scientific point of view), magic, marvels, monsters, witches, giants, demons, jinns, speaking animals, and nonreligious miracles are found in this category. So too are tales about the vagaries of Fate, just so long as these mysterious ways are not directly attributed to the Deity. Accounts of religious miracles, saints' legends, and tales based on religious belief appear in Section VIII.

II. *Perplexities and Ingenious Deductions*

Many Turkish tales challenge the wits of both their characters and their audiences. These narratives may involve riddling dialogue, puzzles, conundrums, sign language, symbolic language, or other forms of disguised communication. They may also include seemingly unaccountable behavior for which rational explanation is sought.

III. *Humor*

Regardless of how rigorously one might define the nature of humor, one would probably have to concede that ultimately humor relies largely upon the response of the listener or reader. Turks find the tales catalogued beneath this heading funny. Here are placed slapstick, pratfall, situational comedy, verbal squelch, and tall tale. Here too are placed the clever achievements of tricksters. However exploitative—at times even vicious—the activities of the trickster may be, we usually accord to this archetypal figure a chuckle for his ingenuity and at least a grudging admiration for his success.

IV. *Moralizing*

It could be argued that a high percentage of oral narrative is, in one way or another, at least partially moralistic. This section of the Archive, however, is restricted to those tales that are overtly and unabashedly preachy or didactic. Because most animal fables make clear-cut distinctions between right and wrong, they could logically appear here rather than in Section I.

V. *Romance—Heroic and/or Amatory*

Here are accounts of the valiant deeds of warriors, both male and female. Whether the protagonists are historical or fictional, their prowess is usually exaggerated almost to the point of fantasy. The love stories often emphasize the spiritual aspects of the male/female relationship. The Most Beautiful Girl in the World in such tales may remind one of Dante's Beatrice, though the spiritualized love affair of the Middle East predated the Florentine by at least three centuries.

Narratives in this section are set apart by their form. *Cante fable* in mode, most of them are partly prose, partly poetry, and to one degree or another they are sung tales. They are created and performed by a folk poet-minstrel who in Turkey is called an *âṣık* —literally *lover* but in this context *lover poet*. The *âṣık* accompanies his singing with a lutelike instrument known as a *bağlama* or, more often now, *saz*. (The career of the *âṣık*—his selection for the role, his initiation and training, his image and social status, and the many conventions of the minstrel tradition are too complex and detailed to be described here.)

VI. *Anticlerical Satire*

Tales that comprise this section should not be construed as

being antireligious. Quite the contrary, they reveal and criticize the human failings and moral lapses of members of the Moslem religious establishment. The offenders range from the poor dervish through the mosque personnel to the Caliph himself. Included among the clerical culprits who betray their faith is the *kadı*, the pre-Republic Moslem judge of canonical law, who was all too often vulnerable to bribery. Audiences furtively relish the naughty capers of such backsliders and (even less admirably) enjoy the exposure that humiliates dignity.

VII. *Anecdotal Wit and Wisdom*

Very short comic tales, usually told in less than four minutes, are legion in Turkey. They are placed in this separate section (rather than in III) because of (1) their extreme brevity and (2) their predominantly typed characters. However much historicity may be claimed for such favorites as Nasreddin Hoca, the daringly witty Janissary Incili Çavuş, or the madcap holy fool Behlül Dane, their typicality is patent.

Seemingly every land has villages or towns whose citizens are allegedly very shrewd or very stupid. Kayseri produces the sharpers of Turkey, and such villages as Çemişgezek and Karatepe consistently generate dummers. Anyone, of course, may appear to be stupid when removed suddenly from his or her native habitat, and rustics in an urban setting play the fool in many an anecdote (*fıkra* in Turkish). Ethnic humor, employing appropriate dialect, is the basis for countless anecdotes burlesquing Albanians, Armenians, Greeks, Gypsies, Jews, Kurds, Lazes, Persians, and other minority groups.

VIII. *Miscellaneous*

Within this catch-all category is a wide variety of narratives that have in common only their claim to be true. Some are sufficiently historical to qualify as legends. Others are utterly fanciful, however seriously they may be taken by tellers and listeners. Very few begin with the standard formulaic opening of the Turkish *märchen* or *masal*: "Once there was and once there wasn't...."

One group of narratives in this section is made up of what seems to be folk history. Another contains wish-fulfillment fantasies: stories of buried treasure and accounts of real-life peasant boys and girls who marry into rich, noble, or even royal families. Saints' lives and tales derived from religious sources form another component of

VIII. Among these last a number feature Hızır, who in the modern era is usually pictured either as a saint or as a special agent of God but who in early times was viewed as a water deity.

Finally, there are in this unit a few non-narrative items. They are included because of their relevance, in one way or another, to tales in the other sections. There are, for instance, examples of the *tekerleme*, the long, formulaic nonsense jingle used at the beginning of some tales. There are also songs that seem clearly to be related to the minstrel tales of Section V.

Because Turkey is a land bridge between Europe and Asia, it has been a crossroads of empire for more than 6,000 years, and the peoples of many civilizations and cultures have left their imprints not only upon the landscape but also upon the folk memory. To a far greater extent in Turkey than in most other countries of the world, any seemingly recent item of folklore may in fact be ancient. Pre-Islamic, pre-Christian, even pre-Classical themes and motifs often surface in Turkish folktales. In order to be able to identify and interpret such materials, a greater reliance must be placed on secondary sources than is common in many other folkloric studies. Besides the readily available resources of the Texas Tech University Library, the researcher will find in the Archive a small but highly selective collection of reference works and specialized studies. Fewer than 10% of these titles are listed in the OCLC computer network. Other support mechanisms for research include audio equipment for listening to and reproducing tapes; low-cost copy service; and electronic typewriters with Turkish letters and diacritical marks. Perhaps the most useful tools are the several indexes to Archive holdings, including a subject index that presently runs to several thousand headings and subheadings.

Among ancillary activities of the Archive are the publication and distribution of books and filmstrips on Turkish culture to schools throughout the United States and Canada. See the Archive entry in *Educators Guide to Free Social Studies Materials*.

Archive hours on weekdays during fall and spring semesters are 8:00 to 3:30; during most of the summer they are 8:00 to 2:00.

Queries and other communications should be sent to:

Archive of Turkish Oral Narrative
Texas Tech University Library
Lubbock, Texas 79409
Telephone: (806) 742-1922

Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens, Rosalind Thomas. Cambridge Studies in Oral and Literate Culture, vol. 18. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989. xiii + 321 pp. Appendix; Bibliography.

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The purpose of Thomas's very interesting book is to explore two preconceptions widely accepted by scholars interested in orality: (1) that literacy is always more prestigious than orality and, as a corollary, in writing about the past, literary sources are to be valued above oral; and (2) that literacy and orality function completely independently of each other; that is, that literate societies can be distinguished from oral "with clear-cut characteristics attributed to each" (1-2).[1] In her introduction (1-14), Thomas makes clear her approach and the breadth of the scholarly work on which she is drawing, as she discusses classicists' almost complete avoidance of the research done on oral societies by anthropologists. She recognizes that to know how to apply anthropologists' contributions to the study of ancient Greece, where fieldwork is no longer possible, is difficult, but she argues that it can be done.[2] She suggests that anthropology shows us that "the most important factor in oral tradition is the way the tradition is passed on" (6), then describes her search through Greek authors for "texts which either directly represent oral tradition or which represent its transmission" (7). For her, there are three areas to be investigated—the types of oral tradition, such as those that remember a family's service to the city or its genealogy; the groups who do the transmitting, such as a prominent Athenian family like the Alcmaeonids, or even the Athenian city-state itself; and the means of transmission—oral, literate, or a mixture.[3] Also important is the motive, which can vary from the desire for prestige to a need for self-defense, for passing on such a tradition.

