

THE RHETORIC OF AMERICAN FOLK LITERATURE

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PREFACE

The material of rhetoric is composed of everything that may be placed before it as a subject of speech.

Quintilian

In the beginning was the word--the oral tradition. Once man developed the ability to speak, he felt the utilitarian need to communicate; and language was born. He felt the urge to persuade others to understand his point of view, and rhetoric developed. He felt an artistic need to express his desires, emotions, and memories in tales and songs; thus folklore evolved.

Both rhetoric and folklore, coming from the oral tradition, share common characteristics. Ancient Greeks before the fifth century B.C., defending private property from encroaching tyrants, observed effective methods of discourse in the speeches of their fellows. They formulated from those observations a system of rhetoric which grew into an academic discipline, carried on and perfected in succeeding generations by such men as Isocrates, Plato, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. Folklore as a systematic study is of relatively recent origins. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when the Western world was reconstructing

society around the principles of democratic organization, the historian, no longer content to write about royalty, wars, and changing boundary lines, began to analyze the changes in human culture. The world of literature, too, was in the process of change from the classical ideal to the age of romanticism with its dawning interest in the lives and emotions of the common man. In the wake of sociological studies and nationalistic movements which inspired nations to recognize their rich heritages of popular traditions, the study of folklore began to make important strides as a science itself. At this time the Grimm brothers gave to Germany and the world their collection of folk tales; Richard Wagner brought to life the lore of the Nibelungs; and Francique Xavier Michel recalled for France her great epic poem, Chanson de Roland. Systematic folklore studies, under the sponsorship of learned societies, were initiated in several countries including the United States. In the years since, folklore investigations tended toward philology and literary history or toward cultural anthropology and sociology. American folklore studies have been concerned, for the most part, with cultural anthropology and literature.¹

¹Arthur M. Selvi, Lothar Kahn, and Robert C. Soule, eds., Folklore of Other Lands (New York: S. F. Vanni, 1956), p. 104.

As a cultural anthropologist, however, the folklorist, that person who observes, collects, and analyzes folklore and folklife in all forms, is sometimes inclined to become a fossil hunter, who, says R. R. Marett, "tends to overlook the permanent forces at work. Historical conditions change, whereas psychological conditions are relatively permanent."¹ The psychological conditions in folklore are closely related to the rhetorical conditions as they relate to human involvement and human responses.

Rhetoric like folklore prompts response, says Aristotle, as it advises, commemorates, or accuses or defends. Cicero says rhetoric's threefold purpose is to instruct, to delight, and to move. Folklore also advises and instructs through proverbs, statements of folk beliefs, and didactic songs and tales. It delights through the fairy tale, tall tale, and "noodle joke." It commemorates, accuses, or defends in hero legends and ballads, and moves one to terror or pity by the ballads of tragic circumstances, by urban belief tales, "jump" stories, and ghost stories.

Aristotle says rhetoric, like folklore, is suited to the popular audiences who do not follow elaborate

¹Psychology and Folklore (London: Methuen Co., Ltd., 1920), pp. 120-21.

scientific demonstrations. Folklore is a naive art; however, one is mistaken if he considers it totally primitive or extant only among the ignorant. Folklore is eternally developing in the urban, industrial, and even academic worlds, as collections such as Botkins's Folklore of the Railroad, Boatright's Folklore of the Oil Field, and innumerable absent-minded professor stories attest.

Folklore, in its broadest definition, includes not only tale, song, and "saying," but folk life--the traditional domestic, manual, and graphic arts and crafts of a culture group,¹ each producing a rhetoric of its own. Ballad tunes, for instance, contribute significantly to a song's power to move an audience. Totem poles and hex signs persuade toward a folk belief. This study, however, will confine itself to folk literature--narrative, song, folk belief, and proverb--which comes from the oral tradition but which can be or has been transferred to printed form. Folklore, for the most part, is anonymous. In rare instances, research may discover the identity of a creator of a folk tale or song or of a character. Paul Bunyan, for example, was the literary creation of James MacGillivray.

¹Don Yoder, "Folklife," in Our Living Tradition, ed. Tristram P. Coffin (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1968), p. 242.

Bunyan first appeared as a minor character in a short story "The Round River Drive," published in the Detroit News-Tribune June 24, 1910. In the course of time, countless anonymous narrators told and retold variant tales about him until he has become a national folk hero.¹ Paul Bunyan reverses the usual process by which a character from oral tradition eventually becomes part of published folklore.² As Jan Brunvand notes, however, "The majority of folklore bears no trace of its authorship and even the time and place of its origins may be a mystery."³

A wide variety of tale types contributes to the prose narratives of folk literature, each having its rhetorical form, function, and style. Myths and legends are generally considered to be true. Myths, regarded as sacred, are set in the remote past. They explain creation, animal characteristics, ritual, customs, and natural phenomena. Legends take place in a datable historical past. They have to do with biographical material (personal or hero legends), fears and taboos (belief legends), religious figures

¹Daniel Hoffman, Paul Bunyan: Last of the Frontier Demigods (New York: Temple University Publications, 1952), pp. 3-5.

²For this reason, some folklorists refuse to call Paul Bunyan an authentic folk character at all.

³The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1968), p. 6.

(saints' legends), localized history (local legends), and superstitions (ghost legends). By their nature as folklore, legends often "migrate," turning up at any time in any place as having happened there, the history or biography distorted by successive variations to fit the time and place. Fairy tales take place in unknown times and locations and deal with make-believe situations. Tall tales grossly exaggerate incidents for humorous purposes. "Jump" stories contrive a surprise ending to conjure delighted terror, and "noodle stories" and ilk tell of laughably stupid characters of misunderstood situations.

The study of the rhetoric of folk literature deals also with the folksong and ballad, with proverbs or folk sayings, and with folk beliefs, which perhaps form a tenuous bridge between folklife and folk literature, but provide very real evidence of the persuasive aspects of the rhetoric of American folklore.

According to Tristram P. Coffin, once folklore is printed, it "remains temporarily frozen in written form, [losing] its vitality when transcribed or removed from his oral existence."¹ Benjamin Botkin says, "The essence of [folklore] is something that cannot be contained in a

¹"The Question of Folklore in the American Twentieth Century," American Quarterly 13 (Winter 1961): 527.

definition but that grows upon one with folklore experience. . . . What makes a thing folklore is not that you have heard it before but that you want to tell it again in your own way, because it is anybody's property . . . [and] if you don't like it, you can always change it, and if you don't someone else will."¹ When the folktale or song is rewritten or readapted for various audiences, it is then released from what Coffin calls "a state of suspended animation." The narrator, whether speaker or writer, is the folk informant who employs a transcriptive or pseudo-transcriptive occurrence which provides a sense of place, or tradition, or unity²--all materials of rhetorical discourse.

Folklore's performance parallels that of the classical oration as it instructs, delights, and moves; but it also reflects the essentials of twentieth-century scholars' definitions of rhetoric as communication through the art of effective expression. Kenneth Burke's term is identification, the "unconscious factor in appeal," which causes speaker and audience to identify with one another through

¹A Treasury of American Folklore (New York: Crown Publishers, 1944), pp. xxi-xxii.

²Hennig Cohen, "American Literature and Folklore," in Our Living Tradition, ed. Tristram P. Coffin (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1968), p. 242.

mutual respect and mutual interest in and understanding of a subject matter.¹ Folklore, as it touches on the familiar and sometimes sentimental, is effectively expressive to certain audiences and readers, allowing, even causing them to identify by means of suggestions of shared experiences, memory associations, and at times, a willing suspension of disbelief.

Folklore not only reflects and follows the classical and modern definitions and purposes of rhetoric, but it has within its tales, songs, and proverbs the essential properties of the canon of rhetoric: invention (subject matter), arrangement, style, memory, and delivery.² This study itself is the subject matter of invention. It will deal with other parts of the canon by chapters:

Chapter I: Rhetorical form and structure in
folklore

Chapter II: Style

Chapter III: The persona and his delivery. Early rhetoricians taught their pupils how to memorize a speech. Because this study is descriptive, not prescriptive,

¹A Rhetoric of Motives (New York: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1950), pp. 36-37.

²Richard A. Lanham, A Handlist of Rhetorical Terms (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), p. 106.

and because it relies chiefly on printed sources, "memory" will not be a topic for discussion except as it can be documented as part of a particular narrator's delivery.

Chapter IV: Appeal through logos, ethos, and pathos.

Chapter V: The persuasive qualities of folklore: documented examples of response to admonitions, particularly to folk-beliefs and proverbs, and an examination of the responses evoked by folk tale and song.

The study, confined as it is to rhetorical effects of American folklore, will not attempt to trace origins or motifs. Many valuable and definitive works already exist in those areas. And indeed, except for American Indian, some Negro, and certain occupational lore, most of American folklore derives from European sources. The study will deal with Americanized versions of tales, songs, and proverbs, citing examples which are representative, not necessarily definitive.

The often quoted but pejorative statement, "It is only folklore," implies that the subject matter is not

necessarily believable. Folklore, however, is often more believable to some people than scientific fact. "Man," says R. A. Blakeman, "is by nature a credulous being . . . prone to allow an undue influence on the imagination and passions."¹ Therein lies the rhetoric of folklore.

¹A Philosophical Essay on Credulity and Superstition
(New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1849), p. 12.

CHAPTER I

FORM AND STRUCTURE

Just as cloth can be measured with a yardstick to determine its length, tales may be measured by the schemes.

V. Propp

In his first manual, De Inventione, published about 85 B.C., Cicero outlined six parts for structuring the ideal rhetorical composition: the exordium, or introduction; the narratio, which sets forth the facts and background of the issue; the partitio, which defines the terms and states the thesis; the confirmatio, or development of the argument; the refutatio, which admits the existence of but weakens the argument of opposing views; and the peroratio, or conclusion.¹ When Cicero wrote his handbook, rhetoric was already an academic discipline, even a science. More than four hundred years before his time, however, Greeks had observed effective methods of oratory within the oral tradition. Codified rhetorical form and practice evolved in subsequent centuries from those observations.

Folklore, too, especially as tale, song, and proverb, has an intrinsic form and structure upon which pseudo-folktales

¹De Inventione, trans., H. M. Hubbell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949; reprint ed., 1968), 1:19.

and ballads have been created according to observable formulas. Stephen Vincent Benét's "The Devil and Daniel Webster" and "The Ballad of William Sycamore" are examples of so-called literary folklore consciously composed within traditional patterns by a known author for a literate audience.¹ Readers of Washington Irving, Roark Bradford, and others may cite lengthy bibliographies of examples. That sophisticated authors, like the ancients, transfer what has been done naturally and effectively from the oral tradition into consciously created literature serves to prove that the oral tradition, as Jan Brunvand says, "passes on folklore in fairly fixed or standard forms, allowing us to recognize corresponding bits of folklore in different guises."² Folk narrators, whether storytellers or ballad singers, preserve and relay tales and songs they themselves have heard; but Richard Dorson observes that if they improvise, as they often do, they do so within a formularized tradition.³ Variations develop through countless retellings of a tale by one or many narrators, but the basic form of that tale

¹Tristram P. Coffin and Hennig Cohen, eds., Folklore in America (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1966; Anchor Books, 1970), p. xiv.

²p. 4.

³"Oral Styles of American Folk Narrators," in Folklore in Action, ed. Horace Beck (Philadelphia: The American Folklore Society, Inc., 1962), pp. 77-99.

remains the same. Unlike the classical oration, however, verbal folklore cannot tolerate a codifier to impose standards of effectiveness. Folklore, by its very nature, evolves naturally from unselfconscious sources. It does not conform to "how-to" handbooks. Because of its essence as a naive art, folklore undergoes a radical transformation to what Dorson calls "fakelore" when extraneous patterns mold it to literary conventions.¹ A study of rhetorical form in folklore, therefore, will be descriptive rather than prescriptive.

Form in written or oral literature is defined by Simon O. Lesser as "the whole group of devices used to structure [or order] materials and communicate expressive content."² Form is the overall design; structure, the bits and pieces that make that design. To use an architectural metaphor, one might describe form as the building, whether log cabin, Victorian mansion, or high-rise office complex, and structure as the logs, the bricks, or the glass and concrete that create and characterize the form. In folklore, form and structure provide familiar architectural bases upon which other rhetorical elements build to

¹American Folklore (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1959), p. 4.

²Fiction and the Unconscious (Boston: Beacon Hill Press, 1957), p. 122.

create an identifying response on the part of the listener/reader. In prose narratives opening formulas identify the story as fairytale, local legend, or etiological myth. Structures may include equations of pairs, treblings, and even quadruplings. Conflict between weak and strong, simple and wise, good and evil will structure plot progression in tale and ballad alike while form of songs depends in part upon meter, refrain, and often a sequence of time. Proverbs too rely for effectiveness upon a standard of form.

Within the form of the folktale and ballad certain functions, or actions, develop from preceding and into subsequent functions in logical cause-and-effect relationships.¹ The rhetoric of form, says Norman N. Holland, is that form "is both objective and subjective; we can see it in the text but form only comes alive as it shapes our responses."² Text and response correspond to author and reader, narrator, and audience. To evoke a response from an audience, the narrator must appeal to the listener's personal interests, and paradoxically, expect him to set aside those interests as he becomes involved with the actions of imaginary creatures,³

¹V. Propp, Morphology of the Folktale, trans. Laurence Scott; 2nd ed., ed. Louis A. Wagner (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1968), p. 24.

²The Dynamics of Literary Response (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 108.

³Lesser, p. 133.

thus exhibiting Kenneth Burke's thesis of rhetoric's quality of identification. The narrator identifies with the listener by appealing to his emotions and interests; the listener, caught up in and responding to the tale, identifies with the narrator or with his material.

Rhetorical identification in folklore is best served by devices of the familiar such as formulaic beginning and ending statements. The opening formulas of folktales serve in the same capacity as Cicero's exordia which sought to catch the attention of the listener/reader and to prepare him through pathos and ethos for the type of story to follow. In Old World tales, the opening situation, often presenting a picture of beauty and prosperity, functions as a contrasting background for the difficulties to come.¹ "The Blue Beard," for example, begins:

There was once upon a time a man who had several fine houses both in town and country, a good deal of silver and gold plate, embroider'd furniture, and coaches gilt all over with gold. But this same man had the misfortune to have a Blue Beard, which made him so frightefully ugly that all the women and girls ran away from him.²

Similarly, a version of the Cinderella story, "The King of Colchester's Daughters," begins:

¹Propp, p. 85.

²Iona Opie and Peter Opie, eds., The Classic Fairy Tales (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), p. 106.

Long before Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, reigned in the eastern part of this land a king, who kept his court at Colchester. He was witty, strong and valiant; by which means he subdued his enemies abroad, and planted peace among his subjects at home. Nevertheless, in the midst of all his earthly glory, his queen died, leaving behind her an only daughter.¹

An American tale, on the other hand, more often plunges into the basic action immediately following the opening formula statement. The opening paragraphs of "Rush Cape" and of "The Man in the Kraut Tub" are typical examples:

One time there was a king had three girls. He was getting very old, so he called his daughters one day and told them, says, "There's a question I want answered and I want the truth."

And

One time a man went to see a woman. She was married, but this feller he knew that, and he had a pretty good notion, too, that her husband wasn't at home that night.²

The undating and undatable "Once upon a time," or more commonly in the American tale, "One time," prepares the listener for a fantasy, a story outside time, one which probably did not and could not happen, but which gives pleasure through mounting-and-release of fear or tension by way of imagination and a temporary departure from reality. Of the sixteen variants of Old World fairytales published in Richard Chase's anthology, American Folk Tales and Songs,

¹Ibid., p. 159.

²Richard Chase, ed., American Folk Tales and Songs (New York: The New American Library; A Signet Key Book, 1956), pp. 32 and 46.

thirteen begin "One time." In Who Blowed Up the Church House?, The Talking Turtle and Other Ozark Folk Stories, and Sticks in the Knapsack and Other Ozark Folk Tales¹ Vance Randolph recorded 297 stories almost verbatim from Missouri and Arkansas storytellers. Three begin "Once upon a time," the others begin "One time." In Benjamin A. Botkin's A Treasury of American Folklore² nine stories begin "Once upon a time." Botkin, however, unlike Chase who names his informants and describes the situational backgrounds of the storytelling events, is not exact about identifying verbatim transcriptions from folk informants. Rather, his credits go more often to previously published tales, so that one cannot be sure when certain devices are inherent characteristics of the teller or when they have been added for literary effect. Even so, conscious addition itself reemphasizes the rhetorical value of a once-and-future folk formula. Ten of the thirty-six American Indian tales collected from native informants by Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin begin "Once upon a time," or "Once, long long ago," or "They say that once, long ago."³

¹(New York: Columbia University Press, 1952, 1957, and 1958).

²(New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1944).

³American Indian Mythology (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1968).

One Hawaiian tale, "Au-Ke-Le the Seeker," begins with a variation on the romantic mystery of pre-time, "In a land that is now lost . . . there lived a king. . . ." ¹ The formula introduces, without exception, stories that have to do with the imaginative and the marvelous. The rhetorical effect of the opening formula is such that while any story can begin "Once upon a time," if the formula is applied to sacred scripture or documented history, many readers with strong religious convictions or historical knowledge might take offense. ²

Myths and legends begin more specifically with a time or a place with such formulaic openings as, "In the beginning," or "In the time when their troubles began, the ordinary Cherokee did not at first understand that anything was wrong," ³ Or "All Alaska was once in a dim, gray twilight. . . . In those days there lived . . . a proud and powerful chief named Chet'l." ⁴ Other legends opening with

¹Padraic Colum, ed., Legends of Hawaii (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1937), p. 186.

²Alan Dundes, "On the Psychology of Legend," in American Folk Legend: A Symposium, ed. Wayland D. Hand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 23.

³Marriott and Rachlin, p. 147.

⁴Olive Beaupre Miller, ed., My Bookhouse, 6 vols. (Chicago: The Bookhouse for Children, 1928), vol. 3: "The Adventures of Yehl and the Beaming Maiden," Through Fairy Halls, p. 220.

an identifiable time period and the name of the protagonist proceed immediately with the thematic action, as the story of "Old Johnny Appleseed" illustrates:

A long time ago, when the early settlers of Ohio still lived in little log cabins in the midst of a lonely wilderness, there wandered from farm to farm a queer, but lovable old man. Johnny Appleseed he was called, though his real name was John Chapman. . . . Years ago, Johnny Appleseed had given away to a poor woman with a large and needy family, his home at Pittsburg Landing, and he had lashed two Indian canoes together and packed them to the rim with deer-skin bags of apple seeds.¹

In contrast to the benevolence of Johnny Appleseed, a legend concerning a tyrannical judge in the Old West begins:

In the early cattle trail days, when Oklahoma was known as Indian Territory, a certain Federal Judge, one Parker, was known for the severity of his decisions. In a cow-camp brawl of a passing trail herd, a Mexican cook shot and killed a cowboy in a dispute over a game of cards. Friends of the cowboy wanted to lynch the cook at once, but one of their number, the trail-herd boss, persuaded them to wait until he had seen Judge Parker about the matter.²

Such legends have what Alan Dundes calls "a temporal dimension."³ Those formulas which locate the tale in history and geography and identify with a specific personality establish a rhetorical credibility. Alexander H. Krappe

¹Ibid., vol. 2: Up One Pair of Stairs, p. 352.

²John A. Lomax, "Judge Parker's Sentence," in A Treasury of American Folklore, ed. B. A. Botkin (New York: Crown Publishers, 1944), p. 147.

³"On the Psychology of Legend," p. 22.

calls these formulaic openings "almost sacrosanct . . . familiar to all."¹

Once the exordium introduces and identifies the tale type, the narratio, or factual background, follows in the form of an initial situation wherein the characters are listed or the hero is introduced by name and often by status. Examples are:

There once lived a man who is said to have been good for nothing.²

Morris Slater was a big, dark-brown Alabama Negro bad man.³

Billy the Kid was the most famous desperado of the Southwest, a supergunman with a sure and deadly aim.⁴

Peter Tugg was a young man who lived on Middle Street in Boston with his pretty young wife and pretty little daughter Jenny.⁵

Structural details such as name and status, says Richard McKeon, "serve for the development of connections . . . by means of 'positions' and 'oppositions.'"⁶ In classical

¹The Science of Folklore (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc.; The Norton Library, 1965), p. 31.

²Mary L. Neff, "The First White Men," in Folklore of the Great West, ed. John Greenway (Palo Alto, Calif.: American West Publishing Company, 1969), p. 139.

³Maria Leach, ed., "Railroad Bill," The Rainbow Book of American Folk Tales and Legends (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Company, 1958), p. 175.

⁴*Ibid.*, "Billy the Kid," p. 171.

⁵*Ibid.*, "Never," p. 205.

⁶"The Arts of Invention and Arts of Memory: Creation and Criticism," Critical Inquiry 1 (June 1975): 730.

terms, positions and oppositions were the topics for invention, or the methods for developing the thesis of the subject matter. Aristotle compiled a list of twenty-eight methods for presenting a court case in order to persuade a judge. He also discussed at length four "common" topics useful to discourse of all kinds. Prevalent in the rhetoric of folk literature, the four are: (1) the possible and the impossible, (2) what has and what has not happened, (3) what will and what will not happen, and (4) size (the use of the device of magnifying or minimizing things).¹ The topics and the specifics of their development become elements of structure which create the form of discourse, whether it seeks to exhort, as Patrick Henry's "Liberty or Death" speech; or to defend, as the New York World's 1927 editorial appeal for the Sacco-Vanzetti case; or to commemorate, as Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. The same topics become structural devices for the form of fairytale, myth, or legend.

Just as Aristotle observed and categorized the structural functions of classical discourse, V. Propp has counted as many as thirty-one functions which structure the folktale in a consistently systematic order. After the exordium, the formulaic opening which identifies the form of the tale type as fairytale, myth, or legend, and after

¹The Rhetoric of Aristotle, trans. Lane Cooper (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1932), pp. 142-43.

the narratio, or introduction of major characters and situation, the functions follow in systematic order:

1. One of the members of a family absents himself from home.
2. An interdiction is addressed to the hero.
3. The interdiction is violated.
4. The villain makes an attempt at reconnaissance.
5. The villain receives information about his victim.
6. The villain attempts to deceive his victim in order to take possession of him or his belongings.
7. The victim submits to deception and thereby unwittingly helps his enemy.
8. The villain causes harm or injury to a member of a family.
9. Misfortune or lack is made known; the hero is approached with a request or command; he is allowed to go or he is dispatched.
10. The seeker agrees to or decides upon counteraction.
11. The hero leaves home.
12. The hero is tested, interrogated, attacked, etc., which prepares the way for his receiving either a magical agent or helper.
13. The hero reacts to the actions of the future donor.
14. The hero acquires the use of a magical agent.
15. The hero is transferred, delivered, or led to the whereabouts of an object of search.
16. The hero and villain join in direct combat.
17. The hero is branded or marked.
18. The villain is defeated.

19. The initial misfortune or lack is liquidated.
20. The hero returns.
21. The hero is pursued.
22. Rescue of the hero from pursuit.
23. The hero, unrecognized, arrives home or in another country.
24. A false hero presents unfounded claims.
25. A difficult task is proposed to the hero.
26. The task is resolved.
27. The hero is recognized.
28. The false hero or villain is exposed.
29. The hero is given a new appearance.
30. The villain is punished.
31. The hero is married and ascends the throne.¹

According to Propp's list of functions the folktale develops from either a villainy or a deficiency (called a "lack") through various functions to a reward, a liquidation of misfortune, an escape, or marriage.² Any of the Jack tales, Richard Chase's collection of American variants of an Old World cycle of stories centering around a boy named Jack, illustrates these functions. In "Jack and Old Tush,"³ Jack is holed up in a lumber camp one cold winter

¹Pp. 25-65.

²Ibid., p. 92.

³Pp. 72-73.

night with just enough meal to make a few ash cakes (lack). Old Tush, an "old, slobbery hairy man, looked like a gorilla," breaks into the cabin and steals the cakes (villainy). Jack pursues him through briars and cornstalks to his lair, an underground cave (pursuit). There a pretty girl gives Jack clothes, a sword, a wishbone (reward). With the sword he beheads Old Tush (escape); with the wishbone he wishes that he and the girl were married and that he had a house and a thousand dollars. His wishes are granted (liquidation of misfortune and marriage). "Last I heard," says the folk informant in an American equivalent of the "lived happily ever after" formulaic closing, "they was down there doing well--had three kids."

