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The Wisdom of the Outlaw: The Boyhood Deeds of Finn in Gaelic Narrative Tradition, Joseph Falaky Nagy. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985. ix + 338 pp. Bibliography; Index.

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Although stories about the Irish poet-warrior Finn began to assume the status of written literature only late in the Middle Ages, *fiannaíocht*—storytelling about Finn's *fían* or band—has been a part of the Irish narrative tradition as far back as written records will attest. The small number of Fenian stories recorded in the earliest manuscripts indicate by their allusions to other tales that a fully developed body of material relating to Finn existed well before changing political circumstances and developing literary conditions from the tenth century onward led a rapidly growing class of *literati* to turn to these oral traditional narratives for their material.

Like the better-known tales of the Ulster cycle, the Fenian stories have a more or less regular cast of greater-than-life characters whose adventures cover a wide spectrum of activities ranging from amorous pursuits to conflicts with mortal and otherworldly enemies. At the center of the Ulster-cycle stories we find the closest thing to an Irish national epic, *Táin Bó Cúailnge (The Cattle-raid of Cooley),* in which the young hero Cú Chulainn single-handedly defends his territory against invasion by another province. Being much less tied to a specific locale or group, the Fenian tradition has no such central work. Much more typical of this material is the *Acallam na Senórach (The Colloquy of the Ancient Men),* a frame-story in which two of Finn's men who have survived the rest of the *fían* by several hundred years are met by Saint Patrick, himself an old man, with whom they converse pleasantly. Their peripatetic conversation provides the occasion for a wide variety of poems, place-name stories, and narratives recounting the adventures of Finn and the *fían* and extolling their rugged life beyond the pale of "civilized" habitation.

Fenian narrative is generally characterized as "popular" literature in contrast with the "heroic" Ulster stories. Such distinctions may provide a serviceable label, but they tend to imply the aesthetic primacy of the highbrow Ulster stories over their Fenian country cousins. Perhaps more informative is the distinction put forth some years ago by Mari-Louise Sjoestedt who observed that whereas in the Ulster cycle stories the hero functions as an integrated member of his society, the Fenian hero exists apart from society and its institutions. Until recently, this observation has been allowed to remain undeveloped; indeed, Fenian narrative on the whole has received little critical attention. Joseph Falaky Nagy's *The Wisdom of the Outlaw* takes as its starting point Sjoestedt's perception of the Fenian heroes as outsiders and develops from this a far-reaching investigation of the mythic and social dimensions of these stories.

Nagy focuses on one story, *The Boyhood Deeds of Finn,* using as his base text the earliest extant version, dating from the twelfth century. He is careful to point out, however, that any other version would have served the purpose: the scope of his study extends beyond any single version or story. Operating on the methodological assumption—strongly influenced by the work of Claude Lévi-Strauss—that any given traditional narrative and its variants belong interdependently to a greater matrix of cultural reference and that each has something to contribute to our understanding of the others, the author makes free use of Fenian texts from all periods, including oral texts collected in this century in Ireland and Scotland. Bringing to bear an extremely well documented and extensive critical apparatus, he supplements his observations with references to other aspects of Irish and Celtic traditional narrative. *Macgnímrada* or "boyhood deeds" play an important part not only in Irish narrative cycles but in the broader context of Indo-European literature as well. Insofar as the behavior of a hero may provide exemplary or paradigmatic patterns of conduct, the crucial stages of his development merit special attention. Certainly

one of the most critical rites of passage is the transition into adulthood, for it is traditionally at this time in his cultural development that a youth is instructed in the traditional wisdom of his people. His initiation into adulthood—and the narrative re-creation of that event—functions at a metaphorical level to renew the world and its fundamental truths.