Thomas's focus is upon classical Athens of the 5th and 4th centuries BC. Her choice reflects, in part, her belief that evidence from the city disproves both of the scholarly assumptions mentioned above and, in part, the nature of the evidence available, which makes her choice of focus, to use her term, "inevitabl[e]" (7). She argues that scholars studying literacy in ancient Athens have let certain biases restrict their work: they may be interested in literacy only "as a means of access to Greek literature" (19) or they may see in literacy the impetus for democracy (22, 30), and thus be misled about the role of literacy in Athenian culture, as she understands it.

Equally important to her discussion of orality are her beliefs that both oral and written ways of accomplishing tasks co-existed in Athens, and that Athenian attitudes toward oral tradition and written documents changed only gradually from the 5th to the 4th centuries, as Athenians came to feel that oral tradition by itself was no longer sufficient for

[1] I would like to thank Dr. Timothy W. Boyd for his work in helping me to prepare this review.

[2] Thomas expresses many disagreements with Jack Goody's work, particularly with his "autonomous model" of literacy (Brian Street's term), throughout her introduction and section 1.1.

[3] Important for oral transmission is its form, whether it is, for example, "passed on in poetic or other fixed form" (6).

their needs. She points to the legal and commercial worlds, specifically to pleas, evidence, and contracts, to illustrate the co-existence of oral and literate ways and the eventual replacement (sometimes only partial) of the oral by the literate (41-43). In her discussion, she suggests that an intermediate stage in this transition may be seen in the iconic value given to texts by orators (49-51). In her survey of the 4th century BC, she singles out Aeschines of the orators and the *Athenaion Politeia* as examples of sources that reveal themselves to be more "document-minded" than their contemporaries and forebears.

Her material is presented in five complex, densely argued chapters, an epilogue, and an appendix on lists in early Greece. In the first chapter, she discusses her approach and defines important terms. The second and third chapters together are devoted to family tradition and genealogy. In the second, she concentrates on family traditions because she believes them to be oral, without almost any contamination from writing, and studies three cases, the family of Aristocrates, the family of Andocides, and the Alcmaeonids. In these three, she finds evidence for the transformation of family tradition in response to Athenian civic development and polis tradition. The subtitle of the third chapter, "Genealogy and family tradition: the intrusion of writing," reflects Thomas's belief that writing is not "simply a neutral skill or technology" (24), and she argues in this chapter that writing and the interests of Athenian democracy both affected the genealogies of prominent families. She illustrates her thesis with a long look at the Philaid genealogy.

In her final two chapters, Thomas broadens her perspective to examine the tradition of the Athenian city-state. The epitaphios (the public funeral oration) and polis traditions are the subjects of chapter 4. Thomas argues that the epitaphios shaped most Athenians' views of their past, creating for them a past that ignored much of the city's history (e.g., defeats in battle and changes in the civic government), focused on Athens' legendary beginnings, and praised the demos with aristocratic language and imagery, often omitting even the names of its leaders. In this respect, she suggests that family and polis traditions diverge: families retain memories of ancestors' deeds for Athens, while civic traditions deny the importance of both the individual and ancestry. Chapter 5 studies the many oral traditions about the end of the Peisistratid tyranny in Athens in order to compare family, polis, popular, and official versions of acts that remained prominent in Athenian minds for at least two centuries. Thomas disagrees with Jacoby's division of these traditions into two, the "Alcmaeonid" as given by Herodotus and the "official," and argues that the traditions were much more complex, much more intertwined than that.

It is important at the outset to understand just how Thomas sees literacy. She criticizes earlier studies that define literacy too broadly or assume that its meaning is self-evident (18-19) and devotes her first chapter to a discussion of the issues she believes are involved.[4] She suggests that we have asked the wrong questions about literacy and that "we should consider the place of literacy in Athens rather than its extent" (15):

[4] For F. D. Harvey, in his article "Literacy in the Athenian Democracy," a definition of literacy may be inherent in his opening question: "how may Athenians in the fifth and fourth centuries BC could read and write?" (*Revue des études grecques,* 79 [1966]:585). Terrence A. Boring's definition of literacy in his study of Sparta seems perhaps too broad: "the ability of an individual to make any use of writing as a tool for the satisfaction of normal social, business, or political requirements, however great or small" (*Literacy in Ancient Sparta*, Mnemosyne, suppl. 54 [Leiden: Brill, 1979], p. 1). Thomas praises Cartledge's term "functional literacy" in his discussion of Spartan ephors ("Literacy in the Spartan Oligarchy," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 98 [1978]:25-37), although her citation should be to his p. 30 (19).

> Literacy is not a single uniform skill with only one significant level of competence, and... its use is far from predictable. Common sense tells us that there is little value in considering literacy by itself as an almost theoretical possession, if we do not also consider how it is used....
>
> It is also recognized that much of Athenian life was primarily oral where we might expect the use of writing. So we must extend discussion of literacy to the 'mixture' and interaction of literate and oral processes. Once we recognize such a mixture, and even regard it as normal, then we may see the evidence used for the "literacy debate" in a rather different light. (15-16)

Such a very flexible view thus allows Thomas a greater freedom than that of earlier writers to explore Athenians' attitudes to and uses of writing, as well as to document any changes.

One of the book's major strengths is the evidence—often fresh—that Thomas brings to her subject. She draws first on the speeches in the Athenian assembly and law courts, including the public funeral speech. She begins with this evidence not only, she suggests, because speeches offer a version of Athenian history based on the city's oral tradition,[5] but also because they sometimes provide the family history of the speaker and are thus a source of family tradition, much of it potentially orally received. Conversely, Thomas also argues that studying oratory "tells us how written documents were regarded in practice" (61). Her second source is comedy, which, she believes, "expressed popular tradition" (7), but, curiously, she does not make much use of this material.[6] Because of her emphasis on oral material contained within the written speech of rhetoric and the stylized conversation of comedy, it is only after these two types of evidence that Thomas suggests that we can turn to the historians. She explains this ordering of her sources by arguing that, although such historians as Herodotus and Thucydides used oral tradition, they so

[5] Thomas provides evidence for her belief in chapter 4, "Official Tradition? Polis Tradition and the Epitaphios."

[6] Thomas cites the emphasis on Marathon and the Μαραθωνομάχαι in Aristophanic comedies. She argues that for Athenians, Marathon came to represent the whole of the Persian Wars, the Athenians quickly forgot that they were not alone against the Persians at Marathon (221), and that "the battle both reflected legendary heroism and began the *aretē* of the historical period" (225-26). She also suggests on the basis of *Lysistrata* that 5th-century Athenians remembered Sparta's role in the expulsion of the Peisistratidae but that Athenian patriotism was troubled by this memory (245-47). Very early in her discussion of the meaning of literacy, she points to what she believes are distorted interpretations of Aristophanes made by previous scholars (19-20).

Harvey (1966) makes greater use of Aristophanes in his discussion of Athenian literacy, depending on the comic poet chiefly when there is evidence from no other source. Thus he cites Aristophanes as evidence, for example, for public notices in Athens concerning forthcoming trials, military summonses, assembly meetings, and the agenda of the Boule (601). Aristophanes also provides evidence of the keeping of personal accounts (611-13), casual notetaking (616-17), the knowledge of uneducated people (618-19), and the education of women (621).

G. E. M. de Ste Croix's reservations about the use of comedy, especially Aristophanes, as the basis for historical reconstruction are particularly relevant in this context (*The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1972]:231-37). He argues that comic poets should be the last source of evidence in historical reconstructions and offers five principles for using them. His first states: "the only safe course is to *look at the other evidence first*, and, if we have reliable sources, to make sure we *interpret the comic poet in the light of the remaining evidence* [italics de Ste Croix's], instead of going to work the other way round, as people so often do" (232).

rearranged and combined it with what they learned from other sources, that such contamination has made it more difficult to isolate and understand the oral material which their histories may embody. She illustrates this rearrangement in her detailed analysis of Herodotus' and Thucydides' sources for the Alcmaeonid family (chapter 5, *passim*).