Although any given tale may use any number of Propp's thirty-one functions, some elements are commonplaces in all tales. Certain pairs of functions, like Siamese twins, are inevitably joined, among them, "interdiction and its violation; an attempt to find out something and the transmission of that information; deception by the villain and the hero's reaction; fight and victory; and marking and recognition."¹

Interdictions and violations include forbidden alliances and secret marriages, orders not to enter a room or open a box, and the entering or opening. Perhaps the

¹Propp, p. 109.

best known example in American folklore is Br'er Rabbit's reverse psychology in begging Br'er Fox not to throw him into the briar patch (interdiction) and Br'er Fox's violation of that interdiction. The Hawaiian legend, "The Waters of Kane,"¹ a variation of "Au-Ke-Le the Seeker," is one of many which illustrate almost all of the pairs as structural elements of form. Aukela, the younger brother, is forbidden to join his older brother on an ocean voyage but he goes anyway (interdiction and violation). He is tricked into a fist fight and emerges triumphant (fight and victory). The oldest brother sends him in search of water into a place where he knows Aukela will be hopelessly lost. When Aukela does escape, however, he forgives the traitor and with magical powers tries to protect him from disaster (deception by the villain and the hero's reaction). After all of the crew but Aukela drown, the goddess of a nearby island recognizes Aukela's magic talisman and supernatural powers (marking and recognition), and marries him, only to impose further interdictions if he is to restore the lives of his brothers.

In folklore other not-so-inevitable halves are sometimes paired: kidnapping with counter-kidnapping, and

¹Mary Kawena Pukui and Caroline Curtis, collectors, The Waters of Kane and Other Legends of the Hawaiian Islands (Honolulu: The Kamehameh Schools Press, 1951), pp. 3-22.

recovery by helpers or instantaneous return or magical powers. Dualism, like the two-by-two march onto the Ark, has its practical purposes. It supplies balance in form and plot, and it often provides a basis for didacticism. If, in the folktale, as in life, there is poverty and crime, there is also good and evil, reward and punishment.¹ Such polarity, creating intense contrasts in motivations and actions (McKeon's positions and oppositions) accounts for the fact that in folktales and ballads only two characters appear in a given scene. If others are present at all, they are only onlookers.²

More obvious to non-analytical readers than the use of two's in folklore is the use of three's. There are three brothers, three wishes, three attempts, etc. In a vast collection of Mormon saints' legends one finds tales of the three Nephites, disciples to whom Jesus granted eternal moral life so that they might minister to the hospitable and faithful on earth. Their appearance in a village or home or along the road is usually unremarkable. They take on the guise of itinerant workmen or humble travelers looking for a lodging for the night. Wherever they are

¹Krappe, p. 32.

²Axel Olrick, "Epic Laws of Folk Narrative," in The Study of Folklore, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965), p. 135.

accepted, they perform some miracle--healing the sick, preventing a lynching, rescuing a fellow traveler from hazards of the road. They arrive under ordinary circumstances, but they disappear miraculously once their mission is accomplished.¹

Trebling, a practice which American folklore inherits from classical and European tradition, is not only a conventional element of structure but a device for rhetorical climb or progress. The third brother triumphs, the third attempt succeeds, the third time is a charm. In "The Water of Kane" there are many brothers, but only three are named and have speaking parts. Aukela is given three interdictions if he will obtain the water of life, and he makes three attempts at learning to fly. Similarly, in the Jack tales, Jack is the third brother, seemingly simple, abused by the others. In "Jack and the Talking Crow"² Jack strikes three bargains, each more valuable than the previous ones, until he becomes wealthy and in oxymoronic simple cleverness causes his brothers to lose all they have.

Pairs and trebles exist in and migrate from European folklore; but in North American Indian lore, four is the significant if not magic number, chiefly because the Indians

¹Austin E. Fife, "The Legend of the Three Nephites Among the Mormons," Journal of American Folklore 53 (1940): 1-49.

²Chase, American Folk Tales and Songs, pp. 79-86.

depend upon a world divisible by four: the seasons, the directions (known as the Four Corners), and the portions of a day or a life. A Northwest Indian legend of Temlaham explains emblems on a totem pole and natural phenomena in terms of four images. A Man-from-Sky in radiant garments which caught the sun "like licking tongues of fire" came to earth and kidnapped an Indian princess. He took her to his home, but he returned to earth in a fog many years later with the princess and their grownup family. When the fog lifted, the neighbors saw only a star moving off, leaving four ready-made houses, each marked by a luminous crest, a Sun, a star, a Rainbow, and a Thunderbird. The family was equipped with a power called an "earthquake box" which could be used locally or for complete annihilation.¹

In addition to the elements of four in time and nature, four character types inhabit Indian folktales: the Culture Hero, the Trickster, the Spider Grandmother, and the Twin War Gods. The Hero represents the best of man's strength and wisdom. He is the protector of women and children, the guide for youths, and the intermediary between man and the Power Above. The Trickster, a troublemaker, exhibits man's most despicable characteristics and is used to explain natural phenomena or to point a moral. In some

¹Christie Harris, Sky Man on the Totem Pole (New York: Atheneum, 1975), pp. 3-5.

Indian lore, there is a Trickster-Hero who displays traits from both types but who benefits man or defeats death.¹ In Navajo and other tribal lore, the Trickster-Hero has the identity of Ma'i, or Coyote, who is both creator and buffoon, a taboo breaker and a laughingstock, who possesses power to bring fire and to cause death.² According to the lore of the Kaibabits of Arizona, Coyote is a lineal descendant of the first people on earth.³ Grandmother Spider is the personification of Womankind. Old, she can, for a purpose, transform herself into a young and beautiful woman. Wise and kind, she directs men's destinies and lures the wicked to the underworld. Her grandsons are the War Twins, one good, one bad. Virgin-born of supernatural parentage, they are young but can become old quite suddenly. They are creatures of action and killers of enemies. To the Hopis the twins are the north and south poles, keeping the world balanced on its axis and representing the dual nature of man.⁴

¹Marriott and Rachlin, p. 15.

²Barre Toelken, "Ma'i Joldloshi: Legendary Styles and Navajo Myth," in American Folk Legend, ed. Wayland Hand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 203-11.

³Charles M. Skinner, American Myths & Legends, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1903), 2:145.

⁴Marriott and Rachlin, p. 15.

Rhetorical form and structure exist not only in the Anglo-American fairytale and the Indian myth, but in local legends, belief tales, trickster and tall tales, hero and saints' legends, most of which have a formal basis in some sort of conflict. Jan Brunvand identifies local legends as "those which are closely associated with a specific place, either by their names, their geographic features, or their histories,"¹ even though some are migratory, the themes and essences turning up in other areas as other local legends. The tale can be "proved" by a date or an identifiable time period: "Just after the Civil War," or "When the settlers built the fort." The form is a cause-and-effect usually having to do with a misdeed punished or an error rectified, or in the case of place names, with a reason for being. "The Face on the Panes," from Michigan, and "The Face in the Window," from Alabama, are two examples of stories with a common motif told as historical events in separate American locales. The face on the panes was that of Margaret Henderson, daughter of a fur trader, whose father caught her in the act of eloping with her Indian lover. Summoning help from his neighbors, he bound the young man and flung him into the lake to drown. From that day forward, Margaret sat in her room, staring out the window. When she died,

¹p. 96.

says the legend, her "still, waiting face had somehow been photographed on the panes, and that pictured glass is preserved in a Detroit household to this day."¹

"The Face in the Window" tells of Henry Wells, a black man of Carrollton, Alabama, jailed for arson, who was taken out to be lynched. From the moment of his arrest he protested his innocence. Just before the mob arrived, lightning struck, etching the likeness of his face, scar, terror, and all, on the windowpane of his garret cell in the courthouse. Later, when the sheriff had the pane removed, the face appeared on the new glass. When a new courthouse was built the face appeared on a pane in the same location in the new building.

Mildred Barnett Mitcham [Nelson] accounts for thirteen versions of the Alabama tale, some indicating crimes other than arson, some naming different criminals, not all of them Negroes. Dates of the event range from 1870 to 1910, or vaguely, "Half a century ago. . . ." But all are constructed on essentially the same form of conflict and cause-and-effect.²

If one local legend serves to prove the innocence of a victim, another might "prove" the guilt of a malefactor.

¹Skinner, pp. 145-46.

²"A Tale in the Making: The Face in the Window," Southern Folklore Quarterly 12 (December 1948): 241-57.

In a New England tale, "Micah Rood's Apple Tree,"¹ the battered body of an old Jewish peddler was found beneath an apple tree in the orchard of Micah Rood. Investigations turned up no assailant, but in the spring the tree's blossoms were bright red instead of the natural delicate pink. In the fall, when the tree bore its fruit, every apple had a blood-red center. Neighbors, discovering the phenomenon, called local officials who went to the Rood farmhouse, only to find Micah dead. Never could anyone prove that the farmer murdered the old peddler, but the next year the tree bore only shrivelled apples the shape of the old man's head.

Closely allied with the local legend is the personal or hero legend which develops around the life, times, and heroics of an individual. Cycles of ancient tales immortalize such heroes as Robin Hood and King Arthur. In America heroic legend cycles have had less time to evolve; nevertheless, an impressive collection of tales has developed around Washington, Lincoln, Davy Crockett, Johnny Appleseed, Jesse James, and others. Diverse as the heroes are in time, place, and personality, the legends concerning them conform to a rhetorical pattern. Most American heroes, democratically opposing the classical definition, are humble-born persons who, by the Yankee ethic of hard work and honesty,

¹Lewis A. Taft, Profile of Old New England: Yankee Legends, Tales, and Folklore (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1965), pp. 175-78.

achieve a stature of greatness but are never too intent on the climb to help a fellow being. The story of the young George Washington and the cherry tree has been denied by historians and debunked by skeptics, but it cannot be obliterated from American folklore. Folktales also evolve around the adult Washington. During a critical time of the Revolution, General Washington wondered why a company of soldiers had come almost to a standstill in the road. Riding to the head of the company, he saw two young privates struggling to remove a fallen log from the passageway while a third man stood back offering suggestions. "Why don't you lend a hand?" Washington asked. "Sir," the bystander said, drawing himself up with great dignity, "I am a corporal." Nodding as if he understood perfectly, the General dismounted, joined the privates, and helped to tug the log to the side of the road.

Lincoln is perhaps the most representative of American folk heroes. His rise from log cabin to White House provides material for folktales about the omnivorous reader who left a borrowed book in a chink in the walls and worked long extra hours to pay for it when rain ruined it, or about the young merchant-postmaster who walked miles to return money he had overcharged a poor customer. In "Two Little Birds and a Great Man" Lincoln rides with three companions along a country road after a spring rain. They come across

a pair of robins fluttering and chirping and see two scrawny, featherless chicks lying in the mud. Three lawyers ride on, commenting that two fewer robins would make little difference in the world, but Lincoln stops, gently lifts the baby birds, climbs the tree, and returns them to the nest. "I never could have slept tonight if I had left them," he said as he continued his ride to court.¹

John Chapman, better known as the folk hero Johnny Appleseed, was also kind to animals. He would not rob a bee tree completely, but take only as much honey as he needed at the moment and leave the rest for the bees. He would not kill a rattlesnake, declaring snakes were only dangerous when in danger themselves. He once rescued a wolf from a trap and doctored its wounds. Like a grateful dog, the wolf followed him for years. His compassion was not limited to animals, however. One tale tells of Johnny's running twenty-six miles and back in twenty-four hours to bring aid to the people of Mansfield, Ohio, who were threatened by an Indian massacre.²

These didactic biographical episodes grow in hyperbolic proportions as exempla of the Golden Rule or the "Go and do likewise" admonition. Or, in the case of villain-heroes such as Jesse James, who supposedly robbed from the

¹Olive Beaupre Miller, 2:298-99.

²Maria Leach, "Johnny Appleseed," pp. 28-32.

rich and gave to the poor, or Billy the Kid who murdered to avenge his father's death, the tales may point a sociological moral saying the protagonist, a sympathetic victim of circumstances, had a heart of gold given to performing good deeds.

Saints' legends, ghost stories, and the urban belief tale are structured by elements of the supernatural. Saints' legends have to do with the marvelous in a formulaic arrangement. Beginning with a time and a place, they tell of a poor but devout person or community who is visited by a mortal, unrecognizable manifestation of a saint who, in return for hospitality or devotion, rewards the host and then vanishes mysteriously. One such story, "The White Bread on the White Cloth," tells of a young couple, John and Isabella Price, who lived in a one-room house in Salt Lake City, Utah. Their infant son was critically ill. All their prayers and medical attention had not helped the child. One night a stranger came to the door seeking lodging. There was no extra bed, but Mr. Price invited the man in to warm himself by the fire. The baby, who had been fretful for days, sank into a peaceful sleep. Both of the Prices, who had been determined to stay awake to watch the stranger and to tend the ill child, fell asleep too. During the night, Mrs. Price awoke with a start. She saw the stranger sitting at the table covered with a gleaming white

cloth, eating fresh white bread. The next morning, the stranger left without the breakfast the couple offered. Mr. Price followed him out the door; but before he could bid the man Godspeed, the stranger vanished. Inside, the baby awoke, apparently well and playful. Only then did the couple realize their visitor had been one of the three Nephites, the spiritual beings in mortal form who bring health and often prosperity to worthy families who welcome them into their homes.¹ Other versions of the legend tell of a Nephite who cures a small girl's meningitis and an older woman's abdominal cancer.²

A saints' legend from Santa Fe, New Mexico, tells of the Sisters of Loretto who founded a school for young ladies. They hired an architect to design a chapel, but before he completed his work, he was killed by a jealous husband. The nuns were left with a partially finished building where no allowance had been made for a stairway to the choir loft. Local workmen were unable to design or build a staircase in the minute space available. The Sisters made a movena to St. Joseph, patron saint of

¹Hector Lee, "The White Bread on the White Cloth," in Buying the Wind, ed. Richard Dorson (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), pp. 505-506.

²Fife, "The Legend of the Three Nephites"; and Wallace Stegner, "One of Them," in A Treasury of Western Folklore, ed. Benjamin A. Botkin (New York: Crown Publishers, 1951), pp. 683-87.

carpenters. On the ninth day an old man leading a burro appeared at the door of the convent and offered to build the stairway. In a matter of months he completed his work, described by Alice Bullock as "a double helix--two complete turns of 360 degrees each--with no central support . . . nor a single nail in the entire structure. There are thirty-three steps, one for each year in the earthly life of Jesus."¹ To celebrate the completion and to honor the carpenter, the Sisters prepared a dinner, but the carpenter had disappeared. No one could find him. Not even the lumber yards could trace him. He had not bought supplies from them. In fact, no one knew what kind of wood he had used except that it was not native to northern New Mexico.

Saints' legends rhetorically presuppose a belief based upon religious faith of both teller and audience, but ghost stories and "belief" legends, while told sincerely and seriously by some narrators as fact, and received by some audiences in the same spirit, depend as often, particularly in the twentieth century, on a willing suspension of disbelief. Their form, therefore, is essential to the rhetoric as the tale builds by Aristotle's pattern of rising action and climax toward a dramatic dénouement. An example of such dramatic form is the "jump" story, that which is calculated

¹Living Legends of the Santa Fe Country (Santa Fe: The Sunstone Press, 1972), pp. 113-16.

to command attention by building suspense until its abrupt ending, when the narrator springs a surprise, causing his listeners to "jump" in either terror or delight. A type of party game, the jump story often tells of a theft, usually from a grave. In the night, the thief is awakened by a faraway, ghostly voice demanding the return of the object. "Give me back my golden arm," or "my bloody biscuit."

Richard Chase records a jump story called "The Big Toe." A boy, hoeing potatoes whacked off some creature's toe. He put it in his pocket, took it home, washed it, and dropped it in the beanpot. "He liked meat in his beans," says the storyteller. In one of the three baits of beans he ate that night was that big toe, so he ate it too. Later that night, as the family sat around the fire, they heard a voice from the distance calling,

Wha wow woo woe!
Where's my big toe?

The mama and the daddy jump under the bed, but the boy ignores the cry, though he trembles and shivers as the voice draws nearer and grows louder. At an unexpected moment, the storyteller flings the imaginary object back and shouts, "You got it!"¹

Another version of the jump story is "The Handsome Lover," reported by Estelle Broadrick of Cottontown, Tennessee:

¹American Folk Tales and Songs, pp. 57-59.

A woman went out on the porch of her lonely farmhouse and cried, "Come on, my handsome lover." A deep voice answered from the forest, "I'm coming." She returned to the house but in a few minutes went out again and called, "Come on, my handsome lover." The deep voice answered from the pasture, "I'm coming." Again she went inside and again she returned to call. The deep voice answered from the garden gate.

"Even as a child," says Mrs. Broadrick, "I wondered why the handsome lover was so slow." Finally, the woman made her last call and received her answer: "'I'm here!'"--and a big black bear ate her up."¹

The rhetorical effect of a jump story depends essentially on the narrator's delivery; yet the form establishes an expected surprise, paradoxical as it is, that accounts for the popularity of the tale type in all cultures. Less frivolous than the jump tale, ghost stories and urban belief tales are more rhetorically effective as they deal with pity and terror. The ghost story wherein the revenant, the returner, haunts the scene of his crime or of his death is a widespread tale type with a common structural pattern. "The Ghostly Hitchhiker" is a popular example. Someone, often a young man, is driving late at night along a country road by a lake and picks up a girl thinly clad in soaking clothes; or he is driving in the city and finds the girl in difficulties at a busy intersection. He gives her his coat to wear, takes her to her destination, and, attracted to her,

¹Estelle D. Broadrick, personal letter, 1 February 1973.

returns the next day to continue the acquaintance. When he inquires for her at her home, he is informed by her mother, her father, or her landlady that the poor girl died years before, drowned in the lake where the man found her or killed at the intersection. When he insists she was alive only the night before, he is directed to her grave where he finds his coat hanging neatly across the headstone bearing a long-ago date of death. Maria Leach reports that a doctor in New York found forty-nine versions of the tale in the New York State College Folklore Archives.¹ Countless other versions exist across the United States, including one from the White Rock area of Dallas, Texas, which makes the news and features columns every few years.

Teller and listener may or may not literally believe the ghost story, but the urban belief tale gets its name from the fact that someone, usually the teller, does believe it. Brunvand defines the type as "contemporary stories in a city setting which are reported as true individual experiences, but which have traditional variants that indicate their legendary character."² Often the narrator claims to be an eyewitness to the event or to know personally a participant. A belief legend well-known in the Middle West is

¹"The Ghostly Hitchhiker, p. 198.

²Brunvand, p. 90.

"The Hook."¹ It concerns a dating couple parked in a lover's lane. They hear on the car radio that a maniac with a hook for a hand has escaped from a local asylum. A man suddenly appears and demands entry to the car. The boy starts up the ignition and speeds away. When he later opens the door to escort the girl to her house, he finds a hook caught in a crevice between car door and window glass. In another version, sorority members, frightened that the Hook will break into the house, bolt themselves in one room and refuse to answer when someone pounds against the door during the night. The next morning they find one of their sisters dead in the hall, either stabbed by a hook or killed by fright and shock.

Another belief legend, told by two different people separately and at intervals of several months, concerns a woman driving alone on a super highway. A truck "tail-gates" her for miles even though she, attempting to lose him, slows down to let him pass or speeds up to outrun him. Finally when she is forced to stop for gasoline, the truck stops too. Before she can dash into the station to seek help from an attendant, the truck driver jumps from his cab and shouts, "Lady, I've been following you for your own

¹Linda Dégh, "The 'Belief Legend' in Modern Society: Form, Function, and Relationship to Other Genres," in American Folk Legend: A Symposium, ed. Wayland D. Hand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), pp. 55-68.

protection. There's a man crouched on the floor of your back seat." Both versions of the tale were essentially the same in details of form and content although one teller knew the story to be true because it happened to a friend of hers traveling in northern New Mexico, and the other verified the facts as they happened to a woman she knew who was traveling on Interstate 35 in Texas.¹ Belief legends of this sort are based on the innocent's fear of molestation. They offer Aristotle's "inartificial proof," the testimony of eye-witnesses. They are didactic warnings: "Stay out of parked cars," and "Women should not travel great distances alone."

An archetypal fear of snakes makes for an abundance of herpetological folklore, including a contemporary "migratory" urban belief tale. Sometime in 1973 or 1974, a collector of folktales heard that a woman in Dallas, Texas, tried on a coat in a small shop that specialized in "manufacturer's samples" at discount prices. She decided against purchasing the coat, but as she took it off, she felt something prick her arm. Later in the day her arm swelled painfully, and she became so ill she had to be hospitalized. In a short time, someone else shopping in the same store discovered a rattlesnake caught between the lining and the

¹Interviews with Mrs. Sammie O. Nichols, Carlsbad, New Mexico, 1972; and Mrs. Fay Huckeba, Dallas, Texas, 1973.

outer fabric of the coat. The story was repeated at numerous gatherings, but no one knew the injured woman nor at what shop the tragedy had occurred.

In November 1975, the folklorist received a letter from a friend in Flagstaff, Arizona, lamenting the fact that she could not find fabric she needed for a quilt lining. "Our Hancock's Fabric Shop went out of business a number of years ago, but not before someone bought a rattlesnake in a bolt of material." Thinking she might be on to a variation on the snake-in-the-sleeve tale, the folklorist wrote for more information: did the correspondent know who "bought" the snake? did the story make the paper? Again there was more hearsay than documentation involved in the story. Delighted at perhaps making a folk "discovery" the folklorist repeated both versions of the tale to a Dallas friend, who, as soon as she heard a snake had been discovered in Flagstaff said "Oh, no--that did not happen in Arizona! That happened right here at the Hancock's in my neighborhood." Again the collector asked for documentation and again she was told, "Well, I don't know when this was--several years ago at least. Ask Elizabeth Reed. She told me, and I think she heard it from a saleslady there." Since it is not likely that a nationwide chain of fabric stores specializes in snakes among the polyesters, one can detect

a development of another urban belief tale and a textbook example of the rhetoric of folk literature.¹

The tall tale, another type that often depends for effect upon hearsay or an eye-witness account, is not didactic, nor does it inspire fear. It is told for pure enjoyment, the teller's as well as the listener's. The narrator is usually a poker-faced regional character who, for persuasive reasons, may put himself into the tale as a participant. Strickly an American type from genuine oral tradition, the success of the tale, says Jan Brunvand,

does not depend on belief in details . . . but rather on a willingness to lie and to be lied to while keeping a straight face. The humor of these tales consists of telling an outrageous falsehood in the sober accents of a truthful story. The best tall tales are only improvements upon reality; smart animals are smarter, big mosquitoes are bigger, bad weather is made worse.²

The tall tale's rhetorical value is that it gives pleasure because of the storyteller's delivery and the story's form. The narrator begins with a basic situation common to his listeners, one with which they can identify--pride in family or pets: "Had me a little dog once, was the best rabbit dog you ever saw"; weather conditions: "One winter we sure had a big snow"; friendship: "I was beginning to get a bit worried about Good 'Lige, since I hadn't seen him for some

¹Peggy Harris, personal letter, 19 November 1975; and interview with Florence H. Walraven, 3 January 1976.

²P. 116.

three weeks."¹ After the introductory commonplace situation the story builds swiftly by preposterous events culminating in a surprise. A tall tale from Colorado possesses all the characteristics of form. It opens with a situation Coloradans (and others) identify with: "In the winter of 1877, the miners in Leadville ate so much venison the tallow became caked to the roof of their mouths. They could not taste their coffee and other beverages." The preposterous solution was to wire bundles of pitch splinters to their heads and set fire to it. The heat melted the tallow, but left ninety-seven per cent of the miners baldheaded. Along came an enterprising man with a case of hair tonic, but before he could make delivery, he tripped while crossing a stream and dropped two jugs which broke when they hit the rocks in the creek bed. The next preposterous situation and climax to the tale is that the

fishermen were amazed to find they caught fur bearing trout in the stream. The anglers found that by going down to the creek on Saturday afternoon, wearing a white coat, sticking a red, white, and blue barber pole in the bank, brandishing a copy of the Police Gazette and a pair of scissors, and yelling, "Next," they had no difficulty in getting all the fish they wanted.²

¹Chase, American Folk Tales and Songs, pp. 97, 98, and 101.

²Amanda M. Ellis, "Fur-Bearing Trout," in Legends and Tales of the Rockies (Colorado Springs, Colo.: The Dentan Printing Co., 1954), p. 47.

A tall tale is nothing but a folk joke. According to Freud, as a joke fools and tricks the hearer it evokes a pleasurable and a rhetorical response.¹

In the tall tale, native humor is a cohesive structural device as it is in the trickster tales, where it combines with the Aristotelian value for terror and pity for rhetorical purposes. Conflict, too, is a structural event in this tale type. As Frances Utley says,

The basic domestic conflicts, deeply rooted in the psyche, the elements of social mobility, are real no matter what covert wishes accompany them; wishes themselves make man live and move. Pessimism cannot destroy the truth that some men are better within than appearance makes them, or that some men can move beyond their childhood status no matter how hard the challenge from outmoded social structures and sibling hangups.²

To illustrate the organizational pattern of conflict and form in the trickster tale, Polly Pope analyzes the "Bungling Host" tale found in all North American culture areas.³ The basic plot concerns a host who provides food by magic means, either by diving for fish, transforming wood into bread, or cutting meat from himself. Later, when the

¹Holland, p. 131.

²Introduction to Max Lüthi, Once Upon a Time: On the Nature of Fairy Tales, trans. Lee Chadeayne and Paul Gottwald (New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Company, 1970), p. 18.