The choice of the Boyhood Deeds as focal point for this study of Fenian narrative, however, goes beyond the general relevance of the *"enfances"* of the hero to a narrative cycle. Nagy demonstrates that in the stories about Finn "boyhood" is a special state of being and, as such, is representative of the Fenian condition in general. Central to the argument of this book is the concept of "liminality," a transitional state in between two conditions, whether spatial or temporal, literal or metaphorical. The tumultuous period of initiation, of course, is quintessentially liminal in that, coming between two static conditions, it opens up a whole new world of possibilities; it is a time when suddenly access to special—otherworldly—knowledge is granted. It is in this context, then, that we can recognize in the extra social existence of Finn and his *fían* another kind of liminality. Living on the peripheries of society, remotely in touch with its institutions yet committed to a life in the natural world, they enjoy a special status, charged with mythic resonances. Liminal conditions are volatile ones; they have the potential of conferring special wisdom, but they can also be fraught with danger. Finn and his cohorts are *fénnidi* (sing. *fénnid),* outlaws in the literal sense of the word, obliged to live apart from society, yet they are vital links between this world and the secrets of the Otherworld.

Tying together the many liminal characteristics of Fenian narrative in a loosely chronological account of the development of its central figure, Nagy focuses on the two apparently contradictory aspects of Finn's mythological character: he is both a poet *(fili)* and a *fénnid,* and as such he spans the highest and lowest extremes of traditional Celtic society . Yet insofar as the *fili* is an intercessor between two worlds, in mythic terms his (liminal) function overlaps with that of the *fénnid*. Having first issued the useful caveat that mythological institutions may sometimes be correlated to historical phenomena but only with the greatest of caution, Nagy explores the historically documented phenomenon of *fénnidecht,* the state of being a *fénnid,* citing various conditions under which a person might leave society for a period to live the unfettered life of an outlaw. Unlike those who do so to avenge a wrong that conventional means cannot right or those who must be estranged from civilization as part of their initiation, Finn and his warriors are professional and perennial *fénnidi,* serving sometimes as a standing militia to protect the society that excludes them, sometimes as marauders. They take particular interest in young people, often seeing to their tutelage as they make their difficult transition to adulthood. But unlike their charges the *fénnidi* remain locked in their condition, unable to "grow up" and integrate themselves into society.

Nagy places his analysis through the stages of Finn's development: as the song of the *rígfénnid* Cumall whose death he avenges as part of his corning of age, as the grandson of the druid Tadg whose daughter Cumall stole, as the fosterling of two otherworldly women, Bodbmall and Líath Lúachra, as the apprentice of the smith Lóchán from whom he gets his first arms, as the pupil of the poet Finn Eices from whom he takes his name and through whom—inadvertently—he acquires the mantic skill for which he is best known: the ability to utter poetic wisdom whenever he bites on his thumb. In the chapter "Finn the Gilla" we see most clearly the degree to which Nagy has opened up the Fenian tradition to the wisdom of the structural anthropologist, for it is here that he analyzes the phase of Finn's development in which he reaches his most liminal condition. As a *gilla,* a term which can mean a variety of things ranging from "servant" to "pupil" to "youth" and which in this context encompasses the special status of those who are going though an acute period of transition and social apprenticeship, Finn achieves the full status of both *fénnid* and *fili*. Focusing on a set of stories which seem to bear no apparent relation to one another, Nagy demonstrates very deftly, using a Lévi-Straussian analysis of the texts, that the stories work together beneath the surface level of the narrative to establish some important definitions of the role Finn's unique—but mythically paradigmatic—liminal

status plays in the Fenian tradition.

The Wisdom of the Outlaw is a very welcome book. Articulate, incisive, and stimulating, it does much to give shape to the diffuse collection of *fiannaíocht,* and, perhaps most importantly, it clearly demonstrates the integral role played by the Fenian tradition in the mythic structures of Irish society.

Romancero tradicional de Costa Rica, collected and edited by Michèle S. de Cruz-Sáenz. Preface by Samuel G. Armistead. Musical transcriptions by Christina D. Braidotti. Newark, DE: Juan de la Cuesta, 1986. xxxiii + 138 pp. Bibliography; 3 Indexes; 2 Lists.

