Earnest Games: Folkloric Patterns in the Canterbury Tales, Carl Lindahl. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987. ix + 197 pp.
Chaucer Aloud: The Varieties of Textual Interpretation, Betsy Bowden. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987. xiv + 368 pp.

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Chaucer, like all early authors, is known to us primarily through the medium of books. Without a goodly measure of bookishness, in fact, one is unlikely to survive the initial shock and persevere beyond the first week or two in an undergraduate class that studies him in the Middle English. For those few odd birds whom such semester-long experiences do not satisfy, advanced study and scholarly research demand years of immersion in dead languages, arcane traditions of medieval lore, and other singularly bookish pursuits. Perhaps it is no fluke, then, that the characteristic accent of Chaucerian criticism has fallen on intra- or inter-textual relations of one sort or another. And indeed, much in Chaucer's *oeuvre* calls for such treatment: he enjoyed depicting himself as a comically bookish fellow, and the allusions to lettered authorities, medieval and ancient, that populate his pages do indeed attest to a lifelong engagement with the learned traditions of his age. At the same time Chaucer had an eye and an ear for the folklife of his world in a way that another preeminent poet of the Middle Ages, Dante, did not, and *this* aspect of Chaucer's achievement has not been so fully dilated upon.

Thus it is significant that, in the same year, two books have appeared that, in radically different ways, explore relations between the *Canterbury Tales* and oral artistry. Perhaps the orality of Chaucer is a topic whose time at last has come. At least two significant lines of connection can be drawn between Chaucer's poetic creation and the oral world. The first stems from the probability that Chaucer intended his work, at least in part, for oral delivery. This dimension of Chaucer's poetry and other medieval literature was expounded upon half a century ago by Ruth Crosby and Bertrand Bronson, and it has inspired periodic scholarly forays ever since. In fact for Chaucer, as for many other medieval authors, the evidence is thoroughly ambiguous, since on some occasions he seems to refer to his poetry in oral performative and on other occasions in textual terms. Much ink has been spilt on this issue; a sensible compromise between extreme positions is that Chaucer envisioned the dissemination of his work in both ways, through oral presentation and in book form. Without a doubt Chaucer's narrative is singularly well adapted to reading aloud; its very diffusive chattiness, now comic, now serious, ever flowing on through an inexhaustible golden abundance of magical rhyme, makes for the most marvelous listening entertainment. Chaucerians have always known this—since, as Betsy Bowden points out, they are repeatedly performing it to themselves and to their classes. Yet theory has not in general caught up with experience. For the aesthetic implications of an art form that was, in part anyway, designed for live rendering have rarely been examined in a rigorous and thoroughgoing fashion.

That the poetry itself was created to playa role within an oral interchange, that oral performative dynamics are built into the poetic structure, alerts us to one crucial context for its interpretation. Yet the performative process is not only *around* the poetry: Chaucer depicts it explicitly *within* his poetry-and here we turn more narrowly to the *Canterbury Tales*. For, if we buy Chaucer's fiction, what is this his *magnum opus* except the retrospectively transcribed proceedings of an oral tale-telling contest, conducted by no one other than "the folk"? It is indeed remarkable that, amid all the controversy that has surrounded oral-formulaic theory and the study of oral tradition, the pertinence of this the supreme masterpiece of Middle English has so seldom been looked into. For Chaucer furnishes us, along with a word-for-word record of the tales he heard on the road to Canterbury, with considerable information, of the sort that would interest ethnographers,

concerning the character and social standing of the tellers as well as the dramatic circumstances of their performances. Of course, none of this really happened; it is all a fiction, one of Plato's lies. No one feels compelled to believe that the historical Chaucer actually heard any of these tales on a pilgrimage; and some of them he indisputably lifted from written sources. But might not Chaucer's account nonetheless provide us with a modestly accurate and insightful description of folkloric processes? Might not his own talents as a poet have fed in part on the efforts of such folkloric practitioners in the art of oral storytelling?