³"Toward a Structural Analysis of North American Trickster Tales," Southern Folklore Quarterly 31 (September 1967): 275-86.

trickster, using the same methods, tries to return the hospitality, he nearly dies. Action in the story always involves interaction. Pope calls any action which advances the plot a structural function called an event, but an event must be undertaken by a major character acting or interacting with another character. Thus the framework of the trickster tale can be reduced to a formula: Event 1 (the primary action) + Event 2 (the imitative action and its result), or $E1 + E2$. A third event ($E3$) can take either of two forms: it repeats $E1$ or it involves another interaction between the first two characters, but the presence of another actor leads to $E4$. In other words, as Axel Ulrick observes, folk narratives feature only two major characters. The appearance of a third with any significant part to play in the tale portends another development of the tale or a new tale altogether. In the Bungling Host story, for example, the Host and the Trickster are the major characters. In the first interaction, the Host provides a spectacular meal for himself or his guest ($E1$). If he repeats the action to provide "seconds" we have $E3$. When the guest invites the host to share his meal or when he imitates the first action, $E2$, inevitably a disaster, takes place. The story may end there, or it may continue. For example, the host may send for a doctor to treat the injured trickster, but as the doctor, instead of healing, interacts by either killing or

banishing the character, E4 develops. Events do not necessarily occur in numerical sequential order. E1 (basic interaction) + E2 (the trickster tricked) exists in all tales of the type. E3 and E4 vary or do not appear at all; their presence or absence is typical of a particular culture group. "How and Why: Don't be Greedy Story"¹ from the Comanches is typical of the E1 + E2 pattern. Old Man Coyote, the trickster, watched an owl, despised symbol of death, pluck his right eye out, toss it into the air, and hold out his claw. As the eye fell back into its socket, sweet dried meat fell into the claw. Coyote asked if anyone could do the trick. "Only those who have the power," said the owl. The challenge of the statement creates an interaction between the owl and Coyote--E1. Certain that he could do anything an owl could do, Coyote plucked out his own eye, tossed it in the air, and held out his paw. The eye caught in a tree branch and nothing appeared in his hand. Angry, Coyote pulled out his other eye and sent it after the first. It too caught in the tree for the owl to eat, leaving Coyote to crawl about below--E2 or the trickster tricked.

Trickster tales abound in American folklore either as variants of European lore or as indigenous stories of the

¹Marriott and Rachlin, pp. 131-32.

American Indians. "The Gingerbread Man" is New England's version of an old johnny-cake trickster story. Br'er Fox and Br'er Rabbit tricked and out-tricked one another in Negro folklore long before Joel Chandler Harris fixed them in the Uncle Remus collection. Coyote is the familiar trickster tricked in Indian stories. J. Frank Dobie retells the tale of the coyote who meets two sheep and threatens to eat them.¹ In antiphonal interdictions the sheep tell him, "Don't eat me, I'm too thin," or "Don't eat me, I'm too fat." The coyote proposes a contest between them. He draws a line equidistant between a thorn bush and a mesquite tree and sends a sheep to each place (E1). On signal, they are to run toward the line. The first to cross it will be the "winner," in truth, his victim. He gives the signal, expecting the sheep to kill one another as they butt heads at the line, thereby supplying double rations of mutton for his feast. Instead, the sheep race toward the mark, ram Coyote on both sides, and addle him (E2). By the time he regains his equilibrium they are long since gone to the safety of the fold.

In "The Travels of a Fox,"² a fox leaves a bag with a bee in it with a woman for safekeeping. He orders

¹"Coyote Between Sheep," in The Voice of the Coyote (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press; A Bison Book, 1961), pp. 343-44.

²Clifton Johnson, ed., The Oak Tree Fairy Book (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1921), pp. 27-33.

her not to open the bag, but she does (interdiction and violation). The bee escapes. When the fox returns, he takes the woman's rooster to replace the bee and puts it in the bag. Event 1 is repeated from house to house as the next woman lets the rooster escape and must supply a pig instead. In the course of his travels the fox acquires an ox and finally a little boy. He leaves the bag this time with a woman who is baking a cake. The little boy smells it and cries out. The woman rescues him and puts a dog in his place in the bag (E4--a new character with a new interaction). At the end of the day the fox prepares to eat his trophy but when he opens the bag the dog jumps out and eats the fox instead (E2).

The existence of so many versions of the trickster tale is a tribute to its popularity, but as Pope points out, the existence also indicates a rhetorical value because it is "a matter of form persisting through time. The stability is evident."¹

In the tales the explanatory element is repetitive and often serves as an end marker. End markers in American folklore, for the most part, are less formulaic than the "They lived happily ever after" of European tales. At times, the end marker rounds out the story with an explanatory statement, such as "Grandmother Spider and her Half

¹p. 285.

Boys will always remain in living memory,"¹ or "They took Mr. Fox to town, and they tried him on Pretty Polly's evidence, and he was hung."² More often, however, the story comes to an abrupt halt, or the end marker, strong evidence of the oral tradition, indicates that the narrator does not know how to get his characters out of their predicaments. "Don't Be Greedy Story," for example, tells of Old Man Coyote's crawling around the tree, calling for his eyes, and ends with flat finality: "That's the end of the story." Other end markers are "And right then I left and ain't heard from 'em since"; "Well, they fin'llly went back downstairs and got to playin' around and one thing and another-- and they're at it yet, I reckon."³

The folksinger, no less than the folktale narrator, works within a conventional framework whose structural elements are traditional verse patterns, subject matter, and compositional techniques. So restrictive and familiar is this framework that the singer, even in improvising, relies on oral transmission more often than oral re-creation.⁴ In other words, the singer may vary content or stylistic

¹Marriott and Rachlin, p. 89.

²Chase, American Folk Tales and Songs, p. 42.

³Ibid., pp. 45 and 86.

⁴Roger D. Abrahams and George Foss, eds., Anglo-American Folksong Style (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1968), p. 12.

devices to supplement a faulty memory or to adapt to a particular type of audience, but rarely does he attempt to create new songs. A clear sense of organization contributes significantly to the folksong's esthetic and rhetorical effect. As Américo Paredes observes, recognizable formal patterns are necessary to oral poetry, which, at least originally, cannot rely, as sophisticated poetry does, on the visual effect of lines arranged on a page. "The end-stopped line, for example," he says, "is the only line possible in folk poetry because there is no other way to show that one has come to the end."¹

Folk poetry is rhymed verse from the oral tradition, such as lullabies, nursery rhymes, work songs, jump rope chants, autograph album sentiments, or others. For the purposes of studying rhetorical form in folk poetry, an analysis of its presence in the major folksong types, ballad, lyric, and dialogue song, each of which features individual conventions, may serve to identify traditional patterns in folk poetry generally.

Primary formal characteristics of all folk poetry are regularity and balance, rhetorical aids to the singer as well as to the audience, and provisions for classical proportion in form. In folk ballad, lyric, and dialogue song the basic formal unit is the stanza, generally a

¹Cited by Abrahams and Foss, p. 61.

grammatical statement, a sentence. The stanza is made up of stressed and unstressed syllables arranged in pairs, or dipods. As in the oldest English poetry, there are usually four stresses per line with a caesura in the middle of the lines. Abrahams and Foss say:

Developing this binary pattern, the lines generally group themselves in couplets (not necessarily rhymed), with an even stronger caesura between the lines. . . . The number of unstressed syllables coming between the stresses varies, and is commonly irregular, an arrangement called isochronic. Thus Anglo-American folksongs are binary, dispodic, and isochronic in verse composition.¹

The typical ballad meter, a line of four stresses alternating with a line of three, is the most common but not necessarily the consistent meter form in American folk song. The rhyme scheme is either abab or abcb.

Ballads, verse narratives, progress chronologically or consequentially from beginning to middle to end. Each element is immobile within the composition if the story is to make sense. There are no shifts in time, such as flashbacks, and everything is expressed in action.² In narrative folksong the conventional story pattern is itself a rhetorical element which, say Abrahams and Foss,

controls the movement of actions, emphasis, moral stance, and response to an entire piece. Conventional patterns function formally in creating stereotype

¹Ibid., p. 62.

²Ibid., p. 81.

situations which lead to repetitive story mold or lyric stance (the bereft pregnant girl, the man whose girl was left behind, the wandering pilgrim stranger, the dying or rejected lover, etc.).¹

The development of elements of a plot-line is a primary structure in the ballad form. "Frankie and Johnny" begins with narration from which the listener is led through logical steps of Frankie's finding Johnny in the bar, discovering his unfaithfulness, hiding her gun, hearing his plea for life, murdering him, and attending his funeral. In "Springfield Mountain," a young man begins his day's work on the farm where he is bitten by a snake. The narrative progresses through the day as he makes his fruitless attempts to reach home before he dies.²

Less prescriptively unified than the ballad with its narrative, folk lyrics are organized around a situation unrelated to a cause-effect or a time quality order. Occasionally a common theme or image provides a sense of coherence throughout the stanzas, but the placing of stanzas one before another tends to be arbitrary. Lyrics arrest or slow down a sense of time through repetition which delays action and may dull the audience's sense of anticipation.

¹Ibid., p. 33.

²Alan Lomax, ed., The Folk Songs of North America (Garden City, N. Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1960), pp. 13-14.

"The Lovely Ohio" is one of countless illustrations of lyric form:

Come all ye brisk young fellows who have a mind to roam,
All in some foreign counteree, a long way from home,
All in some foreign counteree along with me to go,
And we'll settle on the banks of the lovely Ohio.

Come all you pretty fair maids, spin us some yarn
To make us some nice clothing to keep ourselves warm,
For you can knit and sew my loves, while we do reap and
mow,
When we settle on the banks of the lovely Ohio,
When we settle on the banks of the lovely Ohio.

There are fishes in the river just fitted for our use,
There's tall and lofty sugar cane that will give to us
its juice,
There's every kind of game, my boys, also the buck and
doe,
When we settle on the banks of the lovely Ohio,
When we settle on the banks of the lovely Ohio.¹

Here stanzas are interchangeable; the third would just as well, perhaps better, structure the unity of the content if it were placed in the second position. The repetition serves to negate the sense of movement and progress although, stylistically, it intensifies the idea of settling down.

Another illustrative folk lyric is the humorous "The Sow Took the Measles":

How do you think I began in the world?
I got me a sow and sev'ral other things.

The sow took the measles and she died in the spring.

What do you think I made of her hide?
The very best saddle that you ever did ride.
Saddle or bridle or any such thing,

¹Ibid., p. 85.

The sow took the measles and she died in the spring.

What do you think I made of her nose?
The very best thimble that ever sewed clothes.
Thimble or thread or any such thing,

The sow took the measles and she died in the spring.

What do you think I made of her tail?
The best whup that ever sought sail.
Whup or whup socket, any such thing,

The sow took the measles and she died in the spring.

What do you think I made of her feet?
The very best pickles you ever did eat.
Pickles or glue or any such thing,

The sow took the measles and she died in the spring.¹

In this particular folksong, the singer uses anthyphora (asking questions and answering them)² as a structural device which creates a minute element of anticipation but which is destroyed by the very inanity of the chorus after its first instance. The order in which the stanzas are given in the text indicate their interchangeability; otherwise the singer might observe the rhetorical space order, nose before hide, feet before tail.

The questions in "The Sow Took the Measles," purely rhetorical, are used to involve the listener in a mock dialectic as the speaker talks to himself. The dialogue song, a combination of story song and lyric, focuses on

¹Ibid., p. 31.

²Lanham, p. 126.

confrontation between characters. Action is limited, usually by formulaic expressions such as commonplace phrases, although anticipation may be heightened by arguments, pleadings, and questions and answers between two recognizable speakers. Dialogue songs, however, do not always begin with the dialogue. They may be reports by one who has overheard the conversation or who was a speaker himself on another occasion. "Brisk Young Farmer" is a dialogue song introduced by narration:

I'll tell you about a brisk young farmer
Who was handsome and renowned;
He courted a fair and lovely maiden
And her name was Mollie Brown.

When his parents came to know this
They were angry and did say,
"We'll send him away across the widest ocean
Where he'll never see her face."

He sailed the ocean over and over,
Then came back to his native side;
Said, "If Mollie is alive and I can find her,
I will make her my lawful bride."

It was early in the morning
And he was walking down the street,
Thinking of his Mollie darling,
When his true love he chanced to meet.

It's "Good morning, good morning, my pretty fair maiden,
Good morning and could you ever fancy me."
"No, my fancy's on a brisk young farmer
Who has gone sailing on the sea."

"Oh, he's proper and very handsome,
He is also slim and tall;
His hair is dark and very curly,
His pretty blue eyes the best of all."

"I guess I saw him and I knew him.
Would his name be William Hall?"

I saw a cannon-ball shot through him
And in death I saw him fall."

Such screams, such screams from the pretty fair maiden,
Crying, "Alas, what shall I do;
We were parted, both broken hearted:
Now my heart will break in two."

"Cheer up, cheer up, my pretty fair maiden,
Cheer up, cheer up, for I am he.
Now to convince you of my story,
Here's the ring you once gave me."

They joined loving hands together
And to the church did go straight-way;
This young couple were lawfully married
Whether the parents were willing or no.¹

Like the folk narrative, folksongs have their formulaic openings and endings, or framing devices. Conventional openings set up temporal or spacial identities: "'Twas Christmas eve and the night so dark"; "Away in a long green valley"; "Come all you young fellows and listen to me." Each commonplace formula introduces a specific song type--historical narrative, sentimental eulogy, playful revelation, or advice and warning--and indicates what traditional elements will follow, building toward a rhetorical form of expectation and identification.²

Another structurally rhetorical device which implements expectation and identification is repetition. If repetition retards action in the folk lyric, it serves in

¹Roger D. Abrahams, ed., A Singer and Her Songs: Amelda Riddle's Book of Ballads (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1970).

²Abrahams and Foss, p. 33.

much folk poetry to comment upon or to intensify dramatic situations. Simple reiteration of conventional phrases and stanzas which fit changing situations is called "incremental repetition." As an aid to song construction, it is a formulaic pattern occurring in a song composed of several scenes with similar settings. Incremental repetition, therefore, is a unit of structure because, as Kenneth and Mary Clarke note, "Whereas the song seems to be standing still, we suddenly discover that we have been exposed to a story."¹ In "Home Came the Old Man,"² for example, alternate stanzas begin with "Oh home came the old man, and home came he," where he discovers a strange horse, coat, hat, shoes, and finally a strange head on his pillow. In intervening stanzas his wife calls him "You old fool, you blind fool, you dodderin' fool," and fibs to him about the objects he thinks he sees. But with the repetitions, the man develops as a stock character in folklore, either the wise fool or the simple wiseman.

Repetition for emphasis or as a mnemonic device is an element of style rather than form, but as it creates a sense of familiarity and anticipation it becomes a rhetorical structure within the folksong itself and between the

¹Introducing Folklore (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1963), p. 66.

²Chase, American Folk Tales and Songs, pp. 118-19.

singer and listener as well. These rhetorical functions include such simple formulas as repeating the first or last line of a stanza in an aabab or abcbb pattern. Interlinear repetitions, such as the repeating lines in "The Sow Caught the Measles," are called "burdens," conventional devices in folksongs. Sometimes they reinforce a theme or a description, as they do in "Home Came the Old Man." More often they merely serve to delay the dramatic action or to fill out the rhythm or sound pattern, in which case they are usually nothing but nonsense lines: "Lolly too dum, lolly too dum lay."

Single line reiterations may be mere incantations but a more common repetition is the refrain, a complete verse following each stanza. Rhetorically, the refrain can control the emotional effect of the song, an element of artistic appeal, but it is also significant to form and structure as it heightens or minimizes dramatic effects by extending the story or providing commentary on the action.¹

Repetition as a rhetorical formal element becomes also a creative device in the cumulative song, a composition on a given subject or theme to which subsequent singers add stanzas, usually improvising within the conventional form, prolonging the song ad infinitum. An example of the cumulative song is "The Old Man Who Came From Peedee":

¹Abrahams and Foss, p. 66.

There was an old man who came from Pee Dee,
 But ha! ha! ha! I wouldn't have him. (Burden)
 There was an old man who came from Pee Dee
 With his old grey beard and his shoes a-shovin'. (Burden)

My Mama told me to open the door,
 But ha! ha! ha! I wouldn't have him.
 I opened the door and he fell on the floor,
 With his old grey beard and his shoes a-shovin'.

My Mama told me to get him a seat,
 But ha! ha! ha! I wouldn't have him.
 I got him a seat and he stood on his feet
 With his old grey beard and his shoes a-shovin'.

My Mama told me to get him some tea,
 But ha! ha! ha! I wouldn't have him.
 I got him some tea and he hopped like a flea
 With his old grey beard and his shoes a-shovin'.

My Mama told me to put him to bed,
 But ha! ha! ha! I wouldn't have him.
 I put him to bed and he asked me to wed
 With his old grey beard and his shoes a-shovin'.

My Mama told me to bid him farewell,
 But ha! ha! ha! I wouldn't have him.
 I bid him farewell and he hopped in the well
 With his old grey beard and his shoes a-shovin'.¹

Between the first and last stanzas, any number can be added.
 Cumulative songs are examples of form independent of content.

Although briefer than the folktale or folk song, the folk proverb also adheres to an almost inflexible form which can be analyzed apart from content. Lanham defines "proverb" as "A short, pithy statement of a general truth, one that condenses into memorable form common experience."² As such,

¹Source unknown. This song has been sung in the Murray family for generations. This copy was furnished by my aunt, Fanny Murray Baxley, of Savannah, Georgia.

²Lanham, p. 83.

it is what Aristotle calls an enthymeme, "a kind of syllogism." Syllogisms belong to logic and serve to calculate truth in a mathematical form: If A is like B and C is like B, then A is like C. But Aristotle does not demand that all truth be calculated mathematically. He says, "Truth and likeness to truth are discerned by one and the same faculty; while human nature, let us add, has aptitude enough for discerning what is true, and men in most cases do arrive at the truth."¹ Thus he allows for folk wisdom which comes through sensibilities of human nature and is often expressed in folk proverbs.

Although folk narratives and sophisticated literature alike are sprinkled with proverbial phrases such as "sour grapes," a proverb per se makes a complete sentence. In his analysis of folk proverbs, Archer Taylor reports that a German scholar, F. Seiler, isolated three distinguishing classes of the form:

1. Those in which the idea precedes the image:
"If you don't live in the house" (idea of inexperience) "you don't know when the roof leaks" (image).
2. Those in which the image precedes the idea:
"New brooms" (image) "sweep clean" (idea: change).
3. Those in which the idea and the image are conceived simultaneously:
"A small horse is soon curried." Idea and image: short tasks are soon accomplished.²

¹Aristotle, p. 5.

²The Proverb (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), p. 141.

Epigrammatic proverbs are formed on a classical basis of satire even as they may be categorized according to Seiler's chart. "Whistling girls and crowing hens" (image) "always come to dire ends" (idea: problem of unconventionality); "Children and fools speak the truth" (idea and image: innocence or naivety). Less tantalizing rhetorically but clearly understandable are proverbs formed as declarative statements: "You can't judge a book by its cover"; or "You can't spoil rotten eggs." Other proverbs have the form of interdictions: "Don't count your chickens before they hatch"; or "Don't borrow trouble."

Some comic proverbs, such as Wellerisms and Swifties, are from the oral tradition even as they identify with literary sources. Brunvand calls Wellerisms "dramatic vignettes" because they are composed of both speech and action, and defines them as a three-part form consisting of a familiar quotation, an ascription, and an action: "Every-one to her own notion" (quotation), "said the old lady" (ascription), "as she kissed the cow" (action).¹ Wellerisms existed in verbal folklore long before Dickens revitalized them through the mouth of his Sam Weller, from whom came the

¹Brunvand, pp. 40 and 217. An example of the rhetorical effects of this particular quotation is that in the Nichols' family, any comment on and agreement with another's matter of taste has been abbreviated to "cow-kissing."

name.¹ Swifties, parodying the prodigal use of adverbs in the old Tom Swift novels for boys, are formed by a statement, ascription, and adverb facetiously modifying either the theme of the statement or the character of the speaker:

"'But I don't need a haircut,' Samson said strongly."

Jonathanisms, beloved by today's stand-up comics, date back to America's Revolutionary period. "Cousin Jonathan," the prototype of Uncle Sam,² was first characterized as a bumpkin who spoke in outrageous comparative hyperboles: "He was so short he had to stand on his own head to kiss his sweetheart"; "He was so tall he had to fold his feet under to go through the door"; "His knife was so dull he couldn't stick it in his pocket."

Wellerisms, Swifties, Jonathanisms, and other types of folk humor, like the Noodle or "stupidity" tales that transform in time to Little Moron or Aggie jokes, pass in and out of both oral and literary tradition according to the fashions of the times. Whether contemporaneously popular at a given time or not, their longevity owes much to their rhetorical form. As one analyst of American traditions says, "American philosophy has ever been prone to

¹Taylor, The Proverb, p. 215.

²Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, ed. Maria Leach and Jerome Fried (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1972), s.v. "Jonathan," by Benjamin A. Botkin.

express itself in homespun, succinct terms, and no form or expression so vividly reflects the affairs of everyday life as a proverb."¹ On the rhetoric of form in proverb, Mark Van Doren says:

A proverb is valueless if it does not say what all men believe; but it is equally valueless if one mind has not sharpened it to the point of utmost brevity so that henceforth it remains as memorable as it seems to be true.²

Rhetorically, the proverb is a form fixed in time. It is didactic and witty. It offers proof through artistic appeals of logic and pathos, even if the logic is at times awry and the pathos laughter rather than tears; and it is testimony from the witness of the collective folk mind.

The rhetorical form observable in verbal folklore, whether tale, song, or proverb, responds to Aristotle's plea for decorum, that fittingness that suits form to subject matter and subject matter to audience.³ Form is the inherent and recognizable quality that distinguishes one tale type from another, and ballad from lyric while it consciously or subconsciously evokes a response from the listener/reader. The so-called laws of form are self-imposed by tradition, unenforced by any regimented authority.

¹Dictionary of American Proverbs, ed. David Kin (New York: Philosophical Library, 1955), cover note.

²Ibid., Preface, p. 1.

³Lanham, pp. 29-30.

If they are violated the result may be another art form, but not the conventional tradition that is folklore. Once, not so long ago (opening formula for a family legend), a father listened as a mother read bedtime stories to a little boy. One night, after hearing over and over again about simpletons and swineherds outwitting their rivals and marrying the princesses, the father asked, "Don't cotton pickers ever marry cotton pickers?" No, not in folktales. Rhetorical form will not allow it.

CHAPTER II

STYLE

Men, like rabbits, are often taken by the ears.
F. L. Lucas

The American quality of our national folklore owes its primary identity to style, the third division in the classical canon of rhetoric. In the broadest definition, style, or elecutio, includes expression, diction, idiom, and figurative language.¹ Cicero classified three levels of style, according to the extent of the orator's use of ornamentation: Attic, Rhodian, and Asiatic, or low, middle, and grand. Low (or plain) style uses few, if any ornaments or figures of speech. It is appropriate for simple exposition and for instruction. Middle style draws upon a wealth of well-chosen figures for the purpose of pleasing an appreciative audience. The fully ornamented grand style, which Cicero considered to be the most persuasive, is appropriate for formal or serious subject matter. Whatever style one uses, however, Cicero and other rhetoricians since have said that rhetorical effectiveness depends upon clarity of thought, correct grammar and usage, and aptness of the

¹Lanham, pp. 40, 63, and 77.

expression as a whole to the subject matter or the occasion (decorum).¹

Rhetoricians since Cicero's time analyze style in much the same way; they merely change terminology according to twentieth-century vocabularies. Walker Gibson, for example, discusses three levels of style as tough, sweet, and stuffy. Tough style assumes that the reader/audience knows what the persona knows. Its diction is brisk, even brusque, rejecting ornamentation and all but the most necessary adjectives or qualifiers. Gibson says the tough style is appropriate to the self-consciousness of the modern novel as written by Hemingway. Sweet style, that of the advertising world, is ornamental, even "artsy" and "folksy." It assumes an "I-thou," or in Americanism, a "you and me" relationship. Stuffy style is that of the impersonal, formal scientific report. On Gibson's scale, stuffy style, which might correspond to Cicero's grandiloquent style without the high emotional quality present in classical expression, is the least effective.²

Philip Wheelwright identifies only two styles. Steno-language is that of plain sense and exact denotation. Expressive language is that of poetry, religion, myth, and

¹Ibid., pp. 113-16.

²Tough, Sweet, and Stuffy (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1966), p. x.

"heightened prose and conversation." The two styles are not necessarily in conflict, but each usually serves a separate function.¹

Cicero's low-to-middle, Gibson's sweet-to-tough, and Wheelwright's steno-language best describe the style of American folk literature. Characteristics of folk diction are a variety of non-standard word forms (morphology), such as "clumb" for "climbed," and reversed word order (syntax), such as "everwhat" for "whatever." Folk diction relies on redundancies like "widow woman," "blood kin," and "tooth-dentist."² Coinages are sometimes nonce-words, understood only in context ("cold as floogins,"³); others are self-explanatory (gotch-eyed, catty-wampus for "crooked" or "at odd angles"). Jan Brunvand observes that speech patterns develop in geographic regions and social subcultures with their individual stylistic imagery and metaphor.⁴

¹"The Semantic Approach to Myth," Journal of American Folklore 68 (1955): 473-81.