The Attic orators have been neglected by other treatments of orality in Greece,[7] but Thomas shows clearly how invaluable a source for orality and writing they are, as she makes them reveal Athenian attitudes towards not only orality and literacy but also the Athenian past. In her use of them, she illustrates how the orators assume the oral transmission of written documents (62). As well, she demonstrates how they exploit the "family defence" in their speeches before juries or assemblies, making a plea for sympathy through their ancestry or ancestors' service to the city. This family defense, she argues, reveals what an Athenian may know about his family's past (99); perhaps it may also reveal something about the level of historical and genealogical knowledge of the jury or assembly that might be expected by the speaker.

The epitaphios most frequently recalls the Persian Wars, epitomized for Athens by Marathon, and Thomas believes that this tradition of the epitaphios may have begun soon after the Persians were defeated, perhaps as a response to that victory (207).[8] In other speeches, she points out, Athenian orators emphasize repeatedly four main events: the end of the Peisistratidae, the Persian Wars, the Athenian empire, and the fall of the 30 tyrants (198).[9] We may be surprised that Athenians do not recall ancestors who held civic offices, such as the archonship, and stress military accomplishments instead, but this may reflect the importance of an ancestor's death in battle and also allow an orator to evoke the glory due a

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[7] Harvey's article is an exception and puts the orators to many different uses. He cites their random references to Athenian public secretaries (597), governmental policies (598), business practices (606-15), wills (617), or the literacy of women and slaves (622-23). He also makes much of Ps.-Dem. 43 (*Macart.*) .18 (596-97).

[8] In the epitaphios, four events from Athens' legendary past reappear time and again—the defeat of the Amazons, the expulsion of Eumolpus from Attica, the expulsion of Eurystheus, and the permission given to the Argives to bury their dead (207).

[9] There is a noteworthy lack of reference in the public sphere to Athenian participation in the Trojan War; the only exceptions are the comparison of the Persian or Peloponnesian Wars to the Trojan, to the detriment of the latter, and the use of the Trojan War in historical arguments, as when Solon argued for Athenian possession of Salamis on the basis of two lines in the Homeric catalogue of ships (*Iliad* 2.557-58). Many believed that Solon interpolated the verses for this purpose (Plutarch, *Solon* 10). The third honorific inscription that the Athenians allowed Cimon, the commander of the Delian League forces, to place on a herm after his victory over the Persians at Eion in northeastern Greece in 476 BC may testify to Athenian touchiness on their participation in the Trojan War: the verses describe Menestheus, the Athenian leader at Troy, as a superb leader and then assert "οὕτως οὐδὲν ἀεικὲς Ἀθηναίοισι καλεῖσθαι / κοσμηταῖς πολέμου τ' ἀμφὶ καὶ ἠνορέης"—thus there is no shameful reputation to the Athenian leaders in war and in bravery (Plutarch, *Cimon* 7; compare Aeschines 3.183-85). See the discussion, with bibliography, of this passage in R. E. Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora III: Literary and Epigraphical Testimonia* (Princeton: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1957):103-5, 107.

Perhaps for Athenians, Theseus and his exploits partially filled the gap of the Trojan War. See, for example, Theseus' appearance at Marathon, as if he were an old war comrade called back to the colors (Plutarch, *Theseus* 35). See also Thomas 201-6, 211-12, 221.

Homeric hero (117).

This equation of a recent ancestor and a Homeric hero standing at the very beginning of a family's lineage is characteristic, according to Thomas, of traditional Greek genealogical thinking. A family was not interested in being able—as we might with our meticulous family trees—to trace its descent, generation by generation, from the god or hero with whom its line began, but simply in making the connection with that legendary figure clear. Speakers often show themselves in such passages able to recall only a very few generations in their family, often back only to their grandparents, then leaving a wide gap to a legendary ancestor early in the family's past.

It is here that Thomas suggests we may be able to see the Athenian democracy having an effect on the kind of story that becomes family tradition: the legendary hero may be omitted if the speaker can claim a relative who opposed the Peisistratidae or brought down either of the two oligarchies Athens suffered during the Peloponnesian War. As the fourth century progressed and the distance from these events grew, speakers have an increasing difficulty in identifying just how they are related to their anti-tyrant, anti-oligarchical ancestors and understanding precisely what these ancestors did, but they produce them as evidence, often conflating events in the two oligarchies (e.g., 135, 138), turning defeats inflicted by the tyrants into victories (139-41), or obscuring the relationship between their ancestors and the tyrants, as happened in both the Philaid and Alcmaeonid traditions (169). Thomas even argues that "the rule of the Thirty actually produced changes in most traditions about the end of the Peisistratid tyranny" (144, 252-54).

What is difficult to judge in such developments is how much a part conscious manipulation of family traditions plays and how much is due to oral transmission. Thomas discusses the "telescoping" of events that commonly occurs when information is passed on orally and not in any fixed form. When writing is used for genealogies, Thomas argues convincingly that it does not merely record what it finds in the oral traditions, but that it transforms it. Written records attempt to coordinate and synchronize stories whose contradictions may never before have been noticed in their oral shape; writing may also attempt to fill in the gap between a family's legendary and its democratic heroes. Thus, the writing of genealogies can be seen as the earliest study of Greek chronology, but the accuracy of any of the chronology or even of names is questionable, as Thomas shows: where memory may shorten genealogy, writing seems often to elongate it, to make contemporary generations or figures, such as brothers or cousins, into successive generations, such as fathers and sons (ch. 3 *passim*).[10]

For Thomas, Aeschines shows the transition towards a new way to use documents and she singles him out, saying that he "alone of our extant orators exploits the past decrees fully for chronology" (69). She also finds in him the attitude that the records themselves, rather than the city's memory, are the guardians and preservers of the past. Aeschines depends on this argument in the beginning of his speech against Timarchus, for instance.[11] He distinguishes between democracy and other forms of government on the basis of laws:

[10] The Athenians may have inadvertently added to this uncertainty about ancestry in their naming customs, when they followed a tradition of calling grandsons after grandfathers (125).

[11] Thomas does not cite this example, but discusses others (70).

> εὖ δ' ἴστε, ὦ ἄνδρες Ἀθηναῖοι, ὅτι τὰ μὲν τῶν δημοκρατουμένων σώματα καὶ τὴν πολιτείαν οἱ νόμοι σῴζουσι, τὰ δὲ τῶν τυράννων καὶ ὀλιγαρχικῶν ἀπιστία καὶ ἡ μετὰ τῶν ὅπλων φρουρά.
>
> You know well, Athenians, that the laws guard the citizen body and constitution in a democracy, but that in a tyranny and an oligarchy, it is distrust and armed guards which do the guarding. (1.5)

Aeschines then makes a parallel argument, that the citizens should regard themselves as protectors of the laws handed down to them by their lawgivers: "καὶ τούτους τοὺς νόμους ἀναγράψαντες ὑμῖν παρακατέθεντο, καὶ ὑμᾶς αὐτῶν ἐπέστησαν φύλακας"—and having inscribed these laws, they passed them down to you, and established you as their guardians (1.7). As Thomas observes (71), Aeschines' sophistication in the use of documents is noted by at least one enemy, Demosthenes, who seizes upon this practice as a weapon to use against him: for Demosthenes, Aeschines is "κατάρατε καὶ γραμματοκύφων"—accursed and one who pores over records (18.209) —and a ὑπογραμματεύς—undersecretary (19.249).