This commonly neglected dimension of the *Canterbury Tales* is the subject of Carl Lindahl's *Earnest Games,* a major re-inauguration of folkloric method in Middle English studies. Yet Lindahl dissociates himself from earlier Chaucerian folklorists (such as Child and Whiting and Utley) who limited themselves too narrowly to canonically "folkloric" genres or material transmitted in oral-memorial fashion. In fact, oral tradition as a diachronic phenomenon is not Lindahl's concern. His approach moves rather through medieval social history and its "two basic means of communication: the elite and the folk" (7). This is indeed the crucial and grounding distinction for the entire book. Chaucer himself, while well-versed in elite literature and personally connected with the life of the court, was nonetheless unusually well attuned (by the standards of medieval authors) to the world of folk culture, which orients itself around community experience rather than lettered *auctoritas* and institutionalized learning. Chaucer's powers as an ethnological observer in this homely arena of common life underlie the realism of his depiction of community interactions among the pilgrims. This centering in the narrative level of the Canterbury pilgrims and the community process of their interactions rather than within the separate worlds of the individual tales marks Lindahl's approach throughout. **It** determines his choice, further, to view their exchanges in the light of scholarship and records relating to social history that are seldom featured in Chaucer scholarship.

The first half of the book, entitled "The Shapes of Play and Society," looks for models for the Canterbury pilgrimage community in several domains of fourteenth-century life. One such model Lindahl finds in the parish guilds (as distinct from the craft guilds). Like the pilgrim assemblage, these guilds were primarily middle-class institutions whose membership, including clerical and feminine representation, sampled from a moderately diverse economic and occupational range and catered to entertainment as well as spiritual needs. In the next chapter Lindahl turns to the medieval pilgrim more narrowly, studying the mingling of play and piety that was common in pilgrimages, though not in elite literature, and arguing for the conventional association of pilgrim-wanderers with proficiency in the oral arts. Yet perhaps the most striking of these early chapters is the fourth, which argues that "Chaucer shaped his poem to simulate the medieval festival" (46), by which he means entertainments such as the *Cour Amoureuse,* London Pui, the Mayings, Feast of Fools, Christmas guisings, and other such occasions. The nine most common traits in these festivals—an autocratic ruler, amateur performers, enforced participation, formality, processionality, a mingling of the sacred and profane, wider festival context, competition, and hierarchical structuring-appear in the *Canterbury Tales* with a regularity unmatched in Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Sercambi's *Novella*. Though these contexts (guild, pilgrimage, and festival) diverge from one another, Lindahl's analysis of similarities between their patterns of in-group interaction and those in the *Canterbury Tales* is striking. It is hard not to be persuaded that he has found real social backgrounds to the kind of association Chaucer has depicted in his pilgrim assemblage.

The second section, entitled "Conventions of Narrative War," turns from the pilgrims themselves to what they say, and particularly to the verbal dueling in which the pilgrim churls excel. Such verbal abuse entailed the mastery of a dangerous rhetorical art by which the practitioner steered clear from various rocks of disaster. One of these was slander. For while most offenses on this account were relegated to trial in minor courts before neighbors, the contemporary legal records suggest that slander was nonetheless taken quite seriously. Since attacks on social superiors were the most severely

reprimanded, the bitterest feuds typically sprang up between the rival vocations and approximate social equals. Thus verbal feuding never engulfs the high-ranking Knight, whose "good speaking" is authoritarian in a *gentile* and deferential way. Yet even bickering peers such as the Miller and Reeve usually avoid flagrant abuse but rather draw from a range of strategies that Lindahl enumerates, such as the deflected apology, conditional insult, and mock praise. Lindahl examines closely the "rhetorical folk duels" of the Miller and Reeve, Host and Cook, and Friar and Summoner, analyzing the strategies that the various combatants employ and commenting on their relative success. The last chapter in this section, on the "license to lie," retraces some of this same ground from the standpoint of the *Schwank,* which Lindahl argues at some length to be preferable to the *fabliau* as a characterization of the "Miller's Tale" and others of this class. An oral narrative form centering around the "basic human drives" and mocking "foibles and pretensions" especially of those high in the social order, the *Schwank* employs such tactics as attack through the situational aptness of the tale to its target, concealment through "anonymity" or a refusal to name the target directly, subtle tests and challenges, and stereotyping. Such tactics allow a tale-teller to abuse with a measure of impunity. Lindahl studies at length the manner in which an assortment of pilgrims—the Miller, Reeve, Friar, Summoner, Clerk, Merchant, and Manciple—employ these devices.