²Quoted by Richard Dorson, American Negro Folktales (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc.; A Fawcett Premier Book, 1967), p. 52.

³Lois Williams Parker, "Tales from Uncle Owen," in Tales from the Big Thicket, ed. Frances E. Abernathy (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), p. 168.

⁴p. 29.

The uninhibited, unselfconscious colloquial style, says Gibson, draws the audience closer to the narrator as they share experience (the "I-you" relationship). It is rhetorically more effective than the deliberately witty and urbane style which keeps even an appreciative audience at some distance.¹

American folkloric style, spontaneous, unpremeditated, and unselfconscious, observes Wilson O. Clough,

comes from folk who had no thought of possible scholarly investigation; who offered no criticism beyond that of immediate satisfaction in the product, and of a natural incorporation of the product into the pattern of their living. Somehow this artless expression of folk imagination must be behind anything that is labeled folklore.²

An irony in American history, observes Mary Austin, is that the founders of the Republic did not intend that there should be any "folk." But even as the compacts and declarations were being drawn up, close racial and cultural distinctions were grouping themselves into self-identifying clusters as they were uniting within the larger national body. Thus a character, an identity (or identities), of folkness emerged or continued from Old World origins in the

¹Persona: A Style Study for Readers and Writers (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 52.

²"Has American Folklore a Special Quality?" Southern Folklore Quarterly 8 (1944): 117.

New World.¹ Each racial and cultural group had its particular folklore, identified not only by historical and traditional subject matter but also by style.

To study the style of America's indigenous ethnic folklore, that of the Indian, many folklorists must rely on translations. Indian myth and legend developed in a pre-literate society and were preserved only by oral tradition until nineteenth-century anthropologists, recording cultural history, recognized the value of New World tales which were comparable to those collected by the Grimm brothers, Perrault, and Hans Christian Andersen. Fortunately, some--not all--anthropologists were scientific enough in their approaches to collecting that they studied the languages in which the tales were told and supplied literal translations of the narrator's words. A flavor of the Indian's style, therefore, comes through many of the translations. American Indians, say Alice Marriott and Carol Rachlin, "played with the spoken word, combining and recombining phrases and thought." They were concerned with style in their orations, their poems and songs, and their miracle plays. Style and delivery had a rhetorical purpose for the Indians. As Marriott and Rachlin explain, the "two-hour ritual prayers had to be recited without an error or the

¹Benjamin A. Botkin, ed., "American Folk," in Folk-Say: A Regional Miscellany (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1930), p. 287.

omission of a single syllable, else the spell would not be cast, the ceremony would fail, and the life-giving rain and snow, crops, or wild game herds would not come to the aid of men that season."¹

Indian myths and legends, like most American folklore, are told in plain style. Narration is in chronological order with little ornamentation and few adjectives except for an occasional image of green grass or blue sky. Personification, however, is commonplace in Indian folklore. Talking animals are the counterparts of characters in Old World beast fables. Objects of nature are supernatural beings such as Grandmother Earth and Sun, the father. Water, wind, stones, mountains all possess a spirit or a power by which they may bless mankind.² Example stories are abundant. In "The Race Between the Buffalo and Man,"³ all creatures--human, animal, and bird--are equal until the buffalo, overcome with hybris, proposes a race to prove they are superior to everyone else, particularly man. The animals and birds choose sides; the race is run; the buffaloes' team loses. They must concede that they will never again be the equals of men and birds.

¹P. 14.

²Ibid., p. 16.

³Ibid., pp. 120-23.

In the story, "The Coming of Corn,"¹ grain itself is personified in the form of a mysterious, fat and rosy-cheeked playmate for a thin and starving Cheyenne boy. When the little stranger is killed, enough corn spills from his body to keep the starving child and his mother alive through the winter.

Rhetorical analysis of the style of Indian folk literature is contingent upon translations which, if authentic, indicate a direct, grammatically correct, cadenced narration. In American Negro tales and songs, however, style can be studied "in the original" as it comes from the narrator's lips or as it has been transcribed upon the printed page. Like the pre-literate Indians, antebellum Negroes, the slaves, says Richard Dorson, "missing the bounties of general education and material progress, [remained] a largely oral, self-contained society with its own unwritten history and literature."² With the exception of the Indian, the Negro slave is perhaps the most authentic "folk" being in the United States. Although he, like all other immigrated Americans, had origins beyond this country, his condition of servitude isolated him from the society and culture of the nation as a whole and allowed (or caused)

¹Ibid., pp. 100-104.

²American Negro Folktales, p. 12.

him to develop a society and culture within the humble, often naive, confines of his own reasoning powers. Therein lay the genesis of an American Negro folklore upon which writers before and since Joel Chandler Harris have drawn so freely. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, Harris and folklorist William Owens popularized and analyzed the animal fables of the southern Negro. Later folklorists traced many tale types and motifs to either African or Caribbean sources although many others were European, English, and white American in origin. Sources, while not the subject matter of this study, have a bearing on style and stylistics. Although Harris synthetically recreated phonetic Negro dialect in his Uncle Remus stories to portray the quaintness of the characters,¹ he recognized a difference between the diction of a storyteller coming directly from Africa and that of the Negro native to central Georgia. Twentieth-century linguists identify African influences on Gullah, the dialect spoken by descendants of ex-slaves living on the Georgia and South Carolina seacoast. For example, the use of the uninflected be, as in "It be raining," sometimes called Plantation Creole, is of West African origin.² So are the words goober, meaning peanut, and

¹Ibid., p. 14.

²J. L. Dillard, All-American English (New York: Random House, 1975), pp. 90-93.

buckra, meaning a white man,¹ often connoting a poor, mean white man.² J. L. Dillard traces the word buckaroo, meaning cowboy, not to the Spanish vaquero, as earlier etymologists believed, but to the Gullah buckra plus a pejorative suffix -oo.³

Dialect, perhaps the most distinguishing feature of style in Negro folklore, is prevalent in the short episodic Old Marster cycles and the animal tales of the Brer Rabbit stamp. Dialect, syntax, and non-standard grammatical constructions have a direct bearing on the rhetoric of the folktale or song as a whole. As Newbell N. Puckett notes, "Perhaps one reason for the fragmentary character of Negro folk songs is the fact that the slave was not fully in possession of the English language when these songs were composed." Puckett illustrates his remarks with a prayer and interpretation:

Make he good like he say
Make he say like he good
Make he say like he good, like he God.

"Make him good as his doctrine; make his doctrine as

¹Robert Adger Law, "A Note on Four Negro Words," in Texas and Southwestern Lore, ed. J. Frank Dobie (Austin: Texas Folklore Society, 1927), pp. 119-20.

²Dictionary of American Slang, ed. Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1960), s. v. "Buckra."

³Dillard, p. 127.

pure as his life, and may both be in the likeness of his God."¹

Slave and freedman contributed two genres to American folklore: the spiritual and the blues. The spiritual's style included images of the opulence of Heaven compared to the misery on earth and naive accounts of biblical stories told in folktale fashion:

Read about Samson from his birth,
The strongest man that ever lived on earth,
Read away down in ancient times,
He killed three thousand Philistines.²

Blues, with their artless cottonfield calls and levee moans ("O--o o---wo---," "Ee--o") lamented the hopelessness of sharecropping, chain-gang peonage, the sins of drinking and gambling, and the pathos of unfaithful love.

As society changed, however, collectors observed stylistic changes in folklore also. Dorson notes that as Negroes moved north, "the forms and style of their oral expression alter to catch the rhythms of the urban ghettos. . . . Brer Rabbit has become a fast-talking, sporty hipster in the reshaped lore of Harlem, Watts, south Chicago, and other metropolitan ghettos."³

¹Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1926), pp. 20-21.

²"Samson," in Lomax, The Folk Songs of North America, p. 479.

³American Negro Folktales, p. 18.

As black folk diction becomes distinguishable by distinctions of region from the cotton patch to the ghetto, so do white American speech patterns and stylistic devices echo the colloquial identities of Down-East, the deep South, and the western frontier. Distinct as each geographic area is, however, a national quality of rhetorical style can be drawn from the total body of folklore although detailed analyses of tale or song play up individual rather than representative qualities. As Richard Bridgman writes,

The linguistic situation in the United States was historically unique. Romantic, nationalistic, and practical pressures impelled American writers [or narrators] to evolve a new means of expression out of the casual discourse of the nation. . . . Americans shared, especially on the frontier, basic experiences that required a vocabulary not precisely equivalent to that considered standard in England.¹

The American experience shaped language and values as well. For example, American folklore, derivative in great measure from European sources, either rejected royal subjects altogether or democratized them as in "Rush Cape,"² a Cinderella tale type combined with the story familiar from Shakespeare's King Lear wherein the mad king divides his kingdom among his three daughters according to the love they profess for him. Two girls exaggerate their affection, but the third

¹The Colloquial Style in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966), p. 8.

²Chase, American Folk Tales and Songs, pp. 31-35.

daughter claims to love her father "as bread loves salt." Offended by such a mundane declaration, the king banishes her. She goes to a swamp, weaves a cap and cape of rushes, and disguised by them, makes her way to the palace of the King of England. A version of the tale told in the southern mountain region of the United States is full of Americanisms. The younger daughter looks at her father "right straight." Angry, "he r'ared back and threw up his head." The two daughters blessed by their father "married rich." Rush Cape "hires out" as a kitchen maid to the King of England, where she meets and later marries "the King's boy," an Americanism for "prince." His mother, presumably the Queen of England, says, "I reckon." Many years later, when Rush Cape's father, ousted by his daughters and driven mad, comes to the English castle, the King's boy democratically answers the knock at the door himself. The old man, every inch a king, stands there "right proud-like." Rush Cape recognizes her father. She orders the cook to omit all salt from the food. When the cook protests that it will taste awful, Rush Cape declares, "It don't differ. Do as I say."

In addition to the folk expression, sentence structure distinguishes American rhetorical style within this version of the tale. The story opens with a common

colloquial device, ellipsis,¹ the omission of a word easily understood--here a relative pronoun:

"One time there was a king had three girls."

Other ellipses omit the subject of the sentence:

"Looked at the oldest, says, 'How much do you love me?'"

"Is that all you can answer? Talked hateful."

"Put on that cape, and covered her fine clothes."

"Shook out her pretty yellow hair and went to the dance."

"Wouldn't even look at any other girl."

"Started whispering--'There she is.'"

"Opened the door and there stood an old beggar."

"Combed his hair and fed him."

Another of the narrator's devices for abbreviatio in expression is parataxis, the placing of phrases or clauses side by side without intervening connectives. Parataxis is used most often in "Rush Cape" with speech tags:

"Looked at the oldest, says . . ."

"She looked at him right straight, says . . ."

"The other girls came to her, said . . ."

"He raised up off the pillow, says . . ."

¹Lanham, pp. 30-40. All references to terms for rhetorical devices will be from this volume unless otherwise noted.

If the folk narrator omits easily understood words in some contexts, he inserts them in others. Parelcon, the device of adding superfluous words, occurs often in this story and others, usually as a double subject:

"The oldest she spoke right up."

"The youngest she went to the swamp."

"Rush Cape she slipped out . . ."

"Rush Cape she stayed there by the fire . . ."

Another device of amplification the folk narrator uses is diaeresis, "dividing genus into species" for further explanation. An example in "Rush Cape" is, "Now the youngest, she was his baby and his pet, and she thought the world of her old father so she made up her mind she'd try to tell the truth the best way she could." The appositive "she was his baby and his pet" is the diaeresis. The long, full sentence itself is called a continuatio. Indeed, of the ninety or so sentences making up the story, fifty-two are compound in construction and most of those are continuations. There are twenty-six simple sentences, four embedded sentences, and, if we consider the ellipses as subjects understood in those examples, the story has only one sentence fragment. Folk speech employs contractions and apocope, the omission of final letters on words. Here examples are "dyin'," "lookin'," and "feedin'."

Folktales and songs use few metaphors, similes, or other figures of speech. In "Rush Cape" there are no examples of any such figures except for one form of litotes, "understatement which intensifies." When the two selfish daughters drain their father of his wealth and turn him out of his own house, "That hurt him."

Litotes is a rhetorical scheme, a figure of speech; understatement in general, says MacEdward Leach, is a notable characteristic of folk language in both tale and song.¹ Except for an occasional descriptive dramatic action ("he r'ared back and threw up his head") the story of "Rush Cape" is narrated in understated plain style, the chronological events reported objectively. Even the traditional high point of the story, the recognition scene, is briefly understated: "His girl came right to him and took his hand and raised him up. Then he looked at her and he knew who she was and his mind came back clear." A climax so anticlimatic has a rhetorical value in that it "moves" the audience by its simplicity and brevity. As F. L. Lucas says, "Brevity is often [most] effective; the half can say

¹"The Singer or the Song," in Singers and Story-tellers, ed. Mody C. Boatright, Wilson M. Hudson, and Allen Maxwell (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1961), p. 40.

more than the whole and to imply things may strike far deeper than to state them at length."¹

Implications suggested by effective understatement stimulate the imagination, which, Demosthenes believed, is a suasive device itself. It serves "to make the real seem doubly real rather than to make us, within the conditions of a fiction, believe in the 'reality' of things we might not otherwise believe at all."² Aristotle and Longinus, who thought the imagination should be primed by an enthusiastic and passionate use of words to produce a vivid scene before the eyes of the audience, might have discounted understatement as an effective rhetorical device in this context. Kenneth Burke, on the other hand, might include understatement as a stimulant for imagination when he says:

Often "imagination" seems to sum up the "lyric motive," as distinct from "dramatic motive." . . . It is a miscellany ranging all the way from the visible, tangible, here-and-now to the mystically transcendent, from the purely sensory and empirical . . . to the dramatically empathetic and sympathetic, from the literal to the fantastic, including all shades of sentiment and refinements of taste and judgment.³

¹"The Fascination of Style," in Party of Twenty, ed. Clifton Fadiman (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1963), p. 177.

²Cited by Burke, A Rhetoric of Motives, p. 79.

³Ibid., p. 81.

Understated narration in American folk literature calls for a certain simplicity of interior details as a part of plain style. Proper names, for example, in keeping with the identity of folk characters and characteristics, are short and commonplace. "Jack," "Will," "Mary," and "Sally" appear in white American folktales and songs; "John" or "Sam" in Negro lore. Other characters, especially in ballads, have no names at all, or are known by physical features, occupations, or activities. "Ashpet," "The Gambling Man," "The Wayfaring Stranger," and "The Dying Cowboy" are examples of characterismus, marking with a distinctive sign. In animal stories from all American culture groups, white, Negro, or Indian, the name is often the species itself, sometimes preceded by a title--Brer Rabbit, Mr. Owl--sometimes standing alone--Coyote, Buffalo Woman. Tales and ballads based upon historical or legendary figures also fit the pattern. American folk heroes almost invariably seem to have short, plain names, biblical in origin, sometimes diminutized: "John Henry," "Jesse James," "Davy Crockett." Even "Stagolee" is a corruption of the real name of Jim Stack Lee, mulatto son of a "skull-cracking steamboat captain."¹

¹ Alan Lomax, The Folk Songs of North America, p. 559.

Both the common name and the characterismus are rhetorically valuable within the context of American folk literature. As Michelle Zimbalist Rosaldo states, "Linguistic usage is constrained by our knowledge of objective reality, but the use and significance of labels depends on the context in which things are named."¹ In other words, denotative language expresses fundamental thought, but labels (such as charactersima and nicknames) are often symbols of associative or suggestive qualities. The parent or the creative writer may chose a name for its connotative or metaphoric significance, a significance sometimes evident in folk literature also. The name "Jack," a dimunitive for "John," for instance, is so closely associated with the clever fool that the rhetorical effect of the tale depends upon Jack's behaving accordingly. Every Tom, Dick, and Mary, however, is not necessarily a stereotype. The nameless character or the one with the short common name represents Everyman, thus rhetorically creating a point of sympathy and an identifying element between tale and audience.

In addition to understatement as a rhetorical element in American folk literature, one finds clichés and stereotypes. Because the folk sympathize and often identify with the underdog, in folklore the unfit outwits the villain,

¹"Metaphor and Folk Classification," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology 28 (1972): 83-99.

the kitchen maid marries the prince, the trickster gets tricked. Thus, character contrasts and plot devices may qualify as secondary elements of style. Rhetorically speaking, says Max Lüthi, "The greater the contrast, the sharper the portrayal."¹ Stereotyped characters are the poor man, the orphaned child, the wicked stepmother. Cliché expressions are "ruby red lips," "lily white breasts," hair, eyes, hearts, or even blood "black as coal." As a matter of fact, except through cliché expressions, folk narrators rarely describe objects by color. When they do, they make no attempt to create fresh imagery. Grass is green, the sky is blue; nothing more concrete need be said. Silver and gold contribute a romantic quality to an image, but the romance evolves by way of content or situation more often than by the appeal of the sense impression itself.

An exception to the prosaic use of color descriptions is the stress given to red and black clothing in Negro folksongs, a stress which indicates the significance of rhetorical style. G. Malcolm Laws, Jr. points out that when a character in a tale or song about death wears red, he deliberately displays a complete lack of respect for the dead person. Black, typically, indicates mourning. Laws cites songs about a bully for whom the women wear red and another about the hero/villain Stagolee, for whom they wear

¹p. 76.

black. He also quotes a stanza from a Negro version of "Casey Jones" which illustrates his point:

Womens in Kansas all dressed in red,
Got de news dat Casey was dead.
De womens in Jackson all dressed in black,
Said, in fact, he was a cracker-jack.¹

A notable exception appears in the ballad about John Henry who was mourned by a woman in blue:

John Henry had another woman,
The dress she wore was blue,
She went walkin' down the track and she
never look back,
I wish my wife was true.²

Here the symbolic true/blue cliché undoubtedly accounts for the significant use of the color description. Such uses of color details move toward concreteness, says Leach, and "are immediately transferable to pictorial art."³

More symbolic than concrete, perhaps, is the idea that Rush Cape and almost all other folk heroines have yellow hair. Eric Berne has made a study of "the mythology of dark and fair," as the contrast appears in history, literature, and folklore. He cites biblical tradition which has the outcast sons of Cush the black men, as were the Saracen enemies of the Crusaders. In early lullabies and nursery

¹Native American Balladry (Philadelphia: The American Folklore Society, 1964), p. 90.

²"John Henry," in Alan Lomax, The Folk Songs of North America, p. 561.

³MacEdward Leach, p. 41.

rhymes, fair-haired children deserve favors; dark-haired children merit punishment, as in the verse,

Blue-eyed beauty, do your mother's duty;
Brown-eyed pickle pie, run around and tell a lie.

If the myth is, as Berne believes, of use to the psychologist and the student of human behavior, it is even more significant in the rhetoric of American folklore which proclaims that gentlemen prefer blondes because blondes have more fun.¹

In addition to cliché, stereotype, and understatement, American verbal folkstyle makes prolific use of repetition for rhetorical purposes. It may be used to stress a developing idea or to accent a static one. As Mody Boatright notes, because "the folk artist knows the value of circumstantial detail," certain bits and pieces become commonplace to a particular tale and are repeated almost word for word, regardless of variant changes which evolve.² One such fixed and repeated detail appears in the story of the Kaiser Burnout. During the Civil War, a band of Confederates attempted to burn out a group of Union sympathizers hiding in the Big Thicket of East Texas. Old Man Lilly, traveling with a team of oxen, had stopped to

¹"The Mythology of Dark and Fair: Psychiatric Use of Folklore," Journal of American Folklore 72 (1959): 1-13.

²Folk Laughter on the American Frontier (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 90.

have breakfast with a family in a cabin on the creek. Hearing noises, he ran outside, and was caught in the crossfire between the soldiers and the Union sympathizers. A bullet hit him in the back where his galluses (suspenders) crossed.¹ The legend has been told many ways by many narrators, but, as Francis E. Abernathy reports, "nearly all the versions . . . have the detail of the galluses shot where they crossed."²

A similar example of repeated detail occurs in an Indian legend from the Clatsop Plains of the Pacific Northwest, which tells of two bearded strangers in a canoe who appeared one day on the river's edge. They put corn in a kettle and built a fire under it. Soon the corn began to pop and fly into the air. The amazed Clatsops had never seen pop corn. Although the significance of the legend is that the strangers brought iron and copper to the Indians and taught them how to make knives and hatchets, the episode of the corn, says William D. Lyman, "is the one part of the story preserved in every version."³

¹Dean Tevis, "The Battle at Bad Luck Creek," in Tales From the Big Thicket (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), pp. 75-92.

²Personal letter, 9 October 1975.

³"Konapee, the Iron-Maker," in James A. Gibbs, Pacific Graveyard (Portland, Ore.: Binford & Mort, Publishers, 1964), p. 57.

Yet another legend concerns racial disturbances and a lynching in Belton, Texas, in the 1890s. Professor Eleanor James heard the story many times from her father, a witness to the events. In each retelling, she says, her father reported, "And the blood ran shoe mouth deep."¹

Repetition also suggests passage of time and degrees of distance. In "Rush Cape" the princess's native land was unspecified, but "she traveled on, traveled on till she came to England." In the phrase repeated without a conjunction we get a sense of the great distance she had to go in her banishment. Line-by-line repetition in song, or as a refrain between stanzas, or a burden interspersed between lines, intensifies action in and anticipation of a situation while it prolongs the narrative to allow for such a rhetorical effect. The folk song, "Old Bangum and the Boar,"² illustrates a variety of effective uses of repetition.

There is a wild boar in these woods,
Dillum day! Dillum down!
There is a wild boar in these woods,
Dillum day! Dillum Down!
There is a wild boar in these woods,
he'll eat your flesh and drink your blood.
Kummo Kay! Cuttle down! Killo kay quumm. [*sic*]

¹Interview with Eleanor James, Professor of English, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas, January 1975.

²Chase, American Folk Tales and Songs, pp. 126-27.

Old Bangum went to the wild boar's den,
 Dillum day! Dillum down!
 Old Bangum went to the Wild Boar's den
 Dillum day! Dillum Down!
 Old Bangum went to the wild boar's den,
 Dillum Day! Dillum down!
 he saw the bones of a thousand men.
 Kummo Kay! Cuttle Down! Killo kay gumm!

Old Bangum blew his bugle horn,
 Dillum day! Dillum down
 Old Bangum blew his buggle horn
 Dillum day! Dillum down!
 Old Bangum blew his horn,
 Dillum day! Dillum down!
 caused the wild boar to come running home,
 Kummo Kay! Cuttle down! Killo kay gumm!¹

The wild boar came in such a dash

 He cut his way through oak and ash.

Old Bangum drew his wooden knife,

 Swore he'd take the wild boar's life.

They fit four hours of the day,

 Old Bangum took the wild boar's life away.

The repetitive narrative lines create the rhetorical effect of an adventure story. In Stanza One, when we hear three times that there is a wild boar in the woods, we can believe he roams freely and is not to be found or captured easily. By being told three times that Bangum goes to the boar's den, we can imagine his search into a remote part of the forest. Three blasts of his horn would incite the boar to return to his den as one puny blow might not do. Repetition

¹The text has gumm in the first stanza, gumm in the second and third.

in Stanza Four suggests the boar's frenzied rush through the woods, while in Stanza Five, the repeated lines seem to create a "stopped motion" montage as Old Bangum poises for attack. Finally, the reiteration of the time involved in the fight intensifies the difficulty of the battle itself for both.

The nonsense words of the burden are obviously a rhetorical device to measure rhythm as well as to create a delay for prolonging the narrative. The images in the seventh line of each stanza, however, are effective rhetoric, both emotionally and stylistically. In "he'll eat your flesh and drink your blood," the singer tells what sort of adversary Old Bangum faces. The hyperbole of "he saw the bones of a thousand men" warn of Old Bangum's precarious chances against his enemy. The boar itself shows his strength and ferocity in Stanzas Three and Four when he charges home through the well-known (therefore undescribed) thick undergrowth of oak and ash trees. And true to the heroics of folklore, Old Bangum swears he will kill the boar, and does so in a long and wearisome battle.

Repetition of scenes and action, important to folklore form and structure, is also a matter of rhetorical style. Rush Cape goes three times to the royal ball; in each episode the tale's plot progresses. The first time, she charms the king's boy. The second time, she has greater

difficulty escaping. The third time, the prince gives her a ring, significant in the marking-and-discovery folk elements to come. Similarly, in the folksong, "Whistle, Daughter, Whistle,"¹ repetitive episodes prolong and progress the story line:

"Mother, I would marry and I would be a bride,
And I would have a young man forever at my side.
For if I had a young man, O how happy I would be,
For I am tired and O so weary of my virginity."

"Whistle, daughter, whistle, and you shall have a cow."
"I cannot whistle, mother, I guess I don't know how.
For if I had a young man, O how happy I would be,
For I am tired and O so weary of my propriety."

"Whistle, daughter, whistle, and you shall have a
sheep."
"I cannot whistle, mother, I can only weep.
For if I had a young man, O how happy I would be,
For I am tired and so weary of my singularity."

"Whistle, daughter, whistle, and you shall have a man."
"I can whistle . . ." [She whistles the rest of the
line.]