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The 160 texts collected by Michèle de Cruz-Sáenz represent 25 different *romance* themes gathered from 63 informants in several visits made to Costa Rica between 1973 and 1979. Given the length and persistence of the editor's search, it would seem at first glance that the harvest was lamentably poor. Yet, as we know, it is typical of the state of the *romance* in Hispanic America and is not remarkably different from that of Mexico, a much larger country, where, for example, 176 texts were collected of 29 ballad themes (see Díaz Roig 1987). However, only three of the *romances* found most frequently in Mexico are prominent in the Costa Rican tradition. On the other hand, 11 out of the 17 most popular in all of America are being sung in Costa Rica (*ibid*.). If we compare the Costa Rican situation with the present-day Peninsular tradition, out of the 154 ballad themes found during the course of field expeditions in Castile and León in the summer of 1977 (see Petersen 1982), only 11 were among those discovered by Cruz-Sáenz in Costa Rica.

More significant is the fact that barely half a dozen of these twenty-five ballad themes, *Blancaflor y Filomena, Delgadina, Bernal Francés, La vuelta del marido (Las senas del esposo), Por qué no cantáis la bella (a lo divino)* and perhaps also *La fe del ciego (La Virgen y el ciego),* were circulating in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Rather, most of them are children's songs, that is, game and dance songs, and other popular songs are classified as *romances* often for want of a better category. A case in point is the Costa Rican favorite, *El barquero,* or which there are forty versions in Cruz-Sáenz's collection. It is a short romantic song in which the boatman demands a kiss from a young girl in exchange for taking her across the sea. What is perhaps most surprising is the total absence of ballads like *Gerineldo, La dama y el pastor,* and *Conde Niño (Olinos),* which one expects to find wherever *romances* are sung.

Among other symptoms of a waning tradition is the preponderance of fragmentary texts, many only several verses long. Even when the full story is told, the ballad is usually very short. Songs of four verses are the most common, followed closely by those of eight. Together they account for over half of the texts in the collection. The small amount of variation observable in the multiple versions of certain ballads denotes a lack of creativity on the part of the singers, which suggests in turn that a printed text may have provided the model. For example, in 32 out of the 40 texts of the aforementioned *El barquero,* the first four verses remain virtually intact; six of the remainder are incomplete, while only 2 out of the 40 display variants that alter the meaning. Even though the opening of a song is the most stable part, it is more usual for there to be many small changes from text to text with an occasional more radical innovation, such as a completely different opening.

Another observable feature of these texts is their inconsistent versification. Many are made up of assonating couplets instead of having one assonance throughout. Others open with couplets and then change into a single assonance. Or the contrary may be true: the body of the *romance* may be in one assonance and the conclusion a differently

assonating couplet. The game and dance songs with their repetitive sequences and refrains display a variety of patterns. Although the texts are printed in long (that is, two-hemistich) verses, many give evidence of having been composed in eight-syllable quatrains, possibly under the influence of locally more popular forms like the *corrido* in Mexico. This is the case in the three versions of *Alfonso XII* that contain several verses borrowed from "La cucaracha." These same verses also appear in some Mexican versions of *Alfonso XII* as well as in a couple of other *romances* (Díaz Roig 1987).

Some discussion of all the foregoing matters would have been welcome as part of the introduction, in which the author tells about her collecting experiences, lists the bibliography on the Costa Rican ballad, and gives essential information, including bibliography, about the twenty-five *romance* types of the collection. Armistead's preface contributes a valuable bibliographical survey of the many areas throughout the world where *romances* have been discovered. The musical transcriptions of 36 ballad melodies are an important addition. They are followed by indices and a number of pages of photographs of informants, many of whom are remarkably young.

Although from the point of view of the student of the Hispanic ballad it is disappointing to learn that the traditional *romance* in Costa Rica is in a state of decadence from which it is not likely to recover, such results are as significant for the history of the *romancero* as are more fruitful ones. Furthermore, every text that is culled is a valuable addition to the Hispanic ballad repertoire in the New World. We can only be grateful to Cruz-Sáenz for her energy and perseverance in putting together this collection.

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Vergangenheit in mündlicher Überlieferung, Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg and Hansjörg Reinau (eds.) Colloquium Rauricum, 1. Stuttgart: Teubner, 1988. x + 348 pp.