In the concluding chapter, constituting the third part of the book, Lindahl brings us "back to court," arguing that, in his manner of address to his aristocratic audience, Chaucer acted himself partly in a manner of a folk poet. Indeed, several of the crafty rhetorical tricks of the Miller (defected apology, indirect insult, elaborate disclaimer, and repetition of the insult on a higher level of abstraction) Chaucer himself employs. Possibly such practice owes to the oral delivery of the *Tales,* though even if Chaucer did not design his tales for such a mode of dissemination, the laws of folk community register within their rhetoric anyway. For the precariousness of Chaucer's personal and professional standing within the rather volatile world of court politics in late fourteenth-century England instructed him in the folk arts as a skill necessary for his very survival.

It is this aspect of Lindahl's account from which I find myself most dissenting. To be sure, Chaucer's age was a straited one, and Chaucer himself was subjected to the hazards that any small player must be, so close to the seats of controversy in a dangerous political game. Undoubtedly these personal circumstances registered within his poetry. At the same time, Chaucer's poetry conveys a spirit of freedom and delight and pure humor that Lindahl's construction does not altogether give justice to. The gathering clouds of cultural oppression that loom so large in the awareness of many critics today have cast shadows over what remains the rather happy world of Chaucer's poetry, shadows that, in this case, are perhaps more the making of the modern scholar than the medieval poet. Further, while Chaucer really does seem to have exhibited an unusual degree of attunement to the ways of "the folk," for all that his greater sympathies seem to me to have run with his formal allegiances. For the churls, however insightfully and sometimes warmly portrayed, remain, in the pilgrim company, a raucous crowd. The breadth of Chaucer's vision includes them, but I find it hard to believe that he identified with them in a major way.

Yet these criticisms, addressed to that level of interpretation where scholars inevitably reassemble the building blocks of meaning in the light of their own personal proclivities, cannot even begin to diminish the contributions of this book, which are impressive indeed. Lindahl has established the pertinence of folkloric patterning, oral tradition, and a wide world of fourteenth-century non-elite culture to Chaucer's crowning poetic endeavor with a thorough scholarly authoritativeness that is hard to gainsay. Throughout he is well-informed on scholarship and alive to critical and historical issues relating to his argument. The writing is exceptionally clear, and his analysis is always cogent and centers on specific and well-defined features of style and structure. Perhaps the most compelling argument for Lindahl's approach, however, is its fecundity in producing results. Rarely does one encounter a book delivering so full a yield of genuinely fresh perspectives and insights from ground so thoroughly trampled and picked over as

Chaucer's poetry. Many new directions are indicated in *Earnest Games;* one hopes that traditional literary scholars as well as folklorists will strike out on them.

It is remarkable that a single year should give birth to two studies of the *Canterbury Tales* so plainly relevant to the interests of this journal as to invite joint treatment in a review, yet so utterly divergent in virtually every other respect. While Lindahl's primary emphasis falls on the performances of the pilgrims within the fiction, Betsy Bowden's *Chaucer Aloud,* as the title suggest, deals with the performance of the poetry itself. Implicitly this topic relates to the possible oral performance milieu of Chaucer's original compositions, although Bowden does not dilate upon this dimension of significance in her study. Her interest centers rather on the interpretive possibilities registered in and arising from oral renderings of the *Tales* by present-day scholars. And herein lies undoubtedly the book's originality and its claim to have pointed out a new horizon in Chaucer studies. For it is accompanied by a ninety-minute cassette tape of readings from the *Tales* by thirty-two scholars, which the author collected between 1979 and 1983. These taped selections are essential to the book, since four of the twelve chapters concentrate on their interpretation. These tapes are not professional quality, nor does Bowden represent them as such. Rather, they provide evidence on the oral interpretation of Chaucer; and to bring home their significance is one of Bowden's major aims.