Thomas also argues that the author of the *Athenaion Politeia* (Aristotle, perhaps)[12] makes greater use of written sources than previous writers. This dependence on written materials, both documents and poetry, she suggests, may be "expressive of the increasing interest in documents and documentation" (91). Aristotle's dependence on written sources, one might add, could also reflect an increasing ease of access to documents as well as an increasing willingness to grant such documents authority. As Thomas herself discusses, the establishment of the Metroon in the Athenian Agora as a repository of documents only occurs at the very end of the 5th century BC and it seems to have taken some time for Athenians to realize its potential value for them, but once Aeschines showed the way, many others (orators, at least) eagerly followed (38-40, 52, 68-83).

In Aeschines and the *Athenaion Politeia*, then, Thomas detects a change in the Athenian attitude toward documents, but argues that even during the 4th century, "Athens was only partially document-minded, familiar with oral methods of proof and record" (93). Nonetheless, for her, there is a sense in the rhetoric and histories of the late 4th century "that oral traditions alone might no longer be adequate" (93). She points, for instance, to the increase in the citation of documents (both genuine and forged) by other orators (see 86). Curiously, however, she makes little of the collection of Athenian inscriptions by Craterus (*FGrH* 342). She mentions him only once, describing his ψηφισμάτων συναγωγή as "a new and unusual idea" (90). [13]

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[12] Thomas, perhaps for the sake of simplicity, does not question or comment on the controversy of Aristotle's authorship of the *Athenaion Politeia*. P. J. Rhodes considers the evidence about authorship of this work and concludes: "On the evidence which we have, Aristotle could have written this work himself, but I do not believe he did" (*A Commentary on the Aristotelian* Athenaion Politeia [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981]:63). For convenience, however, I shall refer to the author as Aristotle.

[13] If the fragments of Craterus that survive are at all indicative, he does not seem to have been much used by later writers, with the possible exception of Plutarch in his biographies of Athenians. Plutarch discusses the conflicting evidence for Aristides' final days, then remarks: "τούτων δ' οὐδὲν ἔγγραφον ὁ Κρατερὸς τεκμήριον παρέσχηκεν, οὔτε δίκην οὔτε ψήφισμα, καίπερ εἰωθὼς ἐπιεικῶς γράφειν τὰ τοιαῦτα καὶ παρατίθεσθαι τοὺς ἱστοροῦντας."—on the other hand Craterus provides

But is Athens unique or anomalous in its attitude toward orality and in its increasing dependence on writing?[14] Although Thomas is right to say that the overwhelming majority of evidence on the subject is devoted to Athens, one wonders whether something might be said about other Greek city-states. What were the Spartan, Theban, or Corinthian attitudes toward documents?[15] For most states, including Thebes and Corinth, there seems little hope of recovering any sense of this, but for Sparta a few tentative observations might be made. Indeed, Thomas cites Cartledge's article in her bibliography ("Literacy in the Spartan Oligarchy," *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 98 [1978]:25-370), but does not mention a monograph on the subject, by Terrence A. Boring (*Literacy in Ancient Sparta*).[16]

The evidence for orality and literacy in 5th-4th century Sparta[17] must be assembled from a variety of sources, often offhand remarks made by someone in the course of talking about something else.[18] The essential passages are to be found in Isocrates' *Panathenaicus*

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no evidence of these things that I have written, neither a decree of the court nor a public bill, although he customarily writes such things and quotes his authorities (*Aristides* 26). He also remarks that a copy of the Peace of Callias was included in "ἐν δὲ τοῖς ψηφίσμασιν ἃ συνήγαγε Κρατερός"—the collection of Athenian decrees made by Craterus (*Cimon* 13).

[14] Thomas herself suggests it is somewhat surprising that Athens does not develop a public archive until the end of the 5th century BC, some one hundred years following Clisthenes and two centuries since Solon. She notes the creation of ἀναγραφεῖς in 410 to examine the city's laws as perhaps relevant (40) and also suggests that creating a document, preserving it, and then later making reference to it are not all the same skill, that writing can be used withoutsubsequently organizing what has been written (37-39, 71-73).

[15] Plutarch does mention "τὸ γραμματοφυλάκιον"—the public record office—in Plataea in his description of the festival created to honor the Greek victory over Persia there: the chief magistrate of Plataea is to carry an urn from there in the procession (*Aristides* 21). See also note 24 below.

[16] See L. H. Jeffery's very helpful review in *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 101 (1981):190-92.

[17] By the time of Plutarch, Sparta was a very different place, complete with a γραμματοφυλακεῖον, probably near the agora, and an official known as the γραμματοφύλαξ. Plutarch remarks that he has seen bits of old Spartan poetry ([τὰ Λακωνικὰ ποιήματα] ὧν ἔτι καθ' ἡμᾶς ἔνια διεσώζετο—some bits of Laconian poetry have been preserved even down to our age) (*Lycurgus* 21.3) and looked in the Spartan archives (ἡμεῖς δὲ εὕρομεν ἐν ταῖς Λακωνικαῖς ἀναγραφαῖς—we have found in the Laconian records) (*Agesilaus* 19.6). On these matters, see Paul Cartledge and Antony Spawforth, *Hellenistic and Roman Sparta: A Tale of Two Cities* (London: Routledge, 1989), esp. 127, 147, 217.

[18] Anecdotal evidence is particularly hard to judge, as these two stories from the Peloponnesian War may illustrate. Thucydides describes Nicias' reasons for writing a letter from Sicily to request help rather than to depend on a messenger to convey the desperate situation of the Athenian forces:

> Νικίας φοβούμενος δὲ μὴ οἱ πεμπόμενοι ἢ κατὰ τὴν τοῦ λέγειν ἀδυνασίαν ἢ καὶ μνήμης ἐλλιπεῖς γιγνόμενοι ἢ τῷ ὄχλῳ πρὸς χάριν τι λέγοντες οὐ τὰ ὄντα ἀπαγγέλλωσιν, ἔγραψεν ἐπιστολήν, νομίζων οὕτως ἂν μάλιστα τὴν αὑτοῦ

209, the *Dissoi Logoi* 90 F2 10 (DK), Plutarch's biographies of Athenian and Spartan figures and various passages from the *Moralia*, Socrates in the *Hippias Maior* (285e-2861), and Aristotle in the *Politics* (1270b28-1272a36). A pair of anecdotes from Plutarch, while perhaps not completely believable, reveal for us ancient attitudes toward writing and its power. In his life of Lycurgus, Plutarch describes the Spartan lawgiver's attitudes toward written laws:

> Νόμους δὲ γεγραμμένους ὁ Λυκοῦργος οὐκ ἔθηκεν, ἀλλὰ μία τῶν καλουμένων ῥητρῶν ἐστιν αὕτη. τὰ μὲν γὰρ κυριώτατα καὶ μέγιστα πρὸς εὐδαιμονίαν πόλεως καὶ ἀρετήν, ἐν τοῖς ἤθεσιν ὥετο καὶ ταῖς ἀγωγαῖς τῶν πολιτῶν ἐγκατεστοιχειωμένα, μένειν ἀκίνητα καὶ βέβαια, ἔχοντα τὴν προαίρεσιν δεσμὸν ἰσχυρότερον τῆς ἀνάγκης, ἣν ἡ παίδευσις ἐμποιεῖ τοῖς νέοις, νομοθέτου διάθεσιν ἀπεργαζομένη περὶ ἕκαστον αὐτῶν . . . . τὸ γὰρ ὅλον καὶ πᾶν τῆς νομοθεσίας ἔργον εἰς τὴν παιδείαν ἀνῆψε.
>
> Μία μὲν οὖν τῶν ῥητρῶν ἦν, ὥσπερ εἴρηται, μὴ χρῆσθαι νόμοις ἐγγράφοις.
>
> Lycurgus did not set down written laws—this is one of the prohibitions of the so-called rhetras. For he believed that the most powerful and greatest force for the happiness and good of the city would remain imbedded in the characters and in the training of the citizens. These forces would stay unchanging and fixed, possessing their purpose as a bond rather stronger than necessity, which education produces in the young and would complete the arrangement of the lawgiver for each of them.... He attached the whole of his work of lawgiving to education.
>
> One of the rhetras, as has been stated, forbade the use of written laws. (*Lycurgus* 13.1-3)