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This volume consists of the papers presented at the first Colloquium Rauricum, a conference at which historians considered their discipline from the perspective of oral tradition. Sixteen of the twenty papers are by historians; the remainder are by scholars in the fields of anthropology, folklore, and psychology. The weight of the conference was on historical evidence from ancient Greece and Rome.[1] Half of the essays deal with the interpretation of historical data; the remainder of the papers are concerned with literary evidence and discussion of methodologies for dealing with oral tradition as evidence for

[1] The general content of the volume is: introductory materials (psychology and a review of oral studies in the United States), 15%; anthropology, 6%; Germanic subjects, 10%; the ancient Near East, 12%; ancient Greece and Rome, 40%; medieval Europe, 12%; modern history (nineteenth and twentieth centuries), 5%.

history.

The orientation of the volume and the weight given to methodology reflect the work of Jan Vansina, whose *Oral Tradition as History* (1985) was the touchstone for the conference. For Vansina, *oral history* is made up of "reminiscences, hearsay, or eyewitness accounts about events and situations which are contemporary, that is, which occurred during the lifetime of the informants" (12-13), whereas *oral tradition* "consists of information existing in memory" and "as messages . . . transmitted beyond the generation that gave rise to them . . ." (147, 13). Of particular importance to the conference was Vansina' s concept of the "floating gap."[2] Most of the papers made reference to this concept and found it valuable for the evaluation of historical narratives. As far as the presentness of history is concerned, it is Vansina's contention that historians are, first of all, witness of their own time no matter what era they focus on in their research.[3]

Vansina's insights in the field of anthropology and sociology are valuable for the historian and a formidable balance to the oral studies of literary scholars who tend to concentrate on close readings of texts along lines developed from the work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord. It is precisely in close textual analysis that Vansina's work is weak, and it is to be noted that the participants in the conference concentrated on his anthropological insights rather than on his conception of form and internal structure.[4]

The organizers of the conference posed a set of questions which they felt should be dealt with by the conference participants in the light of Vansina's theories. A number of participants addressed the questions directly; others used them as general outlines for their

[2] In historical narrative, "there are many accounts for very recent times, tapering off as one goes farther back until one reaches times of origin for which, once again, there are many accounts . . . .At the junction of times of origin and the very sparse subsequent records, there usually is a chronological gap. It is called 'floating' because over time it tends to advance towards the present. . ." (168-69). Further, "the gap is not often very evident to people in the communities involved, but it is usually unmistakable to the researchers. Sometimes, especially in genealogies, the recent past and origins are run together as a succession of a single generation" (23). He also observes that "the gap is best explained by reference to the capacity of different social structures to reckon time. Beyond a certain depth . . . chronology can no longer be kept. Accounts fuse and are thrown back into the period of origin . . . or are forgotten . . . . Historical consciousness works on only two registers: time of origin and recent times. Because the limit one reaches in time reckoning moves with the passage of generations, I have called the gap a floating gap" (24).

[3] 1985:4. Claus Wilcke (113ff.) in his essay is able to show, for instance, that the Sumerian king lists were a mixture of myth and fact. Gregot Schoeler (149ff.), in his discussion of Iranian epic, shows how information about the middle eras is missing between detailed accounts of recent dynasties and their mythical origins.

[4] Vansina 1985:68-83. He views form as (a) language and as (b) rules for poetry, narrative, and formulas ("rulers"). He views internal structure as narrative beyond the level of the sentence as it exists in sub-categories of plot, episode, motif, setting, and theme. His perception of linguistics is limited to structuralism as represented by Tedlock and Jousse, and his ideas of narrative structure come from folklorists such as Propp and Nathhorst. What he offers to historians are the insights not of the literary scholar or linguist but of the cultural anthropologist.

essays.[5] By means of these questions, the organizers hoped that the participants (1) would be able to identify reliable criteria for evaluating oral evidence in historical narrative, (2) would be able to develop a screening process for such evidence, and (3) would be able to present a grammar of oral history. They felt that if the conference in any way dispelled some of the unreliable assumptions made about the advisability of using oral data in the writing of history, then it would have reached its goal (5). The papers themselves indicate that the goal was reached, and that oral sources are valuable as historical evidence because they provide validation of written sources (as correction and supplement) and reveal new insights into historical problems which could otherwise not have been gained.

