

Editor's Column

This first issue of 1993 marks the beginning of the eighth year of publication for *Oral Tradition*, and with the new year comes a resolution and a change in policy. Readers will notice that this issue contains an extensive *Books Received* listing in its final pages. This digest, and those to follow at regular intervals, will constitute an invitation for specialists in various fields to contribute a brief review of approximately 500-1000 words on any of the volumes listed. *OT*'s editorial charter unfortunately does not permit redistribution of the books themselves to reviewers, and so we feel that the profession would be better served by opening up the journal to short reviews—more expeditiously done by a variety of scholars—than to continue strictly with occasional review-essays. This does not mean that the longer genre, complete with discussion of other relevant works, is no longer welcome; on the contrary, we heartily encourage such submissions. But the time seems right to offer another level of review as well, in order to more appropriately and fully serve the needs of an interdisciplinary readership.

Let's keep the rules for brief reviews as simple as possible. Please contact *OT* (via letter, telephone, or e-mail; addresses below) to arrange to have one or more titles reserved for you and to inform us when to expect your manuscript, and therefore when to schedule publication. Since the evaluations will be brief, please be sure to provide your audience with a concrete overview of the work under consideration, as well as with your judgments about the worth of its contribution. We look forward to working with you on this new project.

With this issue we also present another cluster of essays, this one on ancient Greek poetry. It was of course this area in which Milman Parry began his epoch-making research, and, as Mark Edwards' survey essays on Homer and Oral Tradition have shown (*OT*, 1[1986]:171-230; 3[1988]:11-60; 7[1992]:284-330), ancient Greek has been the most active field in the scores of language areas affected by his and Albert Lord's Oral-Formulaic Theory.

This cluster illustrates some of the major directions that scholarship on Homer and his colleagues have taken since Parry's original work. Egbert Bakker begins the symposium with a fundamental critique of the model of communication that underlies Western thinking about language and texts; what he has to say about the Greek situation will certainly apply much more widely. The same is true for Keith Dickson, who follows an earlier essay on "A Typology of Mediation in Homer," (*OT*, 5[1990]:37-71) with this treatment of "Nestor Among the Sirens,"

and of James Pearce, who extends the study of oral tradition to the later Greek poet Theocritus. William Sale rounds off the cluster with Part I of a detailed consideration of formulaic diction in Homer and the Old French *Chanson de Roland*, using mathematical analysis to show how these two poets compose similarly; the second installment will appear in a future issue of *OT*.

The latter three essays in this issue extend the discussion to very different areas, as is *OT*'s custom and editorial policy. Raymond Person describes the homiletic activities of an American cleric who was truly "on the cusp" between orality and literacy, the frontier preacher Alexander Campbell. In a lively essay that tackles significant and far-reaching problems for numerous disciplines, Eric Montenyohl then surveys methods for translating the experienced reality of oral traditions to the silent confines of print. Ursula Schaefer's 1991-92 Lord and Parry Lecture closes the volume by urging a reassessment of medieval texts with roots in oral tradition, specifically from the vantage point of reception theory.

Upcoming issues will feature articles on rap music, Hispanic ballads, the Finnish *Kalevala*, Arabic bridal songs, Tibetan oral traditions, the performance of Old English poetry, and many other topics. On the horizon are special collections on Native American and African traditions.

Finally, the Center is pleased to announce the creation of a "non-textual" medium for discussion of topics having to do with oral tradition and related forms. This electronic symposium, named ORTRAD-L, provides a forum for exchange through the agency of academic computer networks. To subscribe, simply send to the address LISTSERV@Mizzou1.bitnet (or LISTSERV@Mizzou1.missouri.edu) the following command: `sub ortrad-l your full name`. Three weeks into ORTRAD-L's existence, we have some 200 specialists from dozens of fields exchanging ideas and bibliography in what seems to be a very productive context. Please join us.

We look forward to pursuing these developments, and especially to your assistance with the new book review policy.

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