Lycurgus did not believe that the written law had any power to affect a citizen's behavior, but seems to have believed that education of that citizen was the key to controlling him.[19] Lycurgus wanted his laws to remain in force in Sparta forever, without any change, and so tricked the Spartans into swearing an oath that they would not change the constitution until

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> γνώμην μηδὲν ἐν τῷ ἀγγέλῳ ἀφανισθεῖσαν μαθόντας τοὺς Ἀθηναίους βουλεύσασθαι περὶ τῆς ἀληθείας.
>
> Nicias feared that the messengers would not report the facts, either because of their inability to speak or from loss of memory or because of their desire to please the crowd, so he wrote a letter. He thought that thus the Athenians would learn his opinion which would not be suppressed in the message and would debate the truth (7.8.2)

Ironically, Nicias fails to get what he hoped by writing. As Gomme observes in his discussion of Thucydides 7.8, the context suggests that the writing of a letter by a general was not commonplace, but there are other, later examples.

We might compare this with the story told of the downfall of the Spartan leader Gylippus, who stole a certain amount from each of the bags of silver that he was entrusted to deliver to Sparta; what he didn't know was that Lysander had included a note in each bag giving the value of the contents. Gylippus had to leave Sparta disgraced (Plutarch, *Lysander* 16). Was Lysander very cunning in his inclusion of the note or was Gylippus merely an unthinking thief (or illiterate and thereby vulnerable to such a trap)?

[19] There is an unresolvable contradiction in this passage from Plutarch on education in Sparta.

he had returned, then committed suicide at Delphi (*Lycurgus* 29.1-3, 31.1-5).

Compare the Athenian Solon's attitude to written laws and their survival. A foreign visitor, Anacharsis, comes to see Solon while he is reforming the laws and has this reaction:

> [Ἀνάχαρσιν] καταγελᾶν τῆς πραγματείας τοῦ Σόλωνος, οἰομένου γράμμασιν ἐφέξειν τὰς ἀδικίας καὶ πλεονεξίας τῶν πολιτῶν, ἃ μηδὲν τῶν ἀραχνίων διαφέρειν, ἀλλ᾽ ὡς ἐκεῖνα τοὺς μὲν ἀσθενεῖς καὶ λεπτοὺς τῶν ἁλισκομένων καθέξειν, ὑπὸ δὲ τῶν δυνατῶν καὶ πλουσίων διαρραγήσεσθαι. τὸν δὲ Σόλωνα φασὶ πρὸς ταῦτ᾽ εἰπεῖν, ὅτι καὶ συνθήκας ἄνθρωποι φυλάττουσιν ἃς οὐδετέρῳ λυσιτελές ἐστι παραβαίνειν τῶν θεμένων, καὶ τοὺς νόμους αὐτὸς οὕτως ἁρμόζεται τοῖς πολίταις, ὥστε πᾶσι τοῦ παρανομεῖν βέλτιον ἐπιδεῖξαι τὸ δικαιοπραγεῖν. ἀλλὰ ταῦτα μὲν ὡς Ἀνάχαρσις εἴκαζεν ἀπέβη μᾶλλον ἢ κατ᾽ ἐλπίδα τοῦ Σόλωνος.
>
> [Anacharsis] laughed at Solon's efforts, that Solon believed he could stop the wrongdoings and greed of citizens with written laws, which didn't differ from spider's webs—they could hold the weak and insignificant men who were caught, but the powerful and wealthy would slip through. Solon is said to have replied to this that men honor agreements which neither side profits by violating; and that he was tailoring the laws to the citizens so that it would seem better to obey them rather than violate them. But these things went as Anacharsis suggested rather than according to Solon's hopes. (*Solon* 5.3.1-6.4)

In the preserved stories, at least, there is no mention of education in Solon's reforms, in great contrast to its place in Lycurgan Sparta. As well, before he departed for a 10-year absence from his city in order to give the laws a chance to work, Solon took this precaution[20]:

> Ἰσχὺν δὲ τοῖς νόμοις πᾶσιν εἰς ἑκατὸν ἐνιαυτοὺς ἔδωκε, καὶ κατεγράφησαν εἰς ξυλίνους ἄξονας ἐν πλαισίοις, περιέχουσι στρεφομένους, ὧν ἔτι καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς ἐν Πρυτανείῳ λείψανα μικρὰ διεσῴζετο....
>
> He gave force to all of these laws for 100 years and they inscribed them on wooden tablets [...], of which even down into our generation a few remnants have been preserved in the Prytaneion. (*Solon* 25.1.1)

Solon's laws, at least those regarding the archonship, do not last even the ten years of his absence from Athens.[21] Given this almost immediate abrogation of some of Solon's legislation, we may see as ironic the physical survival of many of his laws, long after they had fallen out of use—Plutarch, for instance, in the passage cited above noted the survival

[20] Rhodes argues that Athenians agreed to abide by Solon's laws for only ten years (136). On whitened boards, see Rhodes 1981:555, 594.

[21] We learn from the *Athenian Politeia* (13.1) that stasis over the archonship in the fifth year of his absence resulted in no one being elected and that later, Damasias, after having been elected archon, stayed in office for fourteen months beyond the end of his term.

of Solon's laws even into the 2nd century AD.[22]

Although Thomas does not discuss Spartan orality and literacy, she does make some very suggestive remarks about the relationship between the forms of government and the nature of memory. She argues that the Athenian democracy promoted interest in recent ancestors, those who might have fought at Marathon or opposed the 30 tyrants (154, 157); can we find any evidence to suggest that Sparta's Lycurgan constitution, much older than the Athenian democracy (if we can believe our sources), had a different effect upon the memories of its citizens? She mentions that Hippias of Elis commented on the Spartan love of genealogies of men and heroes, as well as the foundation of cities (Plato, *Hippias Maior* 285d), implying, perhaps, that Spartans were uninterested in their more recent past (174).

As I hope to have shown, Thomas's book covers a wide range of topics, uses a very broad assortment of evidence to illustrate her arguments, and prompts rereading many familiar texts. Unfortunately, the lack of an *Index locorum* makes it impossible to track texts down in her work. The shape of her presentation sometimes means that concentrated, in-depth discussion of sources, such as the *Athenaion Politeia*, must be omitted, and I believe that such texts could be put to many more uses. For example, the sources that Aristotle draws on in the *Athenaion Politeia* as he describes both the history of the government of Athens and its present form may tell us something about the use of documents in producing such works; but we may also begin to understand from it the roles that both orality and literacy played in the Athenian government as we study Aristotle's description.

On the first point, we might begin by cataloguing the sources that Aristotle cites, but does not quote: although he only once names a predecessor in his research into Athenian ways,[23] from his language and treatment of incidents we can infer that Aristotle draws on Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Androtion. He occasionally refers to unnamed sources who conflict (3.3, 17.2) and once is scornful on the grounds of chronology of the opinion about Solon's regard for Peisistratus (17.2). He does name Solon as a source, perhaps because of his importance to the Athenian constitution rather than because of his writing, and also quotes or cites Solon's poetry ten times, in addition to other references to Solon's laws.

This might lead us to wonder, in turn, how Aristotle knows Solon's laws and poems, whether they were part of the oral tradition of Athens over two centuries after Solon had lived or whether Aristotle was completely dependent on written sources.[24] As

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[22] For a convenient collection of all the ancient testimonia to the display of Solon's laws in the Athenian Agora and even a statue of Solon himself (in front of the Stoa Poikile), see R. E. Wycherley, *The Athenian Agora III: Literary and Epigraphical Testimonia* (note 9 above).