Vansina's arguments are based on the psychology of memory and on the processes by which memory structures tradition. Viktor Hobi shows (9-33) how memory is not binary and how it is influenced by the perception of similarities, completions, directions, and backgrounds as well as by characteristics of physiology and personality. Guy P. Marchal (289-320) and Arnold Esch (321-24) illustrate how memory is based on personal experience and that the powers of remembering evinced by non-literate peoples are much more colorful than our own. Not only is memory influenced by personal idiosyncrasies, but memory is social; it is the collective awareness and remembering of communities of valued incidents. Dieter Timpe (266-86) points out that tradition is made secure by social authority, while Marchal indicates how memory is based on what the community has discussed and remembered. The conference participants, like Vansina, argue that history without writing cannot be chronological. This is clearly seen in the frequent references to the theory of the "floating gap" in most of the papers.

The fact that history is a living interpretation of the past was also an idea expressed frequently in the papers, especially by Rolf Herzog (72-76), Kurt A. Raaflaub (197-225), and Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg (237-65). Herzog documents how two African tribes organized history differently: one from the perspective of kingship, the other from that of the clan. Raaflaub argues that the early history of the fall of the tyrants of Athens was written from the particular historical consciousness of the writer-compiler, and Ungern-Sternberg shows how Rome's interest in history was based on the desire of the ruling class to bolster its political position. Two papers on the Greek epics illustrate how these works could be used to supply historical data for historians: the geography described and the lists of ships, for instance, have been found to be archaisms which do not tally with historical evidence. For Joachim Latacz (161) this means that the epics themselves were told from generation to generation for three hundred years before finally being written down; for Wolfgang Kullmann this means that the epics were based on historical reports retold generation after generation with both contemporary and mythical additions. Meinhard Schuster (57-71) writes from the perspective of cognitive anthropology; it is his contention that real history is present in oral history, but that it cannot be easily recovered. Lutz Röhrich (79-99), a folklorist, states that folktales contain real history as archaic material, but he questions how far back such evidence goes.[6] The papers on the early historians Fabius Pictor and Herodotus (Justus Cobet, 226-33; Raaflaub; Timpe; von Ungern-Sternberg) illustrate the fact that oral tradition is not oral history and that the substance of

[5] I paraphrase the questions from p. 3 of the text: (1) What are the conceptions of time and past in your data? Is time reckoned as cyclic? Does it have beginning and end? Is it seen as having phases? (2) What is the structure of memory? How do individuals and societies remember events from one generation to another? (3) What is the content of what is remembered? What do individuals remember, and why? (4) Who are those who do the remembering: specific social groups? singers? storytellers? (5) To what is memory typically tied: burial sites? other specific physical objects such as boundary markings, buildings, ruins?

[6] His explication of the "Pied Piper of Hamelin" contains information that children actually left the town on June 26, 1284, but no one remembers why.

history is reworked by the historian as he remembers and understands it in the light of his own knowledge and style. It was a general consensus of the conference that written history is more complex than oral history and that no transmission, oral or written, is pure (Prantisek Graus, 325-27). Focus on the structure of memory from a variety of perspectives was thus a major concern of the conference participants.

Since the conference focused on history and on the writing of history, the work of Parry and Lord was only briefly mentioned. Deborah Boedeker (34-53) stresses the fact that the insights of these pioneers and the studies developed from them make up a methodology but not a doctrine. The advisability of using interviews for the gathering of historical data was also discussed and evaluated. Rainer Wirtz (331-44), a sociologist, described the LUSIR project based on interviews conducted between 1930 and 1960 in the Ruhr district of Germany, and shows how the information gained from such interviews brings the historian closer to the real experiences of the human beings who live history than do the individual, intellectualized, written accounts of historians. Heinrich Löffler (100-10), on the other hand, instead of showing how contemporary interviews are the value to historians, describes how German linguists have analyzed the interviews as valuable data for the understanding of language change.