"You impudent little daughter, and what makes you
whistle now?"

"I'd rather whistle for a man than for a sheep or cow."

Repetition in dialogue and situation provides the narrative control, but the refrain is rhetorically valuable to the song as a whole. By tradition the refrain serves to emphasize the basic theme, here, the intensity of the girl's desire to marry. The last word of each reiteration varies, however, to indicate a rhetorical progression, a peristasis (amplifying by describing attendant circumstances).

¹Alan Lomax, The Folk Songs of North America, p. 213.

In the first stanza, the word virginity implies a degree of youth and innocence, an implication enhanced later (since virginity literally is not prescribed by youth or age) by the word propriety in the second stanza. Propriety suggests a conscious awareness of right or wrong, a level or so removed from mere innocence. In the third stanza, the word singularity expresses the final rhetorical stand. Not only is the girl tired of being proper, she is tired of being alone. As R. C. Stephenson notes:

An analysis of ballad dialogue by itself would reveal much more salient components both of dramatic tone and of structure. There are even other aspects of dialogue, an emotional use of repetition, for example, that ballad and folktale share. . . . However trivial, or even because trivial, enough small observations . . . can piece together the whole complex of manner. Provided we search them out as correlates of oral delivery, they . . . will give us the molecular structure of folk tale style.¹

In "Whistle, Daughter, Whistle," the stylistic element of dialogue becomes dialectic with argument by connotation or adjuncts, second in Aristotle's list of topics of rhetorical invention.²

Such an argument, advanced by a single stylistic device, repetition, illustrates the sparseness of other ornamentation in much folk literature. The plain style of

¹"Dialogue in Folktale and Song," in Mesquite and Willow, eds. Mody C. Boatright, Wilson A. Hudson, and Allen Maxwell (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1957), pp. 136-37.

²Lanham, p. 108.

American folklore finds few occasions to use figures of speech, but their effectiveness, when they are used, is often more rhetorically sound because they are not overdone. In "Rush Cape" the major plot device pivots on a simile, "I love you like bread loves salt." "The Riddle Song"¹ is itself a series of metaphors, as riddles are by tradition:

I brought my love a cherry that has no stone,
 I brought my love a chicken that has no bone,
 I told my love a story that has no end,
 I brought my love a baby and no cryen [sic].

How can there be a cherry that has no stone?
 How can there be a chicken that has no bone?
 How can there be a story that has no end?
 How can there be a baby and no cryen?

A cherry when it's blooming it has no stone;
 A chicken in the egg it has no bone;
 The story of our love shall have no end;
 A baby when its sleeping there's no cryen.

Folk expressions and proverbs offer greater rewards than the folk song for a study of schemes and tropes in American folk literature. A variety of rhetorical devices: simile, metaphor, hyperbole, parataxis, chiasmas, and others, appears in countless single-sentence examples. Proverbs, like much of American folklore, are not totally nationalistic; but folk diction creates an American style within those sayings which are reminiscent of classical and European tradition. On occasion, says Archer Taylor, folk vernacular includes offensive material, but proverbs dealing

¹Chase, American Folk Tales and Songs, pp. 156-57.

with bodily functions seldom reach print, and tastes differ with time.¹ The lasting popular expression is one which proves itself logically to be "true" or is memorable because it pleases the ear and the imagination. Style, therefore, as it transmits a memorable image, is of particular value to the rhetoric of folk sayings. Volumes of anthologies of folk sayings and proverbs may be found on library shelves; only a brief sampler here will illustrate the most prominent of stylistic devices found within folk expressions.²

Similes, likening one thing to another, dissimilar thing, give us "Rattled like an empty wagon on a rutty road," and "cool as a cucumber," which are alliterative as well as comparative. Rhyme contributes to the simile, "squirmed like a worm in hot ashes." Comic comparisons are "cold as a well-digger's butt," and "ugly as homemade sin."

Proverbs in metaphor include: "The smell of frying bacon is man's best alarm clock";³ "A bank book is the

¹Pp. 170-71.

²A proverb has a form and structure: it is always a complete sentence. For the purposes of illustration in the present context, the term "folk expression" is used to indicate either a proverb per se or a "saying" which is either proverbial or descriptive in nature.

³Maria "Bobsie" Melton, Ozark "Vittles" (Fayetteville, Ark.: Southwest Printing Co., 1969), p. 33.

greedy man's Bible";¹ "Time is a true friend to sorrow";² and "The world is a ladder--some go up, some go down."³

Examples of chiasmus, "a crossing," are: "Do not travel looking for life. Life is looking for you";⁴ "Mind your till and till your mind";⁵ and "You can take the boy out of the country but you cannot take the country out of the boy."

Zuegma, one verb governing several words, each in different ways, is in the proverbs, "Winter weather and woman's thoughts change often";⁶ "A puff of wind and popular praise weigh alike";⁷ and "Man and pyramids are not made to stand on their heads."⁸

Diazuegma, one subject with many verbs, forms such proverbs as, "He who speaks, sows; he who listens, reaps";⁹ and "Them as has, gits."¹⁰

Parataxis, the placing of phrases or clauses independently side by side, exists in "Tight shoes, short steps";¹¹ "No mill, no meal; no will, no deal";¹² "Great

¹Dictionary of American Proverbs, p. 236.

²Ibid., p. 255. ³Ibid., p. 282. ⁴Melton, p. 14.

⁵Dictionary of American Proverbs, p. 255.

⁶Ibid., p. 273. ⁷Ibid., p. 196. ⁸Ibid., p. 210.

⁹Ibid., p. 194. ¹⁰Ibid. ¹¹Melton, p. 21.

¹²Dictionary of American Proverbs, p. 161.

boast, small roast";¹ "Love me, love my dog"; and in the Pennsylvania German, "We get too soon old, too late smart."

The impossible image, "So hot you could poke the sun with a ten-foot pole," illustrates Ernest S. Bates' observation that "the humor or exaggeration [hyperbole] is sometimes supposed to be peculiar to America . . . characteristic of an instinctive and reflective culture."² Exaggerated humor and imagery are especially effective as elements of rhetorical style. As Taylor says, "The whimsical union of objects which have no relation at first sight imprints the proverb more deeply on our minds."³ Among proverbs based on two disparate images are, "Whistling girls and crowing hens / Always come to no good ends," and "Children and fools speak the truth."

Another classification of folk proverbs is that which strongly suggests oral tradition as it addresses the audience directly as you: "You can't spoil rotten eggs"; "You can't judge a book by its cover." Others are phrased as imperatives, sometimes with "you" understood: "Look before you leap," and "Don't stay till the last dog's hung."⁴

¹Ibid.

²"American Folklore," Saturday Review of Literature 2 (July 10, 1926): 914.

³The Proverb, p. 159.

⁴Coffin and Cohen, p. 149.

In general, folk proverbs, even those containing outrageously comic imagery, tend to be didactic, illustrating once again Cicero's law for rhetoric--that it teaches, delights, and moves. Among those proverbs which move--persuade--are folk beliefs expressed in proverbial form. They may predict future events, explain omens, or point out cause-and-effect relationships. Each rhetorical purpose has its own style. Predictions of future events, as they emanate from the present, says Wayland Hand, "often involve the logic of a conditional sentence,"¹ containing an "if" clause: "If your nose itches, someone is coming with a hole in his britches"; "If you hang a dead snake with his belly up, it will rain"; and "If two dry hands on the same towel they will quarrel."

Proverbial folk beliefs based upon omens or signs include, "Bubbles rising to the top of a coffee cup [sign] mean you will be rich"; "Cold hands [sign] warm heart." The signs portend or indicate, they do not create a situation. Cause-and-effect beliefs, however, explain how an agent promotes or provokes a result. For example, "Rubbed three times on the eye, a wedding ring will cure a sty."²

¹American Superstition and Popular Beliefs," in Folklore in Action, ed. Horace Beck (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1962), pp. 154-67.

²Vergilius Ferm, A Brief Dictionary of American Superstitions (New York: Philosophical Library, 1949), p. 249.

The ring is the agent which cures the infirmity. Other examples are: "Eat blackeyed peas on New Year's Day [agent] to have good luck all year [result]"; "If you take the last bit of food on a plate [agent], you'll be an old maid [result]."¹

Folk expressions and proverbs illustrate succinctly Bridgman's statement, "Vernacular tricks with language arouse various responses in the reader: superiority, amusement, curiosity, the pleasure of mimetic recognition."²

With its spontaneous delight in applying language to idea, the folk expression, perhaps more than other types of American folk literature, comes closer to eloquence. Burke defines eloquence as a matter of ceremonious pre-occupation with verbalizing for symbolic and formal effects. The rhetorical success of eloquence depends upon the audience's familiarity with and appreciation for the range of imagery and the use of other rhetorical devices of style.³

In oratory and literature, eloquence may be both a means and an end, as it sometimes is in the folk expression. For the most part, however, the plain style of American folk

¹Taylor, The Proverb, p. 159.

²P. 25.

³Terms for Order, ed. Stanley Edgar Hyman and Barbara Karmiller (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), pp. 10-14.

literature precludes the classical concept of eloquence with its formal and elaborate ornamentation. The concrete language of plain style, according to Simon O. Lesser, "is the ideal instrument for simulating the events of our lives--our actions and the things that befall us."¹

Francis Utley makes a strong case for the effectiveness of rhetorical style when he writes:

[Style is] repetition, flat absence of descriptive detail, precision, and clarity of conception. . . . The tempo is retarded for suspense and speeded up for action; the whole tale betrays a feeling for the sacral, the stylized, and the abstract. Hence the fairy tale is not as convincing as realistic fiction, it is more convincing. It has no "if" and no "perhaps"; it is the very antithesis of scholarly caution. That is why it is immediate for us and meaningful.²

Folklore's plain style promotes a response by permitting the audience to sense Jack's dilemmas, to recognize Rush Cape in her mountain disguise, and to identify with the griefs of the blues singer, the bravado of Bangum, and the triumph of the daughter who whistles.

¹P. 149.

²Lüthi, p. 13.

CHAPTER III

PERSONA AND DELIVERY

Each person who tells a story molds the story to his tongue and to his mouth, and each listener molds the story to his ear.

Julius Lester

A Lummi Indian legend from the Pacific Northwest tells of Swetan, who lived by himself on San Juan Island in Puget Sound. Even though the Transformer had blessed him with abundant salmon, a reef-net, spear, fire, and a mild climate, he was unhappy because he was lonely. To amuse himself, he made an image of a person from a piece of rotten wood. In the evenings he talked to the image, telling it stories of his adventures and his dreams. When the Transformer came again, he asked Swetan why he had made the image. "I was lonesome," Swetan said. "I had no one to talk to." The Transformer, taking pity on him, sprinkled water on the rotten wood, and it became a woman.¹

The legend, explaining the origins of the Talemec tribe, also illustrates the basic human desire to tell

¹In Bernhard J. Stern, The Lummi Indians of Northwest Washington (Morningside Heights, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1934; reprint ed., New York: Ama Press, Inc., 1969), p. 107.

stories and the necessity of having an audience to receive these stories. The gifted narrator of folklore, like the accomplished rhetorician, however, does not rely on assistance from a supernatural Transformer. Instead, he himself transforms the "rotten wood" of the uninspired into a live and responding audience by the persuasion of his voice, his personality, and the quality of his delivery.

Delivery is the canon of rhetoric most vitally associated with the oral tradition. It is, therefore, surprising to read that Aristotle, in Book III of The Art of Rhetoric, bemoans the fact that previously little attention had been paid to the physical voice of persuasion, and yet, "for the art of rhetoric, delivery is of as much concern as it is for the art of poetry."¹ Cicero would later agree, declaring, "Delivery is the single dominant power in oratory," for without proper delivery eloquence is impossible to attain.² A latter-day rhetorician, Martin Steinmann, Jr., associates delivery with each of "six variables" he assigns to every rhetorical composition: "the speaker or writer, his utterance; his contest (occasion or medium), his audience . . . , his purpose . . . , and the effect of his utterance upon his audience." Rhetorical knowledge, he

¹p. 183.

²De Oratore, trans. H. Rackham (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. 169.

says, is rhetorical ability, the ability of a speaker or writer to control the variables to produce the response his purpose calls for.¹

Folklore like rhetoric with its roots in the oral tradition also emanates of necessity from a narrator who is responsible for the success or failure of the tale or song.² The narrator's effectiveness depends upon his knowing how to control the same variables of Steinmann's list. He has an occasion for telling the tale, whether as a bedtime story or as an illustration, or a reminiscence. He knows his audience, its expectations, and its ability to comprehend, appreciate, and respond. While there are so-called natural-born storytellers who unconsciously adapt the variables, few are so totally unselfconscious as to be unaware that they are "on stage" so to speak. They may imitate animal sounds or simulate tonal qualities of whining, scolding, or muttering for relaying effective dialogue. They may punctuate the air with forceful gestures to hammer home an emphatic point. They may mimic physical motions. Whenever Clarence Pickernell, a Quinault-Chehalis-Cowlitz Indian

¹"Rhetorical Research," in Martin Steinmann, Jr., ed., New Rhetorics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967), p. 22.

²Hereafter in this chapter, the term "tale" is used in a general sense to mean any type of oral performance, whether tale, song, or proverb.

from Tahola, Washington, told the legend, "The Origin of Puget Sound and the Cascade Range," which he heard from his great-grandmother, he pronounced the closing words rapidly and moved his hands to suggest the lapping of water.¹

Richard Chase recalls the teller of the jump story, "The Big Toe," who cups his hands around his mouth to "holler down the well, and who creates suspense with his voice as he calls, "Where's my big T-O-O-O-E?"² Although the folk narrator, unlike the classical rhetorician, may not go through systematic studious deliberations in preparing a presentation of his case, he is nonetheless performing before an audience for a classical purpose: to instruct, to delight, and to move that audience. In this act of narration, William Hugh Jansen observes:

the reciter of the bit of folklore steps outside himself as an individual and assumes a pose toward his audience, however small, that differs from his everyday, every-hour-in-the-day relationship to the same audience. Integral in this posing is a purpose. The poser is as poser a teacher, a monitor, or an entertainer; he may be any one of any combination of the three. In order that a verbal folk item may be . . . performed, there must be some amount of this posing on the part of the individual who makes that term oral, and I think this posing will have as its purpose--implicit or explicit or conventional--one of three aims . . . : didacticism, admonition,

¹Ella E. Clark, Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953), p. 25.

²American Folk Tales and Songs, p. 59.

or entertainment. All of these alternates are necessitated by the disparate nature of verbal folklore, including as it does, ballads, proverbs, marchen, riddles, legends, and so on.¹

While field workers in folklore collect material from both skilled and unskilled narrators, storytelling among many people, says Stith Thompson, "is a consciously acquired and practical art."² Robert J. Miller, collecting tales from the Makah Indians on the Olympic peninsula of Washington, makes the same observation. Tales he heard told in the presence of the collector, the collector's wife, and other visitors, all of whom made proper vocal responses and signs, such as nods, smiles, or frowns, "were stylistically closer to those found in other collections from the Northwest Coast than to tales collected while only the collector was present."³ The artistic folk performer, he who purposefully perfects the "vitalizing context of narration," works within traditional patterns of form, stylistics, and commonplace events or setting, but as he controls the materials at hand, says Thompson, "he adds thereto his individual genius and often the genius of [those] from whom he learned his

¹"Classifying Performance in the Study of Verbal Folklore," in Studies in Folklore, ed. W. Edson Richmond (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1957), pp. 112-13.

²The Folktale (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1946), p. 450.

³"Situation and Sequence in the Study of Folklore," Journal of American Folklore 65 (1952): 29-48.

art."¹ Tom Hunt, a storyteller who lives in a log cabin in the southern mountains describes his individual method of delivery.

Huh.--I saw one of the old tales in a book one of the Weaver kids brought by here the other day. . . . It was like "Jack and his Heiffer Hide" but it was so different from the way I knew it, it got me all bothered up. I got to thinkin' about that tale then, and the next time one of them Weaver young 'uns asked me for it, why! it had got so cluttered up in my mind I told it end-over-backwards. I never could tell a tale unless I told it straight out--unthoughtedly, you might say.²

Hunt's and any storyteller's personally traditional use of material, however flexible and adaptable, is preferable to pure originality in folk performance because the narrator is "bringing [the audience] something with the stamp of good authority, heard from the past or from some old eye-witness or participant."³ The ways and means of the raconteur, therefore, provide the substance for study of the narrator, his persona, and his delivery as he persuades his listener by authority within a framework of the familiar and predictable, and sometimes, the visible. The teller of the jump story jumps toward the audience himself as he reaches his dramatic climax. The narrator of "The Hickory Toothpick,"

¹Thompson, p. 4.

²Reported by Richard Chase, in Grandfather Tales (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948), p. 3.

³Thompson, p. 4.

for example, produces physical evidence to prove his point: As Old Sol Shell of eastern Kentucky tells the story, he chopped down the tallest tree on Pine Mountain and trimmed off the limbs for kindling, but before he could saw up the log itself, it rolled down Pine Mountain, "shot across the bottom, and up Black Mountain," teetered on the ridge a bit, and came rolling back. Sol tried to nail it with his ax, but its momentum was too great, and it went up Black Mountain again. Sol gave up trying to catch the log and resorted to burning his furniture for firewood. After a week or so, however, he noticed a

sort of trough there between the two mountains where that log had been slidin'. . . . When I got to the bottom of that trough I looked and there--still slidin' back and forth just a few inches--was my log. And--don't you know! With all that seesawin' that log had worn down to the size of a toothpick. . . . You may not believe me, but--I've kept it to this day.--There, look at it yourself.¹

Here the narrator reached into his pocket, and pulled out a whittled-down hickory twig sharpened to a point.

To call one a folk performer, however, is not to say he has refined his skills to a point of sophistication bordering on the literary. On the contrary, the narrator, unlike the polished writer or actor, usually speaks extemporaneously. Words pour from his mouth often in disjumbled thoughts and phraseology. Richard Dorson has recorded such

¹Chase, American Folk Tales and Songs, p. 100.

a narration:

Well, there's a farmer. This fella was traveling along, he traveled all day long, come night he tired. Young fella, nice looking fella. Knocked at a farmhouse. A man come to the door, wondered what he wanted.¹

Colloquial style and circuitous oral delivery have a certain rhetorical effectiveness, however. As Mody Boatright observes, prefatory rambling fixes a date: "Yes, it was '87, the same year Roaring Springs went dry." Digressions delineate character: "This was the same Bill Webber who took a fancy to a fine new saddle in Pete Cowan's shop." References to places contribute a note of realism and credibility: "It was on Brushy Creek where that feller was killed by the Comanches."²

The rhetoric of oral delivery involves more than diction and sentence structure, however. Gestures, inflections, vocal tone quality, and facial expressions heighten or detract from the dramatic effect of a tale. DeWitt Murray, of Portland, Oregon, is a storyteller who "talks with his hands." Tall, skinny, and bald, he has fascinated three generations of listeners and spectators as he uses the first two of his long, yellowed, bony fingers on his right hand to measure from some spot on his left arm with

¹"Now's Your Chance," in Buying the Wind (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p. 81.

²Folk Laughter on the American Frontier, p. 90.

its first two fingers extended: "A cane, oh, 'bout that long"; or "a tyke, legs no longer'n [right fingers against left fingertips] a tadpole's." His tales become studies in sizes (Aristotle's argument by degrees) as his audiences prompt, as he knows they will, "Tell us how big that sapling was, Uncle DeWitt," or "How tall did you say that midget was?"¹

While physical movements and attributes of the narrator, collectable on phonograph, tape, and in photography by field workers, are difficult, if not impossible, to analyze within the context of this study, they are a significant part of the narrator's rhetorical effectiveness. Constance Rourke associates such a performance with a folk theatrical:

full of experiment, finding its way to audiences by the quick responses and rejections. On the stage the shimmer and glow, the minor appurtenances, the jokes . . . and songs, the stretching and changes of plots, are arranged and altered almost literally by the audience or in their close company; its measure is human, not literary.²

Here we come full circle. As the folk narrator evokes audience response by way of invention (subject matter), proofs (emotional appeal), style, and delivery, so does the audience, whether enthusiastic, casual, or bored,

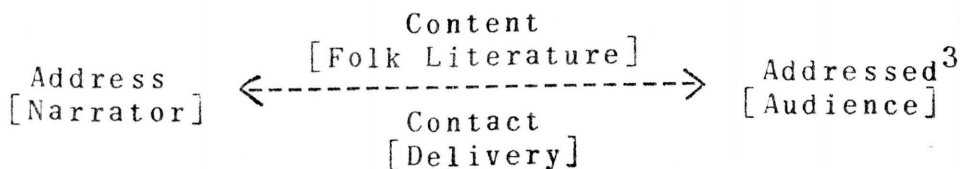
¹Family recollections.

²American Humor: A Study of the National Character (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc., 1931; Doubleday Anchor Books, 1955), p. 93.

evoke a response from the narrator. Face-to-face with his listener, the narrator is immediately aware, as the writer is not, of interest or disinterest, approval or disapproval. He may adjust his performance as he goes along, or revise it in subsequent retellings. The storyteller, sensitive to his audience, knows what Aristotle knows when he says:

The same thing does not appear the same to men when they are friendly and when they hate, nor when they are angry and when they are in a gentle mood; in these different moods the same thing will appear either wholly different in kind, or different as to magnitude. . . . To the [audience] that is eager and hopeful, the proposed object [the tale], if pleasant, seems a thing that . . . will be good; to the man that is apathetic or disgruntled, the same object seems just the opposite.¹

The narrator's action and the audience's reaction become an interaction described by Aristotle as "a speech becoming the joint result of the speaker, his subject, and the person addressed."² Richard Coe illustrates such relationships with a diagram:



¹p. 91.

²Ibid., p. 16.

³"The Rhetoric of Paradox," Address to the Rhetoric Symposium, Texas Woman's University, Denton, Texas, 25 April 1975.

Content and delivery pointing to and from both narrator and audience indicate the interdependence of each item in the diagram.

Robert A. Georges calls such interaction "communicative events."¹ Storytelling arises from a social experience which sets up a structure of identity and status relationships. As the storyteller formulates, encodes, and transmits his tale, his social identity is more prominent than that of his audience, establishing his rhetorical ethos. As the listener receives, decodes, and responds, his social identity increases in prominence. As Aristotle would say, the speaker's ethos has produced the proper attitude in the listener.² Or as Kenneth Burke would say, the listener now "identifies" with the narrator and his subject matter.³ As one interprets and the other responds, they shape the message jointly, thus increasing its prominence. Social and psychological forces, dependent upon the economic, educational, or regional status of all participants, and the forces of time and place (occasions), shape the performance from many sides, making each storytelling event unique, thus

¹"Toward an Understanding of Storytelling Events," Journal of American Folklore 82 (1969): 323.

²Pp. 91-92.

³A Rhetoric of Motives, p. 38.

illustrating the fact that tellers are not stereotypes, listeners are not passive, and stories are not static.¹

Even so, in the rhetoric of folklore, some narrators, like DeWitt Murray, are known for their individual performances. They are expected by the audience to tell a certain type of tale for certain occasions in a more-or-less anticipated manner. MacEdward Leach in an illustration to refute the generalization of "folk theatrical" proves it. He tells of a folksinger from Bryson City, North Carolina, who, "to let the song speak," sat expressionless with his head back and his eyes closed. "No histrionics," says Leach, "no acting."² Deadpan or not, however, the singer performed "on stage" in his own kitchen where "everyone around would gather . . . near the fireplace where [the singer's] wife would be busy preparing food." The song might "speak" by the rhetoric of its own content, but that was enhanced by the rhetoric of the singer's underplayed delivery which was expected and responded to by the audience. Leach makes no record of the wife's rhetoric while trying to cook in a crowded kitchen.

By way of contrast, Vance Randolph describes an Ozark singer who became so emotionally involved with the

¹Georges, p. 324.

²P. 37.

murder ballad he was singing that he broke into his own performance, "and with a gasping sob burst out in a paroxysm of rage. 'Oh God!' he shrilled. 'The son of a bitch! God rot the critter!'"¹

A tale's psychological associations, so closely related to rhetorical effects, owe as much or more to the nationality and personality of the narrator as to subject matter or historical origins.² Richard Dorson, who writes extensively on oral styles and delivery, cites for example John Blackamore, a black narrator, who "will take a short anecdote familiar in the Negro repertoire and clothe it with panoramic detail of daily life." In his home locale in Missouri the narrator was a popular participant in all-night story-telling style events, but when he moved North for business reasons, "his storytelling style no longer held an audience and a few of his buddies left the room in boredom."³

In some societies certain tales are expected to be told by women, others by men. Among the American Indian communities of the Pacific northwest, tales are told only in the wintertime by older men. Grandfathers, rarely

¹Quoted by Alan Lomax in The Folk Songs of North America, p. 79.

²Lüthi, p. 14.