[23] "ὡς μὲν Ἡρόδοτός φησιν" (14.4)—as Herodotus says. See Rhodes' commentary on the sources of the *Athenaion Politeia*, 15-30.

[24] See Rhodes for a discussion of Aristotle's sources. He notes that our other major surviving source for Solon's poems, Plutarch, uses many of the same lines as the *Athenaion Politeia*, but that the two treatments do not overlap completely, leading Rhodes to suggest that Aristotle "found the quotations from the poems in his source" and that Plutarch probably used both Aristotle and Aristotle's source (118).

Thomas remarks, there is evidence for the survival and even display of Solon's laws, long after they had been superceded, perhaps because of their power as historic relics (77 and n. 198).[25] In his *Athenaion Politeia*, Aristotle refers to the laws being inscribed and on display in the Stoa Basileios (7.1; see 47.1), quotes from a Solonian law that he describes as no longer being in force (8.3), and discusses possible explanations for the complex language of some of Solon's laws (9.2).

Aristotle seems to rely more heavily on other sources of evidence that the historians. He records public opinion—stories about politicians, sayings, even drinking songs. He tells the anecdote of Peisistratus' visit to the man farming near Mt. Hymettus, introducing it with "φασι"—they say (16.6).[26] In his discussion about pay for jury duty, Aristotle recounts the story told of the advice given to Pericles by Damonides: ἐπεὶ τοῖς ἰδίοις ἡττᾶτο, διδόναι τοῖς πολλοῖς τὰ αὑτῶν—since he was restricted in his own resources, he should give the people what was theirs (27.4). As part of his treatment of the end of the Peisistratidae, Aristotle quotes from two drinking songs about two failed attempts to remove the tyrants from Athens (19.3, 20.5)[27]

He quotes only one inscription, a private dedication from the Acropolis of a statue of the giver and a horse (7.4), in his discussion of Solon's property qualifications for citizens, but he does refer to other public inscriptions, as can be seen in his remark about the recording of the name of the secretaries of the prytany:

> καὶ γὰρ ἐν ταῖς στήλαις πρὸς ταῖς συμμαχίαις καὶ προξενίαις καὶ πολιτείαις οὗτος [γραμματεὺς] ἀναγράφεται
>
> and on the stelai for treaties and proxenies and public business this [office of secretary] is

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Rhodes does not explore the possibility that Aristotle knew the poems from an oral source, except obliquely, in his discussion of *Athenaion Politeia* 5.3. He does assert, however, that "a man working in Athens in the fourth century should have known the poems," but provides no evidence (124; see also 24).

Aristotle is not the earliest witness still surviving to Solon's poetry as well as his laws: Herodotus not only records the story of Solon's visit to Croesus and its aftermath, but refers to a poem in which Solon praises a ruler of Cyprus (...τὸν Σόλων ὁ Ἀθηναῖος ἀπικόμενος ἐς Κύπρον ἐν ἔπεσι αἴνεσε τυράννων μάλιστα—Solon the Athenian after he came to Cyprus praised him among tyrants very highly in his poems [5.113.2]).

Solon is also quoted or referred to in the orators, as Thomas notes (51, 87). He describes Solon with the anthropological term "culture hero," which aptly characterizes his role in Athens (280, n. 129).

[25] See Rhodes 1981:131-34 for a full discussion of the evidence. He notes that a list of the works from the Aristotelian school includes a 5-book study of Solon's a[xone" (25).

Plutarch, in his life of Solon, cites one of his laws according to its placement on the block—"ὁ δὲ τρισκαιδέκατος ἄξων τοῦ Σόλωνος τὸν ὄγδοον ἔχει τῶν νόμων"—Solon's thirteenth table contains his eighth law (19.3). See Thomas 74.

[26] In tone and style, this might be compared to the story about Aristides the Just who writes his own name on an ostrakon to help an illiterate Athenian, but thereby contributes to his own ostracism (Plutarch, *Aristides 7*)—is there a subgenre, possibly oral, of such revealing stories about great men?

[27] As with Solon's poems, Rhodes suggests that these two songs were both so well known that Aristotle may not have used a written source but produced them from his own memory, but does not offer any supporting evidence (235, 248).

inscribed (54.3)

From other comments such as this, we can infer that many of the public inscriptions in Athens were lists—of those who didn't pay their public debts (48.1), of houses and farms claimed as public property (52.1), of those qualified for the cavalry (49.2), and of those called up for military duty (53.7).[28] There seems to have been some sort of citizen roll as well, perhaps kept in the demes, where the registration of new citizens occurred.[29] One list that was to be published, but that appeared only belatedly, after much pressure and alteration, was of the so-called 300, a list that should have been put out by the 30 Tyrants (36.2).

Aristotle's presentation of public life in Athens provides us with evidence for both oral and literate ways of doing business. In his description of the work of various public boards, especially the poletae, and other public officials, many of whom are assigned secretaries to assist them, and in his description of the lawcourts and assemblies, we see that writing and documents did play a role in Athenian government. At the same time, we understand that orality still functioned: candidates were questioned for office, probably orally, but possibly in writing (7.4)[30] The legislative process depended on both writing and orality; although notices of meetings and bills to be discussed were posted, at the same time, they were presented orally in the assembly and there was a secretary whose sole function was to read documents aloud (54.5).[31]

Thomas has had to pass by some topics that I hope she will tackle in her future work, given the care and creativity that she has shown in this. One such topic is education, both formal and informal, in Athens and Sparta. In this book, Thomas argues, primarily on the basis of the orators, that "oral tradition in a wider sense provided most Greeks with a knowledge of their history" (3) and singles out the funeral speech in this context: "the epitaphios presented the only opportunity for most Athenians to hear an account of Athenian history set out in roughly chronological sequence from its earliest times, and this could be crucial" (235). For her, orators transmit the traditional, accepted view of Athenian history, using references familiar to their audience that they suggest are known from their elders; orators might also make small changes in the tradition that they pass on (200-1).

The assumptions in these statements, I believe, need to be examined in depth.

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[28] Lists seem to have been particularly associated with the board in Athens known as the πωληταί—vendors (*AP* 47.2, 52.1). On the πωληταί and the recording of debts, see Thomas 53-55. Once a debt was paid, no record of it was kept, perhaps indicating that, in business, written memory was only important until a transaction was completed.

[29] See 13.5, 42.1, 53.4 with Rhodes' commentary *ad loc*. and 493-95.

[30] Rhodes seems to assume oral questioning in his commentary: "the question was presumably asked when men submitted their names as candidates" (145).

31 Thomas makes a similar observation in her discussion of this passage (64). Rhodes suggests that the secretary read the documents aloud because there was no easy way to supply multiple copies of them (604). To have a secretary read documents aloud may also have been faster and more efficient. In the 4th century, it was also a secretary's job to read texts of tragedy aloud from a copy stored by the city to those actors who would perform the play (48-49).

Thomas assumes that the audiences for speeches included all Athenians, but does not provide us with any evidence. For the epitaphios, at least that given by Pericles, Thucydides' description does support her belief: he states that everyone who wants to be in the procession, both citizens and foreigners, can, and that the female relatives of the dead are allowed to grieve at the tomb (ξυνεκφέρει δὲ ὁ βουλόμενος καὶ ἀστῶν καὶ ξένων, καὶ γυναῖκες πάρεισιν αἱ προσήκουσαι ἐπὶ τὸν τάφον ὀλοφυρόμεναι [2.34.4]). It is important to know what the audiences at speeches in the law courts or the assembly might have consisted of.[32] We might also wonder that an orator doesn't attempt to make a new version seem familiar by suggesting that his audience has already heard it from its elders. Perhaps it is important to distinguish between education and acculturation when we look at passages from the orators, such as Aeschines 3.246 discussed by Thomas (63).[33] I do not think that we can take these lines for what they seem to say on first glance, but must put them into context and remember that Aeschines is arguing cases before a court of law. Thomas couples this interpretation of the orators with frequent references to Plato's emphasis on oral education and his suspicion of the written word (20-21, 32-33, 101). Though Plato is not arguing a case before the Athenian jury, surely he is no less determined to make his point than is Aeschines and is thus equally dangerous as a piece of evidence.