Other approaches to historical data from the perspective of oral tradition concerned the availability of writing and the kind of knowledge possessed by historians in organizing and focusing their materials. Klaus Seybold (141-48) indicates at the outset of his essay that ancient Israel was never at any point in its history without writing, but only made use of writing when there was a political need for it to be written down. The point made here and elsewhere in the papers is that history as it has been traditionally defined is the conscious writing down of something that the community wants remembered for some specific reason.

Throughout the conference it was evident that historians think of history as the intellectualization of written evidence and that they have difficulty in dealing with the concepts of "oral history" and "oral tradition" as data for historical research.[7] In the final summing up, Martin Schaffner (347) makes a plea for oral history as a valuable and necessary adjunct for the discipline of history; he states that the importance of oral history and oral tradition in the compiling of histories requires the insights of sociology, psychology, anthropology, linguistics, and sociobiography as well as other areas of research.

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[7] Von Ungern-Sternberg and Reinau state this problem at the outset in their introduction (1): "Der Historiker europäisch-neuzeitlicher Tradition ist gewohnt, mit schriftlichen Zeugnissen zu arbeiten, aus schriftlichen Zeugnissen sein Geschichtsbild zu konstruieren. Am liebsten hat er es mit Urkunden und Akten jeglicher Art zu tun."

Allegorical Speculation in an Oral Society: The Tabwa Narrative Tradition, Robert Cancel. University of California Publications in Modern Philology, 122. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1989. x + 230 pp. Glossary; Bibliography.

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Robert Cancel's work is on the Tabwa oral narrative called the *inshimi* among the Bemba-speaking Tabwa in Zambia. The noun *inshimi,* derived from the verb *ukushimika* "to tell stories, preach or converse," reminds one immediately of the Xhosa *intsomi* of South Africa. The similarity in structure probably indicates towards a common Ur-Bantu (or Malcolm Cuthrie's Common Bantu) form. It is interesting to note, however, that the Xhosa language does not have a corresponding verb.

Cancel's research was carried out in northern Zambia in an area between Lakes Mweru and Tanganyika. His fieldwork started in 1975 and continued for approximately two years among the Tabwa (5). He admits that this is a relatively short period in which to learn a language, let alone a culture. I like his honesty; the same cannot always be said of field workers everywhere in this regard. Some have made dubious claims regarding their "fluency" or "competence" in the target language after a brief sojourn among the speakers, enabling them to interpret forms such as oral narratives in a way that would not be possible to the "uninitiated." Fortunately this is not one of Cancel's shortcomings. He openly acknowledges help he received through models from similar studies as well as from anthropological and ethnographic research conducted on relevant groups in Zambia and Zaire. This does not, however, detract from his extremely useful contribution as regards the oral narrative among the Tabwa in particular, and the oral narrative in general.

Another case in point is his acknowledgment that the tale-telling events "were rarely spontaneous events" (22). Although this would certainly not seem to be the ideal situation, the fact of the matter is that the serious field worker in Cancel's circumstances has no other option. He openly admits that his "mere presence could have altered any number of the conditions of performance" (22). There have been instances in the past where field workers were at pains to stress the fact that the storytelling performances forming the basis of their analyses were never "contrived" or "organized." They "stumbled" upon these performances and then merged with the audience so as to become barely noticeable, enabling them to witness a "spontaneous" performance. With a foreign worker in your midst, this does not seem feasible.

Cancel rightly maintains that determining a method for analyzing his data comes down to a matter of choice, although an "educated choice" (1). His view of an oral tradition as polysemic, operating on various levels, is commendable. This excludes the usage of any single approach to its structure and function. His view of the Tabwa oral narrative tradition is grounded in three disciplines: literary criticism, folklore, and anthropology. Following Alton Becker's model for exploring Javanese shadow theater, Cancel identifies three specific dimensions of the tradition: the first is the linguistic presentation or the verbal text; the second the intertextual relationship between the narrative and other narratives in the tradition or the traditional context; and the third the living context of the performance itself (18). This ties in with John Foley's insistence that in comparing oral traditions, one should keep in mind that there should be similarity regarding the tradition, the genre, and the text (1988:109-11).