How do these performances and Bowden's interpretations of them fit into the book's larger designs? In fact, though Bowden's approach is striking in its novelty and rich with possibilities, her central idea is not fully coherent. Her focus is limited to three character—the Prioress, the Pardoner, and the Merchant. I do not entirely understand the reason for this particular selection, though Bowden plainly wishes to focus on cruces generating divergent interpretations. These divergences usually stem from problems of character and character motivation, whether relating to one of the three pilgrims themselves or to a figure in their tales. Bowden approaches such interpretive cruces through three sources of evidence. The first, modern scholarly interpretation, is treated in a rather cursory manner—and understandably so, since Bowden has other axes to grind. The evidence of the recordings we shall be discussing more fully presently. The final source consists in what she calls "readers' responses" to the three pilgrims through the four centuries from Chaucer's death until the early nineteenth century, a purely pragmatic cutoff date selected to avoid the prolixity of the Victorians. These "responses" include, occasionally, "direct commentary on Chaucer's text," though these early centuries do not provide this in abundance. More often, Bowden works with illustrations from early printed editions, such as those in John Urry's 1721 edition, or the drawings of Thomas Stothard or William Blake. Most of all, however, Bowden focuses on the "interpretations" of Chaucer implicit in a variety of adaptations, translations, and modernizations. This leads her to such material as the fifteenth-century *Tale of Beryn,* a rendering of the *Prioress' Tale* by William Wordsworth, and especially Alexander Pope's re-creations in the Pope/Betterton edition of 1712 and elsewhere. A special favorite of Bowden's, Pope's version provides the center of gravity for three chapters on early treatments of the "Merchant's Tale." Appendix B, "Canterbury Tales Modernizations, 1700-75," provides a useful catalog that one hopes will one day be extended to cover the entire premodern period. Bowden plunges into this rather esoteric material with an infectious enthusiasm, and she does lead one to wonder why this channel of premodern literary tradition—which attracted the contributions of several major poets-has so largely dropped out of view today.

Bowden's alternation between such writerly modernizations of Chaucer and scholarly readings gives rise to such chapter titles as "The Prioress on Paper" and "The Prioress on Tape." The question that grows increasingly insistent, however, is what these two very distinct sorts of material have to do with each other. What one might have anticipated was a diachronic study of these three Canterbury pilgrims and their paraphernalia in what might, oxymoronically, be characterized as a kind of highbrow folk tradition. In the early centuries, these pilgrims and their tales were seldom encountered

directly in their Middle English texts but lived rather in a zone between their attribution to a celebrated English poet, on the one hand, and an assortment of illustrations and modernized versions, on the other. The phenomenology involved is reminiscent of an oral folk tradition—which Bowden several times invokes—with its multi forms and continuous reshaping and self-adaptation to present reality. Likewise, the modern taped recordings, while they do reflect a disciplined scholarly immersion in the Middle English, nonetheless hark to a very real twentieth-century pedagogical "folk tradition." Flourishing above all in the classroom, this professorial art form teases out a new image of Chaucer between a fixed text, lying open on students' desks, and live performances, designed to tantalize student appetites for arcane literature while ventilating the professorial urge toward histrionics. The possibilities for comparison between these two types of Chaucerian tradition—the early print and the modern pedagogical—are intriguing. Yet Bowden never explores questions of this kind. Indeed, the only rationale she seems to provide for the present-day readings aloud is that all these interpretations attest to the nonhegemonic diversity of meaning to which Chaucer's poetry can give rise. There needed no ghost returned from the graveyard of eighteenth-century esoteric a to tell us this. The poverty of this conclusion is disappointing, particularly when measured against the richness of the brew Bowden has prepared for us.