³"Oral Styles of American Folk Narrators," p. 84.

parents, tell the bedtime stories to which the children are expected to respond with "Haa!" when the interest is intense. When response fails, the narrators know the children are asleep.¹ In Anglo-American groups, however, fairytales as bedtime stories are associated with a mother or a grandmother as narrator. From a rhetorical aspect, Lüthi says:

The kindly, maternal tone of voice which awakes a child's love and understanding for fairy tales is in its way just as well received as the mysterious, magical tone which carries the spellbound listener off into another world.²

Similarly, the tall tale belongs to the "sagaman,"³ the old timer who captivates his audience with hyperbolic mock heroics of impossible dangers with improbable victories which are from his own experience, or at least from those of "a feller he knows." The successful personal saga, says Dorson, "evokes belief, suspense, and admiration."⁴ If the listener is not literally persuaded to believe, he, charmed by the fantasy and pathos, willingly suspends his disbelief, identifying with and responding to the tall tale until the end, when, in either delight or disgust, he admits to being hoodwinked.

¹Robert J. Miller, pp. 20-31.

²Lüthi, p. 71.

³Richard Dorson, Bloodstoppers and Bearwalkers: Folk Traditions of the Upper Peninsula (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952), p. 249.

⁴"Oral Styles of American Folk Narrators," p. 83.

The proper persona for the proper story and the proper audience, called "decorum" by Aristotle, creates a bond between narrator and listener which involves social responsibility and responsiveness, a process, says Kenneth Burke, "of giving and receiving."¹ The bond is forged from two directions, by the credulity of the listener who responds to the charms of the eyewitness or participant. Benjamin A. Botkin says that in matters of superstition among the folk hearsay or even gossip may perform the rhetorical function of persuasion, but

in a culture of which the spoken, living word . . . becomes the "principle vehicle," the past comes to the present as things or words; what is neither seen nor remembered vanishes beyond recovery.²

The narrator, as operator of the "principle vehicle," remembers, sees, and relates within traditional patterns of form and style to process, preserve, and to persuade. As Lüthi points out, "The original teller of the local legend believed his tale and by no means wanted to characterize it as legendary in our sense."³

In folklore, to preserve is not to encase under glass. On the contrary, the fact that there are variants

¹Cited by Benjamin A. Botkin, "The Folk and the Individual: Their Creative Reciprocity," English Journal, College Edition 27 (1938): 134.

²Ibid., pp. 133-34.

³Lüthi, p. 35.

to a tale can be charged to the narrator who might forget some details and add others. He might--and collectors in the field show that he does--combine tales. He reiterates details for analogy, emphasis, or mnemonic reasons. He often assumes a first-person point of view even as he tells recognizably traditional tales. Arthur L. Campa notes:

The teller of a folktale, unlike the informant who gives a brief account of events rather than a narrative, reveals part of his life, part of his accumulated experience as he relates what tradition has willed him together with what he has woven around this heritage. Eventually a storyteller comes to believe what he has told and retold because he has put part of his own thinking into the narrative to the point where the narrative becomes his own property. This is the process that carries traditions from one generation to another in an unbroken though somewhat tortuous line.¹

The storyteller makes the tale his own, and at the same time recognizes the community property claims of the audience as he replaces unfamiliar details by the familiar.² Collectors who follow individual narrators to various storytelling events report that crudities and obscenities, profanity and double entendres which are traditional devices within certain tales are omitted when children or clergymen are part of the audience. A subtle change in the ending of "The Riddle Song" illustrates the rhetorical decorum, the suitability of subject matter to audience. The song begins:

¹Treasure of The Sangre Christos (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), p. vii.

²Thompson, p. 436.

I gave my love a cherry that has no stone.
 I gave my love a chicken that has no bone.
 I gave my love a ring that has no end.
 I gave my love a baby with no cryen.

The riddle question asks how each of these objects can be as they are described. The answer explains that the cherry is still in the blossom, the chicken is in the egg, and the ring rolls endlessly--or the ring symbolizes the couple's endless love story. The folksong versions sung or published for family audiences by Richard Chase, Burl Ives, and Cecil Sharp, and others, explain the last named gift as "A baby when its sleeping there's no cryen." A variant, however, explains, "A baby when its making there's no cryen."

Handbooks of rhetoric set forth prescriptive patterns for memory as part of the rhetorical canon, but in folklore, the faulty rather than the finished memory is a quality of rhetorical effectiveness. That the narrator stammers, repeats himself, and contradicts and corrects himself as he performs contributes a reality suggesting a probability that he was indeed a participant or that he heard directly from one who was. Thanks to modern technology, phonographs, tape recorders, and linguistic symbols have supplemented the field collector's notebook and ear. Voice patterns, inflections, and intonations can now be preserved and replayed for analysis. Many folklorists relying on such equipment have described oral characteristics of storytellers and singers, but because of the individuality

of the narrators, a rhetorical analysis of each one can only become a study in specifics, not necessarily conclusive to a general theory of the rhetoric of folklore. A paper written by Elizabeth A. Meese for the Kentucky Folklore Record, however, analyzing the suprasegmental phonemes in a folktale, graphically illustrates the rhetorical purposes and effect of the physical voice telling a ghost story.

Meese worked from a tape recording of a tale told, with hesitations, repetition, and digressions, by William Nolan, an eighty-two-year-old Kentucky mountain man. When Nolan was about ten, his Uncle Jeff, caught outside in a rainstorm, sought shelter in an empty cabin near the Nolan home. As he was drying his clothes by a fire he had built inside,

a big, somethin', just like a big, black cat, walked right up to 'im, looked right up in his face, an' says, "There's two of us here tonight, ain't they?" He says, "I say, I say ah . . . 'They a won't be but one in a minute!" Said he grabbed his hat an' broke to run. An' says, run till he plum give out. Couldn't go no further. He stopped. Git his breath, 'n said walked right up 'im, looked up at 'im, says, "W'had a pritty good race, ain't we?" He says, "I sigh, I said, "Yes! An' we have another'n just as quick as I git my breath a minute!"¹

¹Elizabeth A. Meese, "The Art of the Tale Teller: A Study of Suprasegmental Phonemes in a Folktale." Kentucky Folklore Record 14 (1968): 32. All quotations from this article are reprinted by permission of Kentucky Folklore Record and the Kentucky Folklore Society, Box U-169, Bowling Green, Kentucky 42101. Copyright 1968 by the Kentucky Folklore Society.

To illustrate Nolan's adapting his performance to his audience, Meese explains:

Although Mr. Nolan . . . believes in ghosts himself, he is aware of the discrepancy between his position as a southerner, who is regarded as a "briar hopper" or a "hillbilly," and that of the collector who is viewed both by Mr. Nolan and society as an educated person. He demonstrates his defensiveness by correcting occasional dialectical idiosyncrasies which he knows are non-standard. He says, for example, "Daddy gat . . . got ahold of 'im" and "just actually got as . . . got afraid." Here he is obviously correcting the dialectical "gat" to "got" and "as . . . ascared" to "afraid."¹

Nolan relies on Aristotle's inartificial proof (a witness) to "establish and emphasize the authenticity of the source," Meese says. "He" tends to speak in utterances that are shorter than those which appear in normal speech. For example, he says:

²bût I + ³knów the mân² | wàs a + ³trúthfùl + ²mân |
hè wàs + my ³uñcle² || ²

Meese explains her symbols, which are standard ones from The Structure of American English, by W. Nelson Francis:

There are four pitch phonemes: 1 - low; 2 - normal; 3 - high; and 4 - very high. Four levels of stress are recognized: /' / - primary, or strongest; /[^] / - secondary; /[^] / - tertiary; and /[~] / - zero stress which is the weakest and commonly left unmarked. Three

¹Ibid., p. 26.

²Ibid., p. 27.

degrees of pauses, or terminal junctures, are indicated in the following manner: // - single-bar juncture, a slight hesitation; ||| - double-bar juncture, a little longer; and /#/ - the double-cross juncture, which denotes the silence usually accompanied by a previous drop in pitch. The open, or plus juncture, /+/, occurs between phonemes, and is barely perceptible.¹

Throughout the tale, Mr. Nolan impresses upon his listeners the truth of what he is telling:

2Thîs is âll + 3só + nòw² | 2whàt + I'm + 2a³téllin'²#
 3Yes | 4so³#

Meese says:

The double-cross junctures which isolate "Yes, so!" heighten the emphasis of pitch and stress. Isolated, single word utterances also occur when Nolan relates some of the more dramatic events in the tale. Notice their frequency in the following passage in which the ghost is first described:

[said it was a] || bíg³ || 2sómethìn'³ | 2jùst +
 lîke a + bíg³ | bláck³ | 3cát² |

The double-bar junctures preceding and following the first use of "big" is an especially dramatic pause, forcing the listener to anticipate the horror in his own mind. The effect of the mounting drama as the informant says "big black cat" is clearly indicated to the pitch and stress phonemes as well. [Emphasis mine.]²

Diction and grammatical patterns differ according to regional and educational backgrounds. Mr. Nolan's delivery is not totally representative of narrators outside

¹Ibid., p. 26.

²Ibid., pp. 27-28.

the southern mountain areas, but his pitch and stress on certain words he chooses to dramatize or to create suspense are typical of all narrators who seek to persuade and entertain an audience.

Because the rhetorical effect of folk literature depends primarily on oral delivery, Jan Brunvand suggests that it be called aural, a term most applicable to folksong which "reaches the ear from voice or musical instruments."¹ Rhythms, pauses, and protracted stresses distinguish folksong delivery. As with the folk tale, it is impossible to cite a single example as representative of all, or even most, folksingers although one might examine a number of types of songs that lend themselves to a delivery tradition. Cowboy songs like "The Old Chisolm Trail," celebrating a devil-may-care freedom of open spaces, function as round-up songs to herd cattle to a branding or to market. Others, like "Doney Girl" and "Git Along, Little Dogie," lament the hard and lonely life amid sand and sagebrush. Sung to a rocking rhythm of a lullaby, they soothe restless cattle and prevent stampedes. A rhetoric of delivery primarily designed to move cattle rather than men is equally effective among human beings. The continuous popularity of cowboy folksongs in Eastern as well as Western

¹p. 4.

societies has created the picaresque-type romantic image of the Old West that is an indomitable element of American folklore.

Western cowboy songs fit into categories of occupational ballads--those which describe an activity--and work songs--those which create a rhythmical incentive to tug, chop, hammer, or march. The effectiveness of such functional songs depends more on delivery than on any other element of rhetoric. Alan Lomax, who with his father, John, collected work songs from cotton fields, labor crews, and prisons, says:

The pace of the work and the spacing of the work blows, which the songs control, are for the workers the qualities most required in a good song leader. Matching his tempo to their muscular tone and his songs to their collective mood, giving voice to his own fantasies and to theirs and improvising comments on the happenings of the day--a good work-song leader can keep a gang of men working happily for long, hot hours.¹

One of the Lomax's discoveries was Huddie Ledbetter, called Leadbelly, a black folksinger, sometimes convict, and composer of "Goodnight, Irene." At a time when Leadbelly worked with other roustabouts and mule-skinners (drivers) on Mississippi levees, Lomax writes:

Every skinner had his own tune and his own verse. Their voices rang like bugles and moaned like trombones. They could improvise new stanzas till the sun went down. Their wayward country melodies

¹The Folk Songs of North America, p. 524.

cannot be written down, for they are all movement, all soaring or gliding from one note to another. . . . Such a song is the old levee camp blues ["I'm All Out An' Down"], which Leadbelly learned as a boy in Louisiana and arranged for guitar. It begins with a long country whoop and goes on to an elaborate 10-bar blues. Leadbelly punctuated it here and there with an explosive TI-YOW! imitative of the pop of the skinner's blacksnake whip.¹

The leader of the work song is the rhetorician persuading his audience to act. Lomax describes the effect of the argument of the song, "It Makes a Long-Time Man Feel Bad," and the effect of delivery on a sweating gang of convicts:

The leader gathers his chorus together like a fist of voices and flings them at the hot blue sky, at the faces of the guards, at the heavy, wounding green of the bottom woods. A tall yellow boy, lithe as a stalk of cane, spins his pick handle on the up-stroke till it "shines like a diamond," and laughs out the bass part. A stumpy man with one white eye like a dead moon in his dusty black face decorates each final cadence with a high, sweet, soprano cry. Three other old-timers fill in with rasping, syncopated unison. And just at the leader's elbow a shy young fellow sings second lead, following every phrase with a wild HANH! of exhaled breath as the picks fall on the off-beats. Thus a half-dozen or a dozen Negroes singing and working together sound like a regiment of humanity on the march; and, sounding so to themselves, the men take heart, the muscles relax and roll supplely under the sweat-cooled skin, and the heart-breaking job gets done in pride and beauty, and with a rush of communal joy.²

Singers of folk lyrics and ballads, nonfunctional songs, may be less dramatic in delivery than work song leaders even as they tap a toe or clap in time with the

¹Ibid., p. 573.

²Ibid., p. 523.

rhythm. Traditional singers develop individual styles of delivery according to their musical knowledge and talent and their personal feelings for the language and meaning of the songs. Thus, says Abrahams, "the traditional performer produces variations in an unintentional or subconscious but nonetheless creative way."¹ Folklore, never static, lives and develops through variations, producing rhetorical elements of form, style, and artistic proofs. According to Aristotle, "It is not enough to know what to say--one must know how to say it."² How the story teller or singer practices his individual delivery determines the effectiveness of his position in the triad of narrator-tale or song-audience in the rhetoric of folk literature.

¹A Singer and Her Song, p. 161.

²p. 182.

CHAPTER IV

THE ARTISTIC APPEALS: LOGOS, ETHOS, PATHOS

Folklorists should not neglect the emotions that are hidden away behind the superficial sayings and doings, since the former belong not to the mere context and atmosphere, but to the very essence of what he has to study.

R. R. Marett

A basic function of rhetoric, says Kenneth Burke, is to control attitudes by the use of language with which the audience may favorably identify his own causes or unfavorably identify the causes of his opponent.¹ In the classical view, attitudes are rhetorically controlled by what Aristotle calls artificial or artistic proofs (elements of argument): logos (appeal to reason), ethos, (appeal by means of good character), and pathos (appeal to emotion).² A basic quality of folklore is that it, with the same artistic proofs, controls attitudes, as seen, for example, in this folk ballad, "Mary Fagan":

Little Mary Fagan
She went to town one day;
She went to the pencil factory
To get her weekly pay.

¹A Rhetoric of Motives, p. 46.

²Pp. 8-9.

She left her home at eleven;
 She kissed her mother goodbye;
 Not once did the poor girl think
 She was going off to die.¹

From the first word the reader is prompted to sympathize with Mary. The adjective "little" implies that she is either small or young, or both, and, therefore, helpless and innocent. Lines 3 and 4 suggest an admiration for the Yankee work ethic. Mary is a factory girl, paid by the week, who must collect her wages on her day off. Why else would she leave "her home at eleven"? (Other versions say she goes on Saturday.) Line 5, "She kissed her mother goodbye," dramatizes not only a familial closeness, commonplace in folklore, but suggests a certain purity and goodness. Lines 7 and 8 evoke in the reader a sense of pity and terror as they foreshadow the tragedy to follow.

The ballad, based on a 1913 crime committed in Atlanta, Georgia, tells how Mary, lured to the factory basement by Leo Frank, is attacked and murdered. In some versions, Leo is apprehended promptly; in others, a porter is falsely accused and lynched before the true villain is brought to justice. The ballad, in each of its versions, rhetorically controls the reader's attitudes of sympathy

¹Quoted by Mellinger E. Entry, "More Songs from the Southern Highlands," Journal of American Folklore 44 (1931): 105-107.

and horror by melodramatically pitting Good and Evil as absolutes against one another:

Leo Frank met her
With a brutish heart and grin:
He says to little Mary-:
"You'll never see home again."

Later, the singer introduces the sentimental:

Mother sits a-weeping;
She weeps and mourns all day
And hopes to meet her darling
In a better land someday.

He calls the audience to share in the sorrow, to "identify":

Come, all ye good people,
Wherever you may be,
Suppose that "little Mary"
Belonged to you or me.

In "Mary Fagan," as in most murder ballads, rhetorical control cannot be divorced from the exploitation of sensationalism in both the subject matter and the singer's choice of words, as, for example, "The tears rolled down her cheeks / The blood rolled down her back." Plato, who was ambivalent in his attitudes toward rhetoric, condemned that rhetoric which played upon the audience's emotions for the purposes of "dazzling, not instructing."¹ Indeed, sophisticated readers, often pronouncing the same condemnation on folklore, say that it deals with the irrational and the sentimental. But Aristotle, who considered rhetoric an

¹Gorgias, trans. W. C. Helmbolt (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill; The Liberal Arts Press, Inc., 1952), p. 23.

art, said the speaker could and should use whatever artistic means (proof) he has at his disposal to create the desired state of feeling within the audience in order to move that audience.¹ The artistic proofs, logos, ethos, and pathos, which he analyzed so thoroughly for the benefit of practicing rhetoricians, are also the basis for folklore's effect on its audience.

Logos, the first named of Aristotle's artistic proofs, is the argument itself, or, in the case of folk literature, the subject matter of the tale, the song, or the proverb as an example of discourse made up, as Lane Cooper says, "of more general and less general statements in succession."² The enthymeme (arguing from probability or example), rather than the syllogism (arguing from scientific logic), is folklore's basis for persuasion although certain tale types, the hero legend, for instance, do have a syllogistic logic:

Major premise: A hero (or heroine) is one who gives his life to save another.

Minor premise: Elizabeth Manheim, in "The Great Sacrifice,"³ hears her Tory father plot to kill General George

¹P. 91.

²Ibid., p. xxxiv.

³In Moritz Jagendorf, ed., Upstate, Downstate (New York: The Vanguard Press, 1949), pp. 216-21.

Washington. She exchanges rooms with the general and in the night is killed in her bed.

Conclusion: Elizabeth, therefore, is a heroine.

For the most part, however, folklore logos cannot be analyzed according to syllogistic logic. Indeed, B. A. Botkin says that the essence of folklore, its "folkness," is illogical or unscientific in its intuitive belief in and response to the unknown and mysterious. Its appeal is through the "omnipotence of thought which underlies superstition, magic, and religion."¹ According to Archer Taylor, folklore is "associative thinking"--unconscious, suggestive aspects of thought rather than logical thinking. He illustrates his definition of associative thinking with an example from folklife:

The plan of villages is traditional and differs from region to region: the New England village has its commons and the Western town is a long string of houses. The forms of the houses are traditional.²

When one speaks of a regional village, the identifying images come to the mind of the audience who applies associative thinking. Although story tellers and singers exercise varying degrees of conscious activity, the unconscious

¹"The Folkness of the Folk," in Folklore in Action, ed. Horace P. Beck (Philadelphia: The American Folklore Society, Inc., 1962), p. 49.

²"The Place of Folklore," PMLA 67 (February 1952): 61.

forces of associative thinking operate to preserve folk literature.

Paulo de Carvolo-Nato says folklore is not unlogical but prelogical--it is that in which the act is motivated by individual feeling rather than by scientific reasoning.¹ Carvolo-Nato's theory is illustrated in the urban belief legend, to cite one example, where hearsay becomes credible as it reinforces itself through repetitive tellings and many variants. The urban belief legend of the unwanted passenger in the back of the car varies in detail as it "migrates" from place to place, but the more it is told, the more it is accepted as "true." Because of an innate prelogical fear of evil strangers, the audience unconsciously rejects the logical probability that if the event occurred in many places, it must be a fabrication and accepts instead the probability that "if it happened there it can happen here." General legends also, those narratives set in an identifiable time period, are credible, if not literally true; and in that credibility lies their logos. The body of argument, the logos, of the general or local legend is cause and effect. The face etched on the Alabama courthouse window is caused by an unexplained phenomenon occurring when a

¹The Concept of Folklore, trans. Jacques M. P. Wilson (Coral Gables, Florida: University of Miami Press, 1971), p. 40.

lynching party comes for the prisoner. In a Ponca Indian legend, "The Deer Woman," a mysterious and beautiful woman often appears at tribal dances. If she chooses a young man for a partner (cause: evil intentions), she later abandons him, mutilated and dead (effect). If she chooses a young woman (cause), the Deer Woman either kills her or whisks her off to a prostitution ring.¹

The sophisticate may quarrel with the logic of events within the tale, but legends whose appeal depends on a willing suspension of disbelief are not departures from the truth, says Philip Wheelwright, so much as they are evidence of half-guessed or hidden truths which the tales themselves symbolize.² In other words, the legends serve as reminders or didactic warnings against evil, intemperance, or the stranger in one's midst.

Logos in folklore, therefore, is what Theodore Armand Ribot calls the "logic of the senses," emotional reasoning which adapts beliefs, desires, or aversions to a justification of phenomena it cannot prove.³ The logic of the senses as a basis for logos is best illustrated by the

¹Marriott and Rachlin, pp. 161-64.

²P. 480.

³Cited by Carvola-Nato, pp. 54-55.

differences in the logos of the fairy tale, the legend, and the myth. The argument or subject matter of the fairy tale is that of personal desires and escape from frustrations and human conflict. Imaginative in nature, its appeal is in the promise of a happy ending for deserving characters and just punishment for the wicked.¹ In an Americanization of the Cinderella story, for example, Ashpet, the hired girl is kind to "an old witch woman lived over the gap in the mountain." When the daughters of Ashpet's employer go "off to meetin'" the witch-woman appears, does Ashpet's chores by reciting magical incantations, and sends her, dressed in a new red outfit, off to the church-house too. There the hired girl meets the king's son but loses her slipper when she returns to the house. The story does not end with the traditional discovery and recognition scene, however. After the wedding, the two daughters and their mother still make trouble for Ashpet, until the king's son takes matters into his own hands. He tosses the hateful women out to the Hairy Old Man who lives in a water cave, where "they're down there yet, I reckon."² The logos of the fairy tale is the rise of the deserving and the fall of the undeserving.

¹Susanne K. Langer, Philosophy in a New Key: A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite, and Art (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957), p. 176.

²"Ashpet," in Chase, Grandfather Tales, pp. 115-23.

The effect of the rhetorical appeal of this logos is that it reinforces our desire for poetic justice. As Norman N. Holland observes, "Literature transforms our primitive wishes and fears into significance and coherence, and this transformation gives us pleasure."¹ The pleasure, then, is a response to the rhetoric of the folk literature.

Like fairy tales, myths make use of the marvelous and the imaginative, but they differ from fairy tales by the matter of logos. Myth is defined as "a story, presented as actually having occurred in a previous age, explaining the cosmological and supernatural traditions of a people, their gods, heroes, culture traits, religious beliefs, etc."² Myth deals with birth, death, natural conflicts, and a world view. Its characters are either divine or anthropomorphic beings who may guide, govern, or frustrate human desires and destiny.³ As a myth constitutes beliefs concerning the origin of the world, its logos is serious, and at some point in its development, it is taken seriously by narrator and audience. As David Bidney writes,

It is not only the metaphysical concepts involved or the prehistoric space-time in which the narrated events occurred, which determine whether or not a tale is

¹P. 30.

²Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, s. v. "Myth," by Ermine W. Voeglin.

³Langer, p. 176.

regarded as a myth; it is rather the psychocultural attitude or degree of belief of those who recount them [The] accepted belief or subjective truth of one epoch may become myth for another.¹

America's indigenous mythology is that of the Indians. It survived in the esoteric societies of the Kivas when immigrating missionaries attempted to obliterate the myths altogether or to amalgamate them into a Christian framework. Even so, some creation myths parallel the creation story in Genesis. In the Cheyenne "How the World Was Made"² Maheo, the All Spirit, lived in a void in the beginning. He divided the water from the land, ordered Light to spread, decorated Grandmother Earth with trees and flowers, made man from his own right rib, and woman from his left. In the Modoc "How the World Was Made"³ "Kumokums was the one that made the world and everything that is in it." After dividing earth from water, making plants and living creatures, he rested. According to the Modocs, Kumokums is still sleeping, but they await his awakening to find and to correct the natural and social problems which have developed since his hibernation.

¹"The Concept of Myth and the Problem of Psychocultural Evolution," American Anthropologist 52 (1950): 15-26.

²Marriott and Rachlin, pp. 21-26.

³Ibid., pp. 27-29.

Religious ceremonies vary from tribe to tribe, but certain principles of belief exist in Indian mythology as a whole. For example, the logos of the Navajo myth, "Male and Female Created He Them: The Water of Separation,"¹ is the explanation of the concept of duality, and for the need for the two parts to become one. According to the myth, First Man and First Woman and their Twins came to this world from four worlds below the waters. Because of the sexist nature of their chores--Man hunted, Woman gardened--they began to feel independent of one another. They quarreled, and Man moved across the River of Separation. For a while, all went well; but eventually Woman's garden did not provide sufficiently for her needs, and Man missed home cooking. Of necessity they reconciled:

from then on the River of Separation was a quiet stream again. When men and women crossed it, they crossed it together. For neither could get along without the other, and both had learned their lesson.²

By classification, "The Waters of Separation" may be called one of the "little stories" as accurately as it is called a myth. "Little stories" are the how-and-why stories the Indians told as object lessons for children.

¹Ibid., pp. 90-95.

²Ibid., p. 95.