A second topic to be explored is numeracy: is there any evidence that some Greeks were numerate but not literate or that some were both illiterate and innumerate?[34] We know that Greeks had ways of recording whole numbers as early as the Mycenaean era and that later Greeks developed two different ways to record numbers. We also know that mathematics—geometry in particular—played a central role in Greek education, philosophy, astronomy, town planning, and architecture.[35]

Finally, I would hope for a discussion about how Greeks calculated their ages. Young men in 5th- and 4th-century Athens certainly seem to have known when it was their turn to begin their ἐφηβεία, but how did they know? The *Athenian Politeia* describes the registration at the deme of the sons of Athenian citizens when they were eighteen (42.1)

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[32] See Plutarch, *Demosthenes* 5, where we are told of the young Demosthenes' eagerness to attend a trial to hear a speaker famed for his eloquence. It is only through the intervention of Demosthenes' tutor that he is allowed to enter and sit by the doors, where he would not be seen.

[33] See also S. Perlman, in an article cited by Thomas, who argues that we are to understand passages such Aeschines 1.141 to mean that the education of Athenians comes from "listening by learning," not to teachers probably, but "to recitations and performances, which are thus the primary source of knowledge" ("Quotations from Poetry in Attic Orators of the 4th Century BC," *American Journal of Philology*, 85 [1964]:156).

[34] See Boring 1979:11-12, 41, for evidence on Spartan numeracy. He discusses the context and tone of Hippias' claim that Spartans could not even count (*Hippias Maior* 284-85).

[35] On mathematics in Greece, see O. A. W. Dilke, *Mathematics and Measurement* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987).

There are also archaeological finds associated with mathematics which could be combined with literary evidence to understand the role that mathematics played in the Greek business world. See John McK. Camp, *The Athenian Agora* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986) for illustrations of artifacts such as water clocks. Mabel Lang discusses numbers marked on pots in their possible interpretations in "Numerical Notation on Greek Vases," *Hesperia*, 25 (1956):1-24.

and then explains the function of the monument to the eponymous heroes in not only military callups but also the assignment of lawsuits to διαιτηταί—arbitrators (53.4-7).[36] One wonders whether this was the only way to know one's age and whether Sparta, for instance, had a similar system.[37]

Thomas's book is well worth reading and makes me eager for her to explore other issues. Her rephrasing of the question of literacy in Athens is an important step forward in our attempt to understand that world.[38]

The Odyssey of Homer, translated by Allen Mandelbaum. With Twelve Engravings by Marialuisa de Romans. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990. 526 pp.

The 1991 Homeridae
University of Missouri-Columbia

The new verse translation of Homer's *Odyssey* by Allen Mandelbaum offers a very useful introduction to ancient Greek epic for those unfamiliar with the poem in the original language. Using a vehicle characterized by iambic pentameter, rhyme, and alliteration, Mandelbaum manages to achieve an effect parallel to that of Homer's original. Due to this metrical commitment and his emphasis on parataxis, he is (perhaps expectably) unable to render completely the formulaic structure of Homer's diction. As a result, he treats the oral traditional legacy of the *Odyssey* inconsistently, sometimes instilling problematic interpretations onto the Greek. Although his English *Odyssey* contains these and other inevitable discrepancies inherent in any translation, Mandelbaum does capture much of the feel of the Greek, both in style and interpretation; he and the University of California Press have, in short, presented an elegant and beautiful volume.

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[36] On the complex system, involving not only the ten eponymous heroes of the monument but—seemingly—another forty-two, see Kurt von Fritz and Ernst Kapp, *Aristotle's Constitution of Athens and Related Texts* (New York: Hafner Press, 1950):191, n. 166. These additional heroes are very mysterious; were they some of the one hundred submitted to Delphi (*AP* 21.6)? See also Rhodes on 42.1, 53.4-7.

Aeschines notes that a certain Misgolas "τυγχάνει μὲν γὰρ ἡλικιώτης ὢν ἐμὸς καὶ συνέφηβος, καὶ ἔστιν ἡμῖν τουτὶ πέμπτον καὶ τετταρακοστὸν ἔτος"—happens to be the same age as I and was an ephebe with me, and we're both in our 54th year (1.49).

[37] Xenophon observes, "πρῶτον μὲν τοίνυν οἱ ἔφοροι προκηρύττουσι τὰ ἔτη, εἰς ἃ δεῖ στρατεύεσθαι καὶ ἱππεῦσι καὶ ὁπλίταις, ἔπειτα δὲ καὶ τοῖς χειροτέχναις"—the ephors first announce the ages which are required to serve to the cavalry and hoplites, and then also to the craftsmen (*Politeia Lacedaemonion* 11.2)

[38] I have only a very few quibbles with the presentation of the material. Occasionally Thomas's sentence style becomes too complex and hard to untangle, so her points can seem more complicated than need be. Although she carefully cites her sources, it would make the reader's task easier if she would quote at least the most important among them; her wide range of sources virtually insures that the necessary texts will not be at the reader's hand for easy verification. My only other quibble concerns the presentation of the Greek: I do not understand why sometimes the Greek is transliterated and sometimes not.

Although modern English is by its nature unable to easily accommodate the Greek hexameter, Mandelbaum has preserved the oral-aural texture of the epic line by employing a loose iambic pentameter with a mixture of rhyme, alliteration, and assonance. By utilizing target-language poetic conventions, in other words, he imitates the regular pattern of the original epic meter. Book Nine, for example, the description of the blinding of Polyphemos successfully renders the flavor of the Greek by transmitting it through a dynamic concatenation of English language sound-patterning (p. 186, ix.387-96 Greek):

> So did we twirl that hot
> point in his eye; around the glowing wood,
> blood flowed. And both his eyelids and his brow
> were singed by fire as his eyeball burned;
> his eye-root hissed. Even as, when a smith
> plunges an ax or adze into cold water,
> the metal hisses as he quenches it
> to give that iron strength, so did that eye
> hiss round the olive stake's sharp tip. His howl
> was terrifying; all the rocks rang out.
>
> ὣς τοῦ ἐν ὀφθαλμῷ πυριήκεα μοχλὸν ἑλόντες
> δινέομεν, τὸν δ' αἷμα περίρρεε θερμὸν ἐόντα.
> πάντα δέ οἱ βλέφαρ' ἀμφὶ καὶ ὀφρύας εὖσεν ἀϋτμὴ
> γλήνης καιομένης· σφαραγεῦντο δέ οἱ πυρὶ ῥίζαι.
> ὡς δ' ὅτ' ἀνὴρ χαλκεὺς πέλεκυν μέγαν ἠὲ σκέπαρνον
> εἰν ὕδατι ψυχρῷ βάπτῃ μεγάλα ἰάχοντα
> φαρμάσσων· τὸ γὰρ αὖτε σιδήρου γε κράτος ἐστίν·
> ὣς τοῦ σίζ' ὀφθαλμὸς ἐλαϊνέῳ περὶ μοχλῷ.
> σμερδαλέον δὲ μέγ' ὤμωξεν, περὶ δ' ἴαχε πέτρη,

This combination of assonance and alliteration coupled with enjambed lines recreates the rapid cadence of the Homeric hexameter, forcing the reader of English to move lightly and quickly from one line to the next in the same way as the reader or auditor of Greek.