It is also heartening to see that Cancel believes that literary scholarship can help in bringing together works from a written tradition and those from an oral tradition. To be sure, there are differences but it is true, as Cancel says, that the commonality between these two traditions has been played down in favor of the more highlighted differences.

In chapter 2 Cancel takes a look at the formal structure of the narratives. His basic narrative unit is the *image,* which he defines as "the visualization of a character, action, or relationship" (24). Other key concepts in his analysis are plot, repetition, theme, allegory,

and metaphor (28), and two "basic structural models," i.e. the expansible image-set and the patterned image-set (33). Cancel should perhaps have singled out "episode" as a key structural concept in his analysis too, because the term figures very prominently throughout the discussion. It is quite obvious that Cancel had been strongly influenced by the work of Harold Scheub on the Xhosa *iintsomi* (1975), as he acknowledges (33).

His reference to audience expectations being confirmed (or thwarted) reminds one of Jurij Lotman's (1973) aesthetics of identification, where the code of the sender (narrator) is the same as that of the recipients (audience) as opposed to the aesthetics of contrast (in modern literary forms, for example) when the author's code and that of his readership may differ considerably.

Cancel's selection of performances and his discussion in chapter 2 satisfactorily illustrates the concepts he introduces. I find his method of including non-relevant remarks by audience members in his translations more distracting than helpful. The aim ostensibly is to give an authentic ring to the transcriptions. The inclusion of remarks, in whatever form, by members of the audience on the narrative itself or aiding the narrator in his or her performance, on the other hand, is extremely important. It is well known that the audience and the narrator jointly shape the performance within most oral narrative traditions.

Chapter 3 deals with the performance context, the living event, and it is as Cancel rightly states a vital part of the storytelling tradition. His discussion of narrators and their individual styles and idiosyncrasies reminds one again vividly of Scheub's work on the Xhosa *iintsomi*. One wonders whether Cancel should not have adopted a different way of presenting his translations of the Tabwa narratives, given the transcription he provides on pages 61-63 to illustrate the grouping of words used by the narrator. The illustrations of narrators in action, even frozen as they are, do add a little color to the discussion. It is always extremely difficult to capture the imagination of the reader when describing narrators and their techniques such as body movement, mime, gesture, and facial expression. Cancel again (75) refers to the effect his presence may have had on the performances. Although he admits that he does not know, it is commendable of him to acknowledge the fact that the "normal" context of story-performance, as he calls it, had been altered by his presence.

In chapters 4, 5, and 6 Cancel proceeds to analyze tales that are more complex in composition. Chapters 4 and 5 deal with narratives that share a similar structural framework by way of the same basic polarities, characters, plot, and action. These related narratives constitute an "armature." In chapter 6 Cancel illustrates how the thematic argument of the narrative is composed by allegorically aligning various elements in the narrative. In all three chapters the establishing of sets of polarities or oppositions appears to be the key process.

I fail to understand the reason for Cancel's inclusion of an appendix following every chapter. After chapter 3, having discussed the performance context, he adds three narratives. The mere representations of the translated texts, admittedly with minor indications of instances where narrators had "performed," simply mean very little in terms of the foregoing discussion. One suspects that the narratives are included for comparative purposes or to illustrate variant forms of the same tale-type. If one compares the relatively short narratives in the appendices in chapters 5 and 6 with the tales analyzed in those chapters, they appear much simpler in structure. Why include them? A general appendix at the back would better have served the purpose of providing additional data for the interested scholar. One would also like to see a few tales in the vernacular together with their translations. The book is unfortunately marred by quite a few annoying and unnecessary errors in the text.

In spite of minor criticisms, Cancel has in my opinion made a valuable contribution as regards the study of oral narrative tradition among the Tabwa specifically and in Africa generally. It is quite clear that different societies in Africa share many characteristics in oral

narrative tradition. Cancel's largest contribution lies in his formal application of metaphor and allegory to the composition of story in performance and his book is a welcome addition to the ever-growing and fascinating field of oral narrative.

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