

Editor's Column

With this issue of *Oral Tradition* we offer a cornucopia of items: a thematic cluster, eight essays, a prize announcement, and news about an upcoming collection of unusual significance.

The first three essays exemplify *OT*'s commitment to diversity in the field, with Betsy Bowden's reading of Chaucer's *Tale of Melibee* as a proverb collection, Vladimir Guerrero's investigation of medieval Spanish oral-derived works as what he calls "aurature," and Margaret Beissinger's comparison of Romanian epic and the New Testament in terms of oral storytelling techniques. Then, following on his first group of articles sketching linkages between studies in oral tradition and contemporary criticism in *OT* 17.1, special editor Mark Amodio presents five quite disparate entries on the same theme. Proverb use and Chaucer is again represented in Nancy Mason Bradbury's theoretically oriented contribution, while Jonathan Watson analyzes the interaction of scribal practice and oral tradition in the medieval alliterative tradition. John Hill's description of oral recitation and composition in the Anglo-Saxon *Beowulf* leads to a challenging and nuanced discussion of secondary orality and hypertextuality by Michael Joyce, and finally to Samantha Zacher's study of Cynewulf as an Old English poet operating at the orality-literacy interface. In characteristic fashion, this issue tackles both theory and real-world complexity, from the ancient and medieval worlds to the present day.

Uniquely, we also have the honor to announce the inauguration of The Aeolian Prize, which has been created in order to inspire research and scholarship on the oral traditions of the Aeolian Islands north of Sicily. The Aeolian Prize of \$1000 and publication in *Oral Tradition* will be awarded to the best manuscript received by September 30, 2004 (see the guidelines at the back of this issue). Professional and non-professional scholars and writers from all disciplines are welcome to participate.

Finally, with the next number of *OT* (18.1) we will begin a year-long special issue on the state of the art in our heterogeneous and interdisciplinary field. For these two issues approximately 80 authors from a broad spectrum of individual specialties have contributed thumbnail responses to the following two questions: (1) What does oral tradition mean in your particular discipline? and (2) What are the most exciting developments in your area? Authors were allowed only 500 words and 5-10 citations to answer questions that could have elicited volumes, but the idea is rather to "take the pulse" of the collective field in 2003, the eighteenth year of *OT*'s history, and thereby to offer to nonspecialists some perspectives that may

prove useful at the level of analogy. If the project works, it will open a few windows and make some suggestions—as well as serve as a benchmark for the state of our comparative field three years after the millennium.

As always, we welcome your observations, admonitions, and submissions.

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