Likewise, Mandelbaum employs end-rhyme to add emphasis to particular passages that would otherwise be lost in the translation from Greek to English. Such highlighting often occurs at the end of speeches, providing a rhetorical marker similar to those employed by Homer for various purposes. For example, Zeus concludes his address of the gods in Book One with an end-rhyme (p. 6, i.42-43 Greek):

> Hermes had warned him as one warns a friend.
> And yet Aegisthus' will could not be swayed.
> Now, in one stroke, all that he owes is paid.
>
> ὣς ἔφαθ' Ἑρμείας, ἀλλ' οὐ φρένας Αἰγίσθοιο
> πεῖθ' ἀγαθὰ φρονέων· νῦν δ' αθρόα πάντ' ἀπέτισε.

In this way, the translator effectively signals the end of Zeus's address rhetorically, thereby transmuting the distinctly Homeric rhetoric into elegantly parallel English. Although it could be argued that Mandelbaum makes too frequent use of poetic devices, he does successfully echo much of the poetic nature of the original Greek.

To maintain the poetic character of the original, Mandelbaum had also to consider the integral nature of the Greek line and its additive dynamics. In order to bring this effect

over into English verse, one must sacrifice fidelity to the Greek lexical units in favor of parataxis. At times this emphasis creates awkwardness within the English syntax, causing the translator to employ an elaborate system of dashes to establish relations between phrases and verses. In the first few lines of Book Two Mandelbaum's parataxis in particularly evident (p. 25, ii.1-7 Greek):

> Firstlight: when Dawn's rose fingers touched the sky,
> the dear son of Odysseus—quick to rise
> and dress—soon set with his shoulder strap
> and his sharp blade; to his feet—anointed, sleek—
> he tied fine sandals. As he crossed the threshold,
> he seemed a god. At once he told his heralds—
> with voices clarion-clear—to call a council.
> The long haired Ithacans were soon assembled.

> Ἦμος δ' ἠριγένεια φάνη ῥοδοδάκτυλος Ἠώς,
> ὄρνυτ' ἄρ' ἐξ εὐνῆφιν Ὀδυσσῆος φίλος υἱός,
> εἵματα ἑσσάμενος, περὶ δὲ ξίφος ὀξὺ θέτ' ὤμῳ,
> ποσσὶ δ' ὑπὸ λιπαροῖσιν ἐδήσατο καλὰ πέδιλα,
> βῆ δ' ἴμεν ἐκ θαλάμοιο θεῷ ἐναλίγκιος ἄντην.
> αἶψα δὲ κηρύκεσσι λιγυφθόγγοισι κέλευσε
> κηρύσσειν ἀγορήνδε κάρη κομόωντας Ἀχαιούς.

Mandelbaum manipulates the Greek phrase (ποσσὶ δ' ὑπὸ λιπαροῖσιν) as "feet—anointed, sleek—," presumably to fit his target-language meter. Although he captures Homer's frequent use of parataxis, Mandelbaum's awkward system of dashes, employed to reflect the characteristic nature of Homer's verse, sometimes hinders the reader's comprehension.

Though Mandelbaum reshapes the Greek line, he does remain faithful to some of the formulaic phraseology of the original. However, because of the relative brevity and distinctive texture of the iambic pentameter line, he is unable to wholly reproduce the highly repetitious lines so common to Homer and therefore cannot completely capture the oral traditional style of the poem. His consistent translation of "more poetic" lines like the "rosy-fingered Dawn" verse (rendered as "As soon as Dawn's rose fingers touched the sky") does convey some feel for the original diction. However, many other formulaic phrases are inconsistently translated or omitted, such as the exclusion of the common noun-epithet ἔπεα πτερόεντα ("winged words") in Book Nine, line 409. Although Mandelbaum admits to the cancellation of several lines (see pp. 503-4), his rationale is not entirely convincing. Some lines are omitted based on scholarly evidence; others are passed over merely because they recur elsewhere in the epic. The reader should be aware that by silencing some of the oral traditional qualities present in the original, Mandelbaum in effect makes the poem more of a literary, textual composition.

Of particular difficulty is his translation of the beginning of Book One, where he equates the return of Odysseus with a path of exile. Mandelbaum renders the first two original Greek lines of Book One as follows:

> Muse, tell me of the man of many wiles,
> the man who wandered many paths of exile
> after he sacked Troy's sacred citadel.

῞Ανδρα μοι ἔννεπε, Μοῦσα, πολύτροπον, ὃς μάλα πολλὰ
πλάγχθη, ἐπεὶ Τροίης ἱερὸν πτολίεθρον ἔπερσε·

Here Mandelbaum translates ὃς μάλα πολλὰ, πλάγχθη as "the man who wandered many paths of exile," possibly imposing a Vergilian figure on the Homeric epic or simply seeking an effective rhyme for the opening lines. On the contrary, πλάγχθη is more appropriately translated as "was tossed about" or the like. Even in its most oblique sense, this verb certainly never suggests Odysseus is in exile.

In contrast to his imposition of the theme of exile in the first book, Mandelbaum admirably captures the ambiguity of the ξεῖνος relationship throughout his translation. This concept is particularly troublesome in that there is no single word in English to express the traditional Greek word, which hovers between the English poles of "guest" and "stranger." The concept underlying Homer's invocation of ξεῖνος emphasizes the particular relationship between guest and host, a relationship according to which Penelope is obliged to feed and care for Odysseus, who in turn must reveal his identity and story. By attention to each individual situation in which the word ξεῖνος appears in the original, Mandelbaum attempts to preserve the complex, reverberative idea of guest-friendship. A good example of his method appears in Book Nineteen, where Penelope names Odysseus "stranger" until she has learned where he has come from and heard of his alleged relationship with the apparently lost Odysseus. After this formality has occurred, Mandelbaum has Penelope address Odysseus as "guest," capturing the complexity of the ξεῖνος relationship. Furthermore, once Odysseus rejects Penelope's hospitality, Mandelbaum again renders ξεῖνος as "stranger," illustrating the singular inappropriateness of Odysseus' refusal. Thus the translator is able to fully illustrate the complicated ritual of guest friendship through his varying but situation-specific translation of ξεῖνος throughout the book.

To balance the ledger, it should be observed that Mandelbaum also occasionally brings into his translation modern idioms or colloquialisms that often disturb the otherwise epic tenor of his *Odyssey*. A pointed example occurs in Book One, lines 133-34 where Mandelbaum translates the revels of the suitors (*orumagdôi deipnôi*) as "brouhaha." Although this rendering captures the disruption of the suitors, the word seems inappropriate to the heroic tone of the epic. Another instance of this kind of break in tone appears in Book Nineteen, line 91, where Mandelbaum unnecessarily translates *kuon adees* as "arrogant slut," an interpretation that few would find Homeric. Though relatively uncommon, such idiosyncrasies at times interject an unheroic flavor into the epic.

This translation of the *Odyssey* is not a substitute for the more literal works of Fitzgerald and especially Lattimore, but its poetic emphasis complements these traditional translations. Despite his inconsistencies, Mandelbaum does produce a compelling introduction to Greek epic, which is enhanced greatly by the masterful presentation of the volume. Each book is introduced with a brief outline of major scenes, a feature that should prove particularly helpful for the student or scholar interested in locating specific episodes. The text is also partnered with a series of engravings by Marialuisa de Romans that captures the magic and mystery of the epic. Supplementing Mandelbaum's translation, her art work at the beginning of each chapter unifies the volume, reminding the reader of the harshness of Odysseus' struggles to return and emphasizing the joy of his homecoming.

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The latter-day *Homeridae* are the six members of the 1991 incarnation of the ancient Greek epic seminar at the University of Missouri-Columbia: Michael Cusick, Richard Glejzer, Victoria Nevius, Danielle Parks, Johanna Schafer, and Keith Schafer. They suffered, like *polutlas* Odysseus, under the direction of John Foley.

Thomas McKean specializes in Gaelic traditional song, especially its structure and social context. He has carried on extensive fieldwork on the Isle of Skye, and teaches at the School of Scottish Studies in Edinburgh.

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