Less overtly didactic than the "little story," more down-to-earth than the myth, the logos of the legend echoes elements of subject matter from both tale types. Often explanatory of natural phenomena, its characters are humans or personifications, perhaps historical and local, from whom develops a "culture hero" who possesses both altruistic and mischievous personality traits.¹ In Indian legend, Coyote, sometimes called Old Man Coyote, is the culture hero who by his exploits runs into trouble as often as he meets with success. In one legend he is responsible for equal hours of night and day. The sun shone for long, irregular periods of time, making the day creatures happy and the night creatures unhappy. It went away for other long, irregular periods, making the night creatures happy and day creatures unhappy. Finally Old Man Coyote agreed with all creatures that some system should be developed which would satisfy everyone. He brought out the guessing bones, a game similar to Button-button-who's-got-the-button? The game, described by Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin, is conducted "by two people holding two counters [bones], one marked and one unmarked, in either hand. The guesser for the opposing team tries to find both marked counters in a single guess. If he succeeds, the counters pass to his side. If he fails, they

¹Langer, p. 181.

remain with the original team."¹ Both sides under Old Man Coyote's direction were so successful in passing bones from one to another team mate without being guessed by the opponents that even the sun tired of waiting for a decision and went down for a few hours, and rose again to see how the game was going. It remained up for a few hours, but "because nobody won the game, the day and night took turns from that time on. Everybody had the same time to come out and live his life the way he wanted to as everybody else."²

Argument by explanatory details or universal concepts creates the logos within the narrative of legend or myth. Because of the logos of either tale type, says Mody Boatright, "It is possible to believe the myth [or the legend] without believing in the historicity of a single specific narrative embodiment of it."³

The "meaning" of myth or legend often lies below the surface narrative, but the logos of the folk ballad is the literal level of the story it tells, whether based upon historical events, as "Mary Fagan" and "Tom Dula" are, or on the progressing chronology of "The Scolding Wife," in which the narrator married on Monday, discovered his wife's

¹Marriott and Rachlin, pp. 128-29.

²Ibid., p. 132.

³"On the Nature of Myth," Southwest Review 39 (1954): 131-36.

scolding tongue on Tuesday, cut a hickory stick on Wednesday, beat her on Thursday, sent her off with devils on Friday, and on Saturday, dined happily alone.¹ C. Malcolm Laws, Jr. observes that "American ballads often use the journalistic method of telling a story. That is, they reveal what has happened and recount the story in detail." The appeal of logos is that such a method "immediately excites one's interest to read and listen further."² But Laws also observes a racial difference between white and Negro murder ballads. In "Mary Fagan," the white ballad is concerned with the horror of the murder itself. The Negro ballad is almost casual about the act of murder but dwells in great detail upon the trial, execution, or funeral. Stagolee, in the ballad of that name, shoots Billy Lyons six times, but the shots are described quite matter-of-factly:

He shot him three times in the shoulder,
Lawd, and three times in the side,
Well, the last time he shot him
Cause Billy Lyons to die.

The sheriff orders his deputies to bring in Stagolee, but they, knowing his meanness, refuse to arrest him:

"If you want that bad man Stagolee,
Go 'rest him by yourself."

¹Abrahams and Foss, p. 72.

²p. 33.

The sheriff himself makes the arrest when Stagolee comes into the bar. In succeeding stanzas, Stagolee is brought to the gallows but does not die in the first attempt, a fact that frightens the hangman. Stagolee does die eventually and has an impressive funeral:

Three hundred dollar funeral,
Thousand dollar hearse.
Satisfaction undertaker
Put Stack six feet in the earth.

But the folk hero-bad man is still undefeated:

Stagolee, he told the Devil,
Says, "Come on and have some fun--
You stick me with your pitchfork,
I'll shoot you with my forty-one."

Stagolee took the pitchfork,
And he laid it on the shelf.
Says, "Stand back, Tom Devil,
I'm gonna rule Hell by myself."¹

In white and Negro folk ballads, logos appeals to different divisions of decorum: the fitness of subject, style, and argument to audience.² "This is not to suggest that Negro singers approve of murders," Laws explains. "But they understand how, provoked beyond endurance, a man or woman may be driven to kill, and they know, sometimes from personal experience, the devastating effects of long years in prison." In the so-called "bad man ballads" like "Stagolee," however, fate catches up with the evil doer, but "just as

¹In Alan Lomax, The Folk Songs of North America, pp. 571-72.

²Lanham, pp. 29-30.

the white outlaw becomes something of a ballad hero, so too does the Negro who flouts the law."¹

Folk fascination for outlaw and victim is only one facet by which logos in song makes its appeal. Songs about occupations, the come-all-ye ballads of miners, sailors, lumbermen, etc., appeal to a brotherhood of workers and jeer at their rivals.² "John Henry" and "She'll Be Comin' Around the Mountain" are only two famous titles from a vast body of occupational songs. The logos of such songs appeals by a logic of senses to camaraderie and pride of place, as a miner's song illustrates:

A miner's life for me
With the boys that's light and free,
So join with me and give a hearty cheer.
For frolic, fun and mirth,
You may search all o'er the earth,
A miner's life is happy all the year.³

Even the more realistic "The Hard-Working Miner" appeals by the logos of the heroics of sacrificial duty:

To the hard-working miner whose dangers are great,
So many while mining have met their sad fate,
While doing their duty as miners will do,
Shut out from daylight, and their loving ones too.⁴

¹Laws, pp. 87-88.

²Standard Dictionary of American Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, s. v. "Work Songs," by Theresa C. Brakeley.

³In Richard M. Dorson, America in Legend (New York: Random House; Pantheon Books, 1973), p. 187.

⁴Ibid.

Logos appeals for the audience's attention by persuading him that the subject matter is worth his attention. Ethos, Aristotle's second identified artistic proof, persuades the audience that the speaker is worthy to be heard. Proper ethos puts the audience in the proper frame of mind to receive the tale or song. The speaker appeals by means of his own character, intelligence, and good will, qualities which, says Aristotle, come from within the discourse itself.¹ In other words, the audience senses from what the speaker says and how he says it that he and his subject matter do (or do not) deserve trust, respect, and attention. While the granny woman is naturally the most knowledgeable about cures, and the oldest inhabitant or tribal leader is by status the one to preside at storytelling events, the speaker's reputation, even when it is known, is not enough to create ethos, which is an inner attitude rather than outer prestige. No matter how famous, noble, or qualified a person is said to be, his ethos is effective only when he appeals personally by his words and his manner to his immediate audience, when he and the audience identify with one another.

In "Mary Fagan" we have a persona who is sympathetic to the innocent. His sense of justice is obvious when he tells of the false accusation: "the poor old

¹Pp. 8-9.

innocent negro / Had nothing he could tell," and of his anticipation of divine justice yet to come:

I have an idea in my mind
When Frankie comes to die
And stands examination
In the courthouse in the sky,

He'll be so astonished
To what the angels say
And how he killed little Mary
Upon that holiday.

Thus, the singer "persuades" by identification. He establishes a rapport between himself and the audience he addresses by using ideas and images he is reasonably sure the audience shares--those concerning moral and poetic justice. Thus he includes himself and the audience in mutual accord.¹ The act of identification in folk song is not intentionally contrived but is a native element within the rhetoric of folklore. Richard Chase writes:

A true folk singer sings "by heart" and not out of books. He never tries to impress an audience, because at his best he is a real artist. Sincerely he shares his love and knowledge of these things with you rather than performing them for you. He sings "unthoughtedly," without self-consciousness. He makes his points without overdoing.²

Thus, by the singer's own sincerity, his identification with and interest in his song, he establishes ethos which appeals to the audience to respond with trust, respect, and a mutual identification.

¹Ibid., p. 38.

²American Folk Tales and Songs, p. 16.

In the folktale, too, the narrator's ethos appeals to the audience by bringing into the tale favorable attitudes which the speaker and audience share and unfavorable conditions they mutually reject. For example, "The Foe in the Dark" begins:

In Bergen County, on Cherry Hill and nearby, the British and the German Hessians were battling our loyal men during the Revolution. But no matter how fierce and battling, how great the foe, the American boys were ever ready for fun and frolic and a little joy. So whenever there was a change the good Jersey Blues, as the Jersey fighting men were called, would leave Fort Patriot at Cherry Hill and go to the old stone tavern for a little merrymaking. There, sweethearts, friends, and parents of the loyal fighters waited with burning cheeks and beating hearts to steal a few hours of pleasure in talk and dance.¹

Here the appeal of ethos comes from this speaker's patriotism and sympathetic understanding of the American soldier, attitudes recognized and shared by the audience. The time is the American Revolution when the enemy battles our loyal men in fierce combat. The Americans are but boys. The implication is that, unlike the mercenary professionals, they are young and untrained. They deserve a bit of fun and frolic and a few hours of pleasure with those they love.

In "Wicked John and the Devil," however, the speaker includes the audience in a series of negative attitudes to establish ethos and identification:

¹Jagendorf, p. 80.

One time there was an old blacksmith that folks called Wicked John. They say he was right mean: never would join the church, never did go to meetin'. Always laughed about folks gettin' saved and bein' baptized and sech.¹

This version of "Wicked John" comes from North Carolina, deep in the Bible Belt, where listeners would respond to and identify with the storyteller's ethos in recognizing John's irreverence as the epitome of wickedness.

In the first-person story or song, the eye-witness element also creates an element of ethos. Wheelright associates the rhetorical effect of the first-person story with the "I-Thou" relationship: the first-person "I" speaks directly to an addressed second person, whether or not he calls on "thou" or "you." The listener, says Wheelright, "opens [his] heart and mind to 'signs of address.'"²

Examples of ethos in the "I-Thou" folklore are the "come-all-ye" narrative songs which directly address audiences of similar occupations, stations in life, or sympathies. As Theresa C. Brakeley says, "The singer identifies himself emotionally with his story . . . as the ballad builds up the heroism, cleverness, and stamina required for a particular calling and warns [the listener] against men of any rival trade."³

¹Chase, Grandfather Stories, p. 29.

²P. 479.

³In Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend, x. v. "Come-all-ye."

The first-person narrator's closeness to the story, its characters, or locale creates for him his ethos. In other words, he is "worthy of belief," or at least his tales and songs are worthy of attention and retelling because of forces within himself and his experiences. A narrator also persuades when he successfully brings his audience to a state of emotion appropriate for the particular tale or song. He persuades his listeners to laugh or to weep, to love or to hate, by the use of pathetic proofs or pathos, an appeal to emotions.¹

One appeals to his audience through the emotions by creating a desired state of feeling. The word pathos is derived from the verb paschein, meaning to suffer or to experience.² Through the emotions, says Plato, we experience either pleasure or pain. Through the storyteller's artistic appeal to the emotions of his audience, he allows or causes that audience to experience, or to identify with the state of feeling he wishes to create within them. Cicero believed that pathos was much more effective than ethos.³ In folklore, rhetorical effect cannot be measured by empirical

¹Aristotle, p. 92.

²James J. Murphy, ed., A Synoptic History of Classical Rhetoric (New York: Random House, 1972), p. 45.

³Orator, trans. G. L. Hendrickson and H. M. Hubbell (London: The Loeb Classical Library, 1962), p. 120.

results as an effective oration can be measured by a resultant vote for or against an issue; but the rhetorical methods of form, style, delivery, and appeal can be analyzed. Of the three artistic appeals, pathos is most obvious within folk literature. Pathos deals with both negative and positive emotions as it creates painful or pleasurable stages of feeling. The first half of Book II of Aristotle's Rhetoric classifies and discusses such negative emotions as pity, fear, anger, hatred, hubris, shame, envy; and such positive emotions as amity, confidence, benevolence, and emulation.

Except for irony, Aristotle does not discuss the appeal of humor; but Quintilian recognizes the rhetorical value of humor to "dispell the graver emotions of the judge by exciting his laughter." He divides humor into three categories of rhetorical effectiveness: (1) to reprove or to make light of another's arguments, (2) to suggest absurdities, and (3) to take words in a different sense than is usually expected.¹

In folklore, humor is used to reprove or to make light of dishonesty, hypocrisy, and ignorance, as countless tales told at the expense of lawyers, ministers, and backwoodsmen testify. Pomposity and greed or avarice are

¹Pp. 434 and 450-51.

themes which give rise to trickster tales. Tall tales, with their exuberant exaggerations or facetious understatements suggest, even create, absurdities; and folk speech, folk proverbs, and varieties of "numbskull stories" take words in a different sense than is usually expected. Vance Randolph reports that in the Ozarks, the word "piano" is modestly pronounced "pie-anno," because "pee-anno" sounds obscene.¹ Folktales explaining place names pivot on varieties of word sense: the Savannah river in Georgia was supposedly named when a young girl fell from a boat there and her companion called out to anyone within hearing distance to "Save Anna!" Selma, Alabama, was named by the slave child who ran around the auction block crying, "Don't sell ma!" In Arkansas, a person crossing a creek on a precarious foot bridge fell smack over into the water, thereby christening the nearby community Smackover.

Typical of the tale plotted on a misunderstanding is "The Irishman and the Fiddle," told by Richard Chase's prolific informant, R. M. Ward. An immigrant Irishman who had never seen a fiddle went to a party. When the fiddler tuned up for the dance, the Irishman darted from the house and ran to the nearest neighbor's where he reported:

I stopped at the next house back there, and a large crowd of people was there . . . all settin' around.

¹Down in the Holler: A Gallery of Ozark Folk Speech
(Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1953), p. 117.

And there was a man there had something in a box. I don't know what kind of animal it was, but he h'isted it up and picked its ears and it squawked just a little. Then he took a stick and started beatin' that thing on the back. . . . Everybody jumped up to run but I was the closest to the door. My legs have saved my body.¹

Pathos appeals rhetorically on several levels in "The Irishman and the Fiddle." It appeals first to community identifications as teller and audience (insiders) laugh at the ignorance of an outsider. More subtly it appeals to fears of inadequacy. Psychologically, any reader who has ever felt socially insecure, even temporarily, or has dreaded being considered a fool because of what he does not understand, can identify with the Irishman. The rhetorical effect of the pathos of humor, however, prompts laughter which drains away dread of feelings of insecurity.

Selections from any anthology of American folk literature illustrate the quantity and quality of pathos in tale and song. "Rush Cape," the Jack Tales, Negro spirituals, and many work songs appeal through pity for the underdog, the misunderstood, and the oppressed. William A. Owens records the observable effect of pathos in the ballad, "Hangman, Hangman, Slack Your Rope," a dialogue between a young girl sentenced to die and those she hopes have come to set her free. As the singer relates that the father says

¹In American Folk Tales and Songs, p. 94.

he does not bring money for the girl's release, but has come to see her hanged, a woman in the audience whispers, "He oughtn't to have done her thataway."¹ Of the spirituals, Alan Lomax says, "White Americans, perhaps at first attracted by the exotic rhythms and earthy poesy of Negro song, have been deeply stirred by the poignant sorrow, the biting irony, and the noble yearnings for a better world implicit there."² Material for railroad folk songs come from problems of Irish immigrant labor, farmers, unionists, and blacks. Many reveal exploitation of workers who labor for a few cents an hour under tyrannical bosses who, knowing the laborer cannot leave, reduce him to slave status.³ Similarly, pity, anger, and fear are stirred by the Indian legends that tell of involuntary migrations, starvation, and disease. Fear is incited by murder ballads, ghost stories, and some local legends, pseudo-fear by jump stories. Love for home and homeland is second only to love for a sweetheart as the favored pathos of the ballad.

¹"Big Thicket Balladry," in Tales From the Big Thicket, ed. Francis E. Abernathy (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966), p. 206.

²Folk Song: U. S. A. (New York: Duell Sloan & Pearce, 1940), pp. viii-ix.

³Ann Miller Carpenter, "The Railroad in American Folk Song, 1865-1920," in Diamond Bessie & the Shepherds, ed. Wilson M. Hudson (Austin: The Encino Press, 1972), pp. 103-19.

Any effective folk tale or ballad makes an artistic appeal to the reader/audience, but it is impossible to say any one example is representative of the whole body of American folk literature. In order to observe the presence of logos, ethos, and pathos, however, we might analyze the ballad, "The Cowboy's Lament."

The Cowboy's Lament

As I walked out in the streets of Laredo,
As I walked out in Laredo one day,
I spied a poor cowboy wrapped up in white linen,
Wrapped up in white linen and as cold as the clay.

"Oh, beat the drum slowly and play the fife lowly, 5
Play the Dead March as you carry me along;
Take me to the green valley, there lay the sod
o'er me,
For I'm a young cowboy and I know I've done wrong.

"I see by your outfit that you are a cowboy," 10
These words he did say as I boldly stepped by.
"Come sit down beside me and hear my sad story;
I was shot in the breast and I know I must die.

"Let sixteen gamblers come handle my coffin,
Let sixteen cowboys come sing me a song,
Take me to the graveyard and lay the sod o'er me, 15
For I'm a poor cowboy and I know I've done wrong.

"My friends and relations, they live in the Nation,
They know not where their boy has gone.
He first came to Texas and hired to a ranchman,
Oh, I'm a young cowboy and I know I've done wrong. 20

"Go write a letter to my gray-haired mother,
And carry the same to my sister so dear;
But not a word of this shall you mention
When a crowd gathers round you my story to hear.

"Then beat your drum lowly and play your fife slowly, 25
Beat the Dead March as you carry me along;

We all love our cowboys so young and so handsome,
We all love our cowboys although they've done
wrong.

"There is another more dear than a sister,
She'll bitterly weep when she hears I am gone. 30
There is another who will win her affections,
For I'm a young cowboy and they say I've done wrong.

"Go gather around you a crowd of young cowboys,
And tell them the story of this my sad fate;
Tell one and the other before they go further 35
To stop their wild roving before 'tis too late.

"Oh, muffle your drums, then play your fifes merrily;
Play the Dead March as you go along.
And fire your guns right over my coffin;
There goes an unfortunate boy to his home. 40

"It was once in the saddle I used to go dashing,
It was once in the saddle I used to go gay;
First to the dram-house, then to the card-house,
Got shot in the breast, I'm dying today.

"Get six jolly cowboys to carry my coffin; 45
Get six pretty maidens to bear up my pall.
Put bunches of roses all over my coffin,
Put roses to deaden the clods as they fall.

"Then swing your rope slowly and rattle your spurs
lowly,
And give a wild whoop as you carry me along; 50
And in the grave throw me and roll the sod o'er me,
For I'm a young cowboy and I know I've done wrong.

"Go bring me a cup, a cup of cold water,
To cool my parched lips," the cowboy said;
Before I turned, the spirit had left him 55
And gone to its Giver,--the cowboy was dead.

We beat the drum slowly and played the fife lowly,
And bitterly wept as we bore him along;
For we all loved our comrade, so brave, young, and
handsome,
We all loved our comrade although he'd done wrong.¹ 60

¹In John A. Lomax, comp., Cowboy Songs and Other Frontier Ballads (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), pp. 74-76.

The logos here is the narrative itself: a narrator tells of the death of a cowboy he chances to meet in Laredo. The argument is full of moral implications: impetuous youth tamed, wrong punished, wasted life caught up by death. Alan Lomax reports that the historical prototype of the cowboy was a young Englishman who died not of gunshot wounds but of syphilis. Some British variants of the ballad are ribald; others are clinically realistic.¹ In most American versions, no such scandal mars the cowboy's memory; the "wrong" he admits to is handled as youthful sowing of wild oats. Indeed, the American variants are typical of folk songs described by Alexander H. Krappe as "melodramatic . . . highly emotional, sometimes even sentimental; but the emotions are simple; there is no question of 'problems,' or 'conflicts,' let alone searching self-analysis or even introspection."²

In the ballad we hear two voices, the narrator's and the dying cowboy's. Both establish their own ethos. The narrator is a cowboy himself (line 9) who sympathizes with but does not excuse the other's mistakes. "We all loved our comrade," he says, "although he'd done wrong." The narrator is compassionate as he tries, too late, to

¹Folk Song: U. S. A., p. 195.

²P. 156.

bring water for the cowboy, and he suggests a religious attitude in cliché, as he says the young spirit had "gone to its Giver." Thus we see in the storyteller a person of moral character and good will.

The dying man's ethos is ambivalent. He is a renegade, having left home and family in the States and run away to Texas where he hired out as a ranch hand. He spent his time in riotous living, either riding his horse or hanging out in the saloon and gambling house. Even in his last moments he is guilty of hubris as he pompously demands:

Let sixteen gamblers come handle my coffin,
Let sixteen cowboys come sing me a song.

Eventually, however, he evokes more sympathy than disapproval from both narrator and reader by his desire to confess: "Come sit down beside me and hear my sad story," and by the repetitive refrain that admits, "I know I've done wrong." He is admirable in his wish to be an object lesson to others:

Go gather around you a crowd of young cowboys,
And tell them the story of this my sad fate;
Tell one and the other before they go further
To stop their wild roving before 'tis too late.

The positive elements of his ethos strengthen in his concern for mother, sister, and sweetheart, who will grieve when they hear of his death.

Many of the devices which create the ethos of both cowboys are instrumental also in creating pathos. The

dying man is twice called "poor cowboy" and "handsome";

"young cowboy" six times, and "unfortunate boy" once.

These epithets emphasize the tragedy of a wasted life and lost potential; thus they make an appeal for pity. Pity is also evoked by the description of a gray haired mother, a sister so dear, and "another more dear than a sister" who will weep bitterly when she hears of his death.

References to the funeral rituals,

Beat the drum slowly and play the fife lowly,
Play the Dead March as you carry me along,

and the image called to mind in "lay the sod o'er me" appeal to pity as they create an element of identification. Their suggestion of the universals in death appeals to the reader/audience who may not be personally moved by the specific death of some nameless, reckless cowboy.

Only the most heartless, however, can fail to experience pity or to identify with the young man in his last moment:

Go bring me a cup, a cup of cold water,
To cool my parched lips, the cowboy said.

Pathos makes another appeal concerning the cowboy personally. He may have been rash and imprudent, but he died repentant, a fact that establishes the pathos of confidence in God's grace and benevolence.

Pathos continues into the peroration, or the conclusion:

We beat the drum slowly and played the fife lowly,
 And bitterly wept as we bore him along;
 For we all loved our comrade, so brave, young, and
 handsome.
 We all loved our comrade although he'd done wrong.

The cowboy who was a stranger in the opening stanzas of the ballad is now a "comrade," beloved and mourned. The conclusion, as in the best of classical orations, is "an impassioned summary, not simply a review of pervious arguments."¹ It brings logos, ethos, and pathos to a focus as it persuades the reader to identify and to sympathize.

When the passions are stirred, when interest is piqued for a subject, when a listener identifies with the teller and the tale, folk literature is rhetorically effective.

¹Lanham, p. 76.

CHAPTER V

THE PERSUASIVE QUALITY OF FOLKLORE

I believe because it is absurd.
Tertullian

In the spring of 1975, a history teacher and an English teacher at the Texas Woman's University rode together on a commuter's bus between Dallas and Denton. One morning, a truck pulling a trailer full of alfalfa waited at one of the access roads to enter the highway. The history teacher, a woman in her early thirties, suddenly slammed her right fist into her left palm, momentarily closed her eyes, and said, "Load of hay, make a wish." The English teacher asked her colleague if she believed her wish would come true. "Perhaps not," the history teacher replied, "but when I was a child I did. And I still 'stamp a load of hay' from habit."

Such is the persuasive quality of the rhetoric of folklore. As Aristotle says, "Persuasion means persuasive to a person. To him, a statement may be persuasive and credible by itself, immediately, or it may become so when it seems to be proved from other statements he believes."¹

¹P. 11.

A childhood belief in signs (the load of hay) still had power to evoke a response, to "move" an audience, who was by no means ignorant or credulous, because the sign's argument related to happiness and its elements¹ (the granting of wishes). As an adult, the history teacher may have been skeptical of the magical powers of the load of hay, but she reacted to the persuasion of its rhetoric nonetheless. She even performed a bit of ritual in "stamping" her palm. Mody Boatright writes:

An essential characteristic of ritualistic behavior ["stamping," crossing fingers, knocking on wood, etc.] is that it seeks to achieve a result, either upon outside events, upon the mental state of the subject, or upon both. The object may be to bring rain or to reconcile one to death. It may be to bring about political action or to reconcile within the subject the dichotomy of selfishness and goodwill toward his fellow man, to gain cosmic approval of what one wants to do.²

A folk belief in signs, omens, and talismans takes on the characteristics of deliberative discourse, that branch of rhetoric which is concerned with future time when wishes come true, or when forecast events occur. Its argument is conducted by means of exhortation ("do this") or discussion ("do not do that") based upon the topics of what is expedient or advantageous and what is inexpedient or

¹Ibid., p. 29.

²"On the Nature of Myth," p. 136.

injurious.¹ That is, signs, omens, and talismans "persuade" an audience that a recommended course of action will benefit a person and a forbidden course of action will harm him.²

The rhetoric of folk belief in good luck persuaded even Aristotle who says:

Good fortune means getting or possessing all, or most, or the most important, of those goods which are the result of chance. Some of the goods that come by luck may also be gained by arts [by contrivance], but many gifts of fortune are independent of art. . . . Fortune is also the cause of those gifts which come contrary to normal expectation.²

Those who carry charms or talismans to invite good luck or to ward off bad are persuaded to such a course of action by traditional beliefs and "testimonies" of others who do likewise. A bit of Negro doggerel expresses an almost universal belief in the lucky properties of a rabbit's foot:

Ole Molly Cottontail
Wont you be shore not to fail
To give me yo' right hin' foot?
My luck, it wont be for sale.³

Line 4 refers to the act of simony; the faithful believe that "luck" is bestowed freely by the talisman but disappears once the recipient tries to profit by selling that

¹Edward P. J. Corbett, Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 15.