Nonetheless, the inclusion of the cassette with the text and the extensive effort of interpretation that Bowden gives to these live renderings represent an audacious move. And one must credit her here and everywhere with an unusual candor in exposing her methods and assumptions. The tape selections break down into a series of "cuts," A through O. Each cut consists of a series of performances of a single passage, ranging in length from a few lines to nearly a hundred, by different readers. Bowden subdivides her chapters on oral performances into sections on the individual cuts, and in each section she provides a schematic-summary of her interpretations. Further, the performed passages from the *Canterbury Tales* are reproduced in an included brochure, doing away with the need to cart around an edition of Chaucer's text as an accessory to a critical study that already demands a tape recorder or walkman. This organization is plainly designed to facilitate the integration of visual reading (of Bowden's text) with aural listening (to her taped selections); scholarly readers who want to do *Chaucer Aloud* justice must be prepared for this multi-media approach. The resulting experience is an unusual one, and one hopes that more ventures of this kind will be attempted.

Bowden assumes, reasonably enough, that any reading aloud itself constitutes an interpretation; and her project, in the four chapters focused on the cassette tape, consists in interpreting these interpretations, in the sense of explaining what these interpretations are. Her method, as she herself acknowledges, is subjective and impressionistic. Speech synthesizers receive a few passing nods, but by and large her conclusion is that the spotlights of such technology do not pierce far through the foggy twilights of personal artistic expression where binary complexities are best left unresolved. I am not sold on this rather quick dismissal and would like to see a more rigorous application of techniques derived from linguistics with the assistance of audio technology, though this would demand a specialized expertise which few humanists possess. Nonetheless, such methods eschewed, what Bowden does provide are detailed "close readings" that center on intonation, accent, pitch, pacing, and other performance variables. Again, she does not provide criteria for her interpretations but relies instead on her intuitive sense and gut feelings for what the performers were trying to convey. I must confess that this approach arouses my suspicions; her interpretations are, to my taste, over-read and over-dramatizing, to the point where some of the subtlety of Chaucer becomes obscured. It is true that these problems originate in some—though by no means all—of the performances themselves. At the same time, Bowden has obviously listened to the tapes with exceeding care, and her readings, whatever their excesses, really do convey a vivid response to what she has heard. Moreover, I find it difficult to suggest what method should be preferred to hers, arbitrary though I find her method to be. Yet in such an experimental endeavor the specific

conclusions will undoubtedly prove less significant than the sheer fact of the attempt. Furthermore, Bowden has presented her work unpretentiously and honestly. And in the process she has raised questions of a new type in literary criticism.

Yet the book is riddled with other problems of a more incidental sort. The writing exhibits a marked penchant for the informal and the "cute" in a way that may grate on some sensibilities (as it does mine). Further, it is not particularly economical: the book runs on longer than it needs to. In short, while the exposition never fails in its liveliness and immediacy of self-presentation, it is not always well thought out. On several levels, the book lacks intellectual rigor. But for all that, what *Chaucer Aloud* has attempted is genuinely innovative. It has opened a new direction and a new horizon in Chaucerian criticism. Whatever its deficiencies, for this it has earned an enduring place of honor.

When one examines the books side by side, one is struck by the rarity of points of contact between Lindahl's and Bowden's probings, despite the fact that, if one draws out a few conceptual connections, their projects are significantly interrelated. Plainly there is a wide world of Chaucer still waiting to be explored. Perhaps the age of electronic orality is engendering a sensibility whereby we can attune ourselves to medieval communication in a way that has not been possible during the intervening centuries of immersion in the world of print. Quite beyond what they accomplish in themselves, these books sketch out new pathways rich in promise for the future of medievalism.

Allegorical Speculation in an Oral Society: The Tabwa Narrative Tradition, Robert Cancel. University of California Publications in Modern Philology, l22. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 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 *iintsomi* of South Africa. The similarity in structure probably indicates 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 oral narrative among the Tabwa in particular, and 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 of 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, metaphor, and two "basic structural models," that is, 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 features 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 expectation 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 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 illustrate 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 transcription. 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 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, may have 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 have liked to see a few tales in the vernacular together with their translations. The book is unfortunately marred by quite a few annoying and unnecessary typographical 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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