

Editor's Column

The present issue of *Oral Tradition* represents the end of one era and the beginning of another. Volume 21, number 2 marks the final appearance of *OT* in printed format; as of volume 22, number 1, the journal will be available only as *eOT*, an online, open-access, and free-of-charge periodical.

We are excited about the early reaction to migration from paper to electronic format—within two weeks of launching in mid-September, 2006, the *eOT* site (<http://journal.oraltradition.org>) experienced more than 4000 non-identical hits and twice that many page-views. Perhaps more importantly, our tracking software indicates major readerships in Asia, Africa, and South America as well as Europe and North America. Likewise, we have begun to receive submissions from scholars and researchers in heretofore under-represented areas, and we heartily encourage more voices to join the discussion. Enlarging our readership and authorship to areas usually difficult to reach through text-based Western distribution networks was and remains the primary reason for our conversion of *OT* to an online, open-access, and free-of-charge medium.

The current miscellany follows our customary pattern of offering perspectives from diverse oral traditions, in the hope that comparative observations and examples may prove broadly useful to our (ever more) diverse readership. Helen Yitah opens the colloquium with a fascinating exposition of African proverbs in social context, illustrating the power of this fundamental oral genre to contest entrenched attitudes and beliefs. Françoise Ugochukwu then provides a comparative view of color symbolism associated with the devil in French and Nigerian folktales. On another note, Michael Drout describes a new model for oral traditional studies based on the biological theory of “memes,” understood as the “simplest units of cultural replication.”

Two additional essays round out this issue by tackling some persistently difficult problems. In consonance with much recent research, Anthony Webster helpfully complicates our understanding of “orality” and “literacy,” with special reference to Native American traditions. Finally, Ademola Dasylva explains the impact of globalization and, in particular the spread of Western-centric educational models, on indigenous culture and learning in Nigeria.

On the near horizon, *OT* will devote 2007 to two special issues on strikingly different topics. The first will focus on the American folk singer Bob Dylan and his relationship to oral tradition, deriving from a conference at the Université Caen and guest-edited by Catharine Mason and Richard Thomas. The second issue will present an in-depth view of Basque oral traditions. Guest-edited by Joxerra Garzia, Jon Sarasua, and Andoni Egaña,

it contains both analytical scholarship and interviews with practicing oral poets (*bertsolari*). We are confident that these two collections will prove interesting and valuable across the wide and multidisciplinary field of studies in oral tradition.

As always, but now with a broader purpose, we urge you to send us your work on oral tradition for publication in online *OT*. Our reviewing policy will remain the same as in the past: one specialist and one generalist will read the submission before an editorial decision is reached. But now we can offer an enormously larger and more diverse audience for your ideas, an audience that paper publication media simply can't reach. We will continue to publish online eCompanions (audio, video, and other support for text) as needed, as embedded links in articles that can be downloaded free of charge by anyone with a web connection and a browser. Please join us as the second generation of *Oral Tradition* begins in the virtual community.

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