²p. 29.

³Puckett, p. 474.

luck to someone else. Among the countless Americans who admit to carrying a rabbit's foot for luck is Helen Landon, the 1956 Maid of Cotton, who credits her good fortune in winning the Cotton Belt beauty contest to her possession of the talisman.¹

A rabbit's foot is perhaps the best known of good luck charms, but physical objects of all sorts serve the same purposes. Athletes wear specific lucky caps, shoes, or other clothing to insure victory on the playing field. Some people put their trust in lucky coins or rings. Copper jewelry is said to ward off arthritis and the seed from the buckeye tree is credited with power to prevent arthritis. When the grandchildren of Oral C. Nichols of Carlsbad, New Mexico, discovered one of the smooth brown seeds among his pocket treasures one said, "Papa, I did not know you have arthritis." "Don't!" he replied, "It works."²

A dried deer's eye is a charm against witchcraft or "the evil eye" in the southwestern region of the United States. Midwives pin dried deer's eyes to the gown of a mother in labor to protect the newborn against the ominous influences of witches.³

¹Ferm, p. 184.

²Interview with Oral C. Nichols, Sr., Carlsbad, New Mexico, 1950s.

³Interview with Peggy S. Townsend, Carlsbad, New Mexico, 29 November 1975.

John D. Rockefeller, patriarch of the famous family of millionaires, carried an eagle stone to prevent disasters and to insure prosperity. The stone is a brown, hollow object, perhaps a dried seed, with a loose bit of matter inside which rattles when the stone is shaken. Its value as an object to ward off evil is greater if one finds it himself in the eagle's nest, rather than purchasing it from a finder. Accepting the premise that a ribbon passed through a perforation in the stone possessed even more power than the stone itself, Rockefeller who, throughout his lifetime, gave \$530,000,000 to causes and charities,¹ gave snippets of the ribbon to friends and associates he wished to honor personally.²

Folklorists agree that folk beliefs and behavior are "widespread at every level of society,"³ but they disagree on the semantics of the terms "folk belief" and "superstition." A dictionary definition calls "superstition"

A belief founded on irrational feelings, especially of fear, and marked by credulity; also, any rite or practice inspired by such a belief. Specifically a belief in a religious system regarded (by others

¹Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1959 ed., s. v. "John Davison Rockefeller."

²T. Sharper Knowlson, The Origins of Popular Superstitions and Customs (London: T. Werner Laurie, Ltd., 1919; reprint ed., Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1968), pp. 10-11.

³Brunvand, p. 179.

than the believer) as without reasonable support; also any of its rites. Credulity regarding or reverence for the occult or supernatural, as belief in omens, charms, and signs; loosely, any unreasonable belief or impression.¹

Jan Brunvand says:

No one is immune from the assumptions that underlie superstition, nor from holding or practicing superstitions to some degree. People are superstitious, and the fact leads to observation of a wide range of beliefs, sayings, and practices, and to some fascinating avenues of folklore research.²

Vance Randolph observes, however:

In all my years of collecting I have never known [anyone] to admit a belief in anything which he regarded as superstition. "I ain't superstitious myself," said one old man, "but some things that folks call superstitious is just as true as God's own gospel!" Most of the real old-timers adhere to traditions wild and strange, and the fact that many of them contradict each other matters not at all.³

Michael Owen Jones makes a distinction between the two terms. He says that superstition is "a value judgment employed disparagingly by observer and layman to discredit practices and ideas not acceptable to the ego." Folk belief, on the other hand, is a neutral term for "an item that may be accepted by the ego as valid, can be verbalized

¹Funk & Wagnalls Standard Dictionary of the English Language, International Edition (1959), s. v. "Superstition."

²Brunvand, pp. 178-79.

³Ozark Magic and Folklore (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947; reprint ed., New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1964), p. 6.

into a brief statement or belief nucleus, and embodies knowledge as well as action."¹

Point-of-view, therefore, provides the distinguishing characters of the definitions of the terms. That is, a superstition is a fear of taboos regarded by the outsider or unbeliever as irrational; folk belief is a faith in the power of omens, signs, and tokens, and in legends and myths, accepted by an individual or a culture group as influences on conditions and results. The sophisticate, the outsider, and even the folklorist may--and does--compile volumes of lists of such attitudes as:

For good luck all year, eat black-eyed peas on New Year's Day.

To have good luck in a new home, send a new broom on in advance. Do not move an old broom.

Such collections are little more than interesting catalogues of quaint customs or mottos gathered from various sources. But the thousands of southern Americans who eat black-eyed peas and hog jowl on New Year's Day attest to the persuasive quality of the rhetoric of that folk admonition. When Margaret (Mrs. D. D.) Giles of Solana Beach, California, left her old broom in her old house to bring good luck to the tenants following her, believing it would bring bad luck

¹"Folk Beliefs: Knowledge and Action," Southern Folklore Quarterly 3 (December 1967): 304-309.

if she moved it,¹ we have, not a mere recording of a superstition but evidence of the rhetorical power of a folk belief to influence or move an audience.

Similarly, "Do not move to a new home on Friday" is but one of countless taboos concerning a day forever fixed in infamy because of its association with the Crucifixion. To Jo Ellen (Mrs. J. B.) Dalzell of Dallas, Texas, the warning is no mere advice based upon hearsay. When she was a child, her family moved on a Friday to a new home in Indianapolis against their better judgment. Her father died within the year. Years later, when the home she and her husband bought was ready for occupancy on the first day of the month, a Friday, she paid an extra day's rent on the apartment where they were living to avoid a Friday move.²

Two generations before the Dalzells, another couple feared a move which also involved a taboo against traveling on a Friday. In 1894 Blanche Edmondson and Charles J. Rootes planned to be married in Glade Springs, Virginia, and to emigrate to Texas immediately following the ceremony. The wedding date had been set and announced when Miss Edmondson realized that the long trek to the Lone Star

¹Margaret M. Giles, personal letter, 8 December 1975.

²Interview with Jo Ellen Dalzell, Dallas, Texas, Autumn 1950.

State by train would have them traveling on a Friday. She insisted on changing the date to another day of the week even as she had to work within the rhetoric of another folk belief, the regional prejudice that "only niggers marry on Saturday."¹

Friday taboos extend to trades and industries. An ancient belief among tailors is that any material cut on Friday could not be stitched up to fit properly. In the twentieth century some seamstresses, still abiding by the prohibition, warn that the owner of a garment cut out on Friday will not live to wear it out. Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower was so persuaded by this bit of folklore that she forbade any cloth in the White House to be cut on Friday while she was First Lady there.² Marie Loud, wife of Methodist minister I. B. Loud, of Dallas, Texas, concurs with the belief, although she maintains that if the garment cut out on Friday is completed that day, the hazards of the taboo are nullified.³

Various fears of Friday, combined with triskaideka-
phobia, the fear of the number thirteen⁴ present an even

¹Walraven, granddaughter of Mr. and Mrs. Rootes, 3 January 1976.

²L. M. Boyd, in Dallas Times Herald, 11 April 1975, sec. A, p. 16.

³Interview with Marie Loud, 10 January 1976.

⁴Ferm, p. 99.

stronger rhetorical argument. L. M. Boyd records the fact that so many Americans are persuaded by the threat of bad luck on that day that the absentee rate in American businesses and industries rises on any Friday the thirteenth.¹ And to warn citizens against the possibility of further ill fortune portended by another emblem of bad luck, the community of French Lick, Indiana, bells all black cats every Friday the thirteenth.²

Persuasive qualities of folklore are most evident in such examples of the oral tradition as beliefs in charms and omens as well as in weather, farm and ranch lore, and the Zodiac. As part of planting lore, Vance Randolph reports the rhetorical belief in an ancient fertility rite still extant in the Ozarks:

Certain crops grew better if the persons who sowed the seed were naked. . . . Four grown girls and one boy did the planting. They all stripped off naked. The boy started in the middle of the patch with them four big girls a-prancin' around him. . . . The boy threw all the seed, and the girls kept hollering, "Pecker deep! Pecker deep!" . . . There ain't no sense to it, but them folks always raised the best turnips.³

According to planting lore, crops thrive or fail depending upon the phase of the moon in which they are sown.

¹In Dallas Times Herald, 28 May 1975.

²Ferm, p. 99.

³"Nakedness in Ozark Folk Belief," Journal of American Folklore 66 (1953): 333-34.

Richard Chase quotes a pair of North Carolinians who believe in the "signs" for planting:

Plant corn when the moon's in The Crab (that's the sign of The Breast) and the grains will fill over the end of the cob. Plant it in the sign of the Twins and you'll have two ears of every stalk. The sign of The Thighs--What's the other name for that?--The Archer, that's hit, if I recollect right, that'll make big ears. Plant potatoes in the sign of The Feet you'll get nothing but little pindly toe-'taters [sic]. Light of the moon for crops above the ground; dark of the moon for root crops. Nothin' to it, some say; but we've always done it, planted by signs, and it generally does seem to make a difference.¹

Rhetoric of moon lore persuaded the United States Department of Agriculture as late as 1903, according to their publication of that year, that moon beams produce chemicals that can spoil fish and some kinds of meat.²

Moon and Zodiac signs also determine certain ranching activities. Cattlemen in southwestern United States castrate their bull calves only when "the sign is in The Head." If they do so when the sign is in The Feet, they believe the animals are likely to bleed to death.³ Similar moon lore pertains to the human condition, and many members of the medical profession recognize the persuasive qualities

¹"A Field Trip," in American Folk Tales and Songs, p. 210.

²Cited by Eric Sloan in Folklore of American Weather (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1963), p. 60.

³Interviews with Lou N. Boyd and Alegra T. Townsend, Carlsbad, New Mexico, November 1975.

of folk beliefs as they relate to surgery. Toni (Mrs. Curtis D.) Boyd, an assistant to an oral surgeon in Birmingham, Alabama, reports that the dentist's appointment calendar may be full until "the sign is in the Head," at which time some patients refuse to have teeth extracted for fear of hemorrhaging to death.¹ Dr. Dale Harris, of Carlsbad, New Mexico, says that in his own opinion one day is as good as another for treating dental problems, but if he discovers a patient believes the "signs" are not right, he suggests postponing treatment until the signs change.² In other words, Dr. Harris is not personally persuaded by the folk belief, but he responds, nevertheless, as he recognizes its rhetorical effect upon his patients.

Perhaps one of the earliest and best known examples of the persuasive quality of folk beliefs in Anglo-America is the New England witch hysteria of the seventeenth century. A witch was believed to be one who had sold her soul to the devil in exchange for the gift of malevolent magical powers to curse and maim both animals and pious human beings. As Katherine Briggs writes in Pale Hecate's Team, "Thoughtful and learned men of all shades of opinion believed, no less than the man in the street and the man

¹Interview with Toni Boyd, Carlsbad, New Mexico, 28 November 1975.

²Interview with Dale Harris, Carlsbad, New Mexico, 24 January 1976.

behind the plough, in the constant presence of the Devil."¹ Indeed, one of the most "thoughtful and learned men" of the time, clergyman Cotton Mather, responded so vigorously to the rhetoric of the belief that he vented his own pulpit and literary rhetoric to perpetuate the persecutions of the victims.²

Although enlightened Americans, including Salem witch trial judge Samuel Sewall, eventually admitted to the error of their condemnations and actions, a belief in witchcraft has never completely disappeared from American folklore. The shaman of the Indian, hoodoo of the black, bruja of Spanish-American cultures are all counterparts of the witch who, possessed by either good or evil spirits, performs benevolent or malevolent deeds.

Shamans, sometimes called "medicine men," practice among Eskimos and among Indians of the North Pacific, California, the Great Basin, Plains, Eastern Woodlands, and some Southwestern tribes. Believing disease is caused by a foreign subject placed in the human body by offended animal spirits (or by other shamans), the shaman administers

¹Quoted by Dorson, in America In Legend, p. 13.

²Louis Untermeyer, "Cotton Mather," in The Britannica Library of Great Writing, vol. 1 (Chicago: Britannica Press; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1960), p. 54.

medicinal herbs and sings appropriate songs or formulas to exorcize the harmful matter. The shaman receives his powers from spirits he himself has befriended, but he can be controlled by those spirits to harm as well as to heal other human beings.¹ Belief in shaman power is not limited to the older generation in remote communities, according to an Associated Press news release quoting Ruth Russell, director of Indian studies at Navajo Community College, Tsaile Lake, Arizona:

Today the Navajo turns more and more to the medicine man, because only he can treat the inner disharmony that causes illness. I cannot explain the benefits of such practices. I only know that they have gone on in the past and they may be related to useful medical practices.²

While the shaman's powers are believed to work for good or evil, depending on the situation, the hoodoo man is an administrator of evil power. Hoodoo is an Americanism for voodoo, an African-derived religious cult brought from Haiti to Louisiana during the French slave uprisings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.³ Its practitioner is the hoodoo man or woman (often called simply "a hoodoo")

¹Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, s. v. "Shaman," by Alfred Métaux.

²In Daily Current Argus (Carlsbad, New Mexico), 16 October 1975, p. 2.

³Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, s. v. "Voodoo," by Melville J. Herskovits.

who possesses magical powers to injure or even kill his enemy or the enemy of a client who pays for the service. To become a hoodoo, believers say, one must sell his soul to the devil on the darkest night of the month when the devil appears in the form of a shadow or a black bird.¹ Hoodoo curses are usually effected by some tangible object, either a feather, snake bone, horsehair, potion, or powder, but most often by a wax doll into which the hoodoo man pushes pins to activate the curse. The victim, wherever he might be, experiences pain or inactivity in the portion of his body corresponding to the stabbed part of the wax image. So effective is the rhetoric of the hoodoo curse that the American Medical Association has documented actual deaths by shock of those who believed a curse had been placed upon them.²

One case involved a woman in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1965. The woman was brought to a doctor complaining of chest and stomach pains. The doctor could find no cause for her problems until her husband confessed that he had had his wife "fixed" or cursed. He had paid a "conjure woman" who had thrown powder on the wife's foot and pronounced a

¹Coffin and Cohen, p. 129.

²Ashley Montague and Edward Darling, The Certainty of Ignorance (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1970), pp. 213-17.

curse on her. The doctor, understanding the rhetoric of hoodoo, also understood that, in his patient's terms, the curse could be removed. He even knew of a witch doctor in the area who would remove curses for a small fee--usually \$15 or \$20. He "prescribed" that the woman be taken to the witch doctor, but before she could make the trip, she collapsed and died. An autopsy revealed no organic damage, no evidence of poison, no logical medical reason for death. The doctor could only conclude that the woman "was simply scared to death," persuaded by the rhetoric of the folklore of voodoo.¹

Voodoo practices have also been grounds for divorce. According to a United Press International report, Mrs. Janet Wojtas of Steamwood, Illinois, sued for divorce because her husband made her "miserable and unhappy." She accused him of placing voodoo dolls around the house and of fastening one to the strap of her shoe. She also found a powder called "Come to Me," supposedly a powerful aphrodisiac, among his belongings.²

The equivalent of the Indian shaman or the Negro hoodoo in Spanish-American culture is the bruja, or witch,

¹Tom Johnson, "Where Hexes Bring Trembles--and Death Too?" The National Observer, 8 February 1965, p. 3.

²"'Come to Me' Powder Dusts Off Wife's Ardor," Dallas Times Herald, 22 October 1975; sec. A, p. 6.

who has sold her soul to the devil. Captain John G. Bourke, commandant of Ft. Ringgold, Texas, in 1894, knew one Maria Antonio who was suspected of being a bruja but who claimed instead to be a curandera, or a healer. She herself believed in brujas who spread sickness among the farm animals, blighted crops and fruit trees, and brought general harm to human beings they wished to spite. Maria Antonio advocated charms against brujas by marking a cross with mustard on the wall beside the bed where the person to be protected sleeps, and by smoking, drinking or chewing powdered marijuana every morning. To keep witches away at night she prescribed a prayer, here translated from the Spanish, to be recited three times:

My house has four corners.
Four angels adore it,
Luke, Mark, John and Matthew,
Neither witches, nor charmers,
Nor evil-doing man [can harm me].

In the name of the Father,
And of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.¹

Associated with the fear of the bruja in folk belief is the fear of the mal de ojo, or the evil eye, in Spanish-American and Middle American Indian cultures. It is believed that some persons, perhaps unintentionally, cause injury by staring at children or by admiring them too enthusiastically, or by touching them. According to

¹Cited by Coffin and Cohen, pp. 109-11 and 237.

George M. Foster, American ethnologists who respect the belief "have found it sound practice not to show too much interest in small children and above all not to touch them until they (the ethnologists) are well known to the parents."¹ Foster's statement to the contrary, however, Peggy Townsend, instructor of nursing at New Mexico State University's Carlsbad branch, reports that in her experiences as a registered nurse, she has known Mexican-American mothers to be suspicious of any stranger who does not touch the baby. The evil eye casts a wicked spell, they believe, but physical touch indicates that one is not casting a spell. Aware of the belief even if not sharing it, doctors in the Southwest make a point of smoothing a child's hair or touching an ear to admire an earring (which many infant Mexican-American girls wear) before attempting to examine or treat a patient when the child is present. Southwestern surgeons also respond to the rhetoric as they respect the folk belief that a cord tied around a patient's chest prevents disease or pain from rising to the head. When a surgical or maternity patient wears such a cord, the doctor will leave it in place so long as it does not interfere with his professional activities. If the cord does prevent normal treatment, the doctor orders it removed after the patient

¹Standard Dictionary of Mythology, Folklore and Legend, s. v. "Evil Eye."

is anaesthetized and replaced before he regains consciousness.¹

The persuasive quality of the folklore of signs, talismans, charms, nature lore, witchcraft, and pseudo-medical beliefs is readily documented as one observes the educated as well as the illiterate responding to the rhetorical effects. Such folklore, however, is strictly from the oral tradition although some folk beliefs are expressed in literary or verbal forms. One example is:

Bury a snake, good weather make;
Hanging it high brings storm clouds nigh.²

A Mexican-American oil field worker out of Freer, Texas, killed a snake on his company's property during the summer drought of 1975. He hung it from a wire fence and explained with pleasure to the engineer on the job that now they could expect rain.

Pennsylvania Indians recite a verse which predicts, according to trees and their foliage, weather to come:

If the oak is out before the ash
'Twill be a summer of wet and splash,
But if the ash is out before the oak,
'Twill be a summer of fire and smoke.

Or, they may forecast by means of onion skins:

Onion's skin is very thin,
Mild winter's coming in;

¹Interview with Peggy S. Townsend, 29 November 1975.

²Sloan, p. 55.

Onion skin's thick and tough,
Coming winter cold and rough.¹

A belief from the southern mountain region that a mirror shines only for the pure and virtuous but will cloud over if a pregnant but unmarried girl tries to see her reflection inspires a subtle folksong:

Mamma, mamma, have you heard?
Papa's goin' to buy me a mockin'-bird!

If that mockin'-bird won't sing
Papa's goin' to buy me a golden ring!

If that golden ring is brass
Papa's goin' to buy me a lookin'-glass!

If the lookin'-glass don't shine
Papa's goin' to shoot that beau of mine!²

The rhetoric of verbal folklore, whether tale, song proverb, like folk beliefs, persuades an audience to respond if not to accept in toto. David Bidney, whose negative view of myth confines its alogical concepts to the irrational mind, nevertheless recognizes its rhetoric when he defines myth as

a universal cultural phenomenon originating in a plurality of motives and involving all mental faculties. . . . Myth originates wherever thought and imagination are employed uncritically or deliberately used to promote social delusion. All mental functions may contribute to the formation of myth and there is historically an essential similarity in the psychological functions involved in its emergence and diffusion. All that changes is the type of myth which prevails at different times and in different

¹Krappe, pp. 221-23.

²Randolph, Ozark Magic and Folklore, p. 171.

cultures. In prescientific culture animistic myths and magical myths tend to prevail. In our secular, scientific cultures we have a nationalistic social myth reflecting ethnocentrism and deliberate falsification in the interests of propaganda.¹

Ashley Montagu and Edward Darling recognize the basic concepts Bidney describes but are less concerned with the manipulations of negative rhetoric (propaganda) when they say:

In preliterate days, the myth was the treasury of human wisdom. Man's fears, aspirations, despairs, his interpretation of the world and his place in it, were expressed in fable, myth, legend, fairy story, proverb, or apothegm: this was his way of being articulate. It is no wonder that we find it difficult to shake off the power of myth in our own time. And before becoming too lofty in our scorn of any particular myth, it might be well . . . to understand the almost universal trait of rejecting one myth as false because we have another, rival myth of our own that conflicts with it.²

Like the word superstition, the word myth has connotations that differ according to the one who uses it. Often a label applied to tales by outside observers (such as Bidney), myth is an imaginative, sometimes fantastic, allegory. Those persons within a culture group who seek to explain the forces of creation and the causes of natural events and phenomena (Why the bear's tail is short, Why light and darkness divide the day, etc.) deny that the etiological tale is a myth. As Rubin Gotesky says, "The

¹"Myth, Symbolism and Truth," Journal of American Folklore 68 (1955): 391.

²p. xv.

myths which will be acceptable in a given culture will obviously depend, not merely upon its scientific criteria, but upon the interests and needs of individuals and groups which compose the society."¹ The effect of the rhetoric is that the "truth" of myth, says Bidney, "is a function of its pragmatic and dramatic effectiveness in moving men to act in accordance with typical, emotionally charged ideas."²

So effective are the rhetorical influences of myth, however, that many outsiders recognize and accept the symbolic truths while rejecting the literal events and character of the story. "The Pandora of Kaibab,"³ for example, is an etiological myth whose logos imaginatively reveals symbolic truths. The myth tells of two Coyotes, wolf-gods, to whom the sea-goddess gave a bag with the interdiction that they not open it until they took it to the Kaibab plateau in Arizona. The bag, she said, contained troubles, which released prematurely, would make a most unhappy world. The younger coyote's curiosity overwhelmed him. He violated the interdiction. The bag was full of human beings, founders of the principal families, Aztecs,

¹"The Nature of Myth and Society," American Anthropologist 54 (1952): 523-31.

²"Myth, Symbolism, and Truth," p. 390.

³In Skinner, pp. 45-46.

Navajos, Sioux, Apaches, Mongols, and white men. Once they were released they began to quarrel among themselves. The older coyote rebuked his brother; and, retying the bag with the few humans who had not yet escaped, he traveled on to Kaibab. There he and the people ordained to settle the area found a beautiful and peaceful home. The others scattered over the world, starting life under difficult circumstances. In their quarreling with one another, they lost the original language of the gods and developed individual and cacophonous speech. Now coyotes, descendants of the disobedient ancestor, always hang their heads in shame when they see a man.

The myth explains the advent of human beings, the division of tribes, the development of language, the reason Kaibab is "paradise" to those who call it home, and the reason coyotes hang their heads as they walk. No sophisticated audience accepts the details of the myth literally, and yet the basic "truths" tell that men of different cultural ties are inclined to misunderstand one another, that human speech, for the most part, does not echo "the music of the spheres," and that coyotes do lope with their heads down.

Anthropologists define myth as that story or concept which can be believed because it is not known to be false, that which is outside testable knowledge, such as

How do we know there is a God?
 How do we know there is not?

Myth is incompatible with scientific knowledge, but it contains belief elements in spite of this incompatibility. As Gotesky says:

Every culture will create and value its own myths, not because it might not be able to distinguish between truth and falsity, but because their function is to maintain and preserve a culture against disruption and destruction. They serve to keep men going against defeat, frustration, disappointment, and they preserve institutions and institutional processes.

Gotesky continues to discuss myth from the standpoint of what Aristotle would call decorum, the appropriateness of invention (subject matter), style, appeal, and delivery to the audience and the occasion:

The myths which will be acceptable in a given culture will obviously depend, not merely upon its scientific criteria, but upon the interests and needs of individuals and groups which compose the society.¹

Myth has an epideictic rhetorical purpose. It deals with what Aristotle also calls objects of praise and blame, or virtue and vice (good and evil), and to some extent covers the nine Aristotelian virtues: justice, courage, temperance, magnificence, magnamity, liberality, gentleness, prudence, and wisdom.

Myth, as rhetorical discourse, argues from the topic of cause-and-effect, and of virtues. It persuades

the audience who accepts it literally and the audience who interprets and responds to its symbols imaginatively. The rhetoric of folktales and legends, however, persuades because those stories suggest a realistic probability in setting and situation.¹ The ghost story, for example, which the sophisticate labels and thus rejects as pure fiction, creates in an audience a sense of nervousness if not outright fear because it argues from the topic of what might be (the possible and the impossible),² the unseen forces or beings which the imagination conjures into possibility. "Nearly all the old-time hill folk," says Vance Randolph, "are firm believers in ghosts and wandering spirits, although few adult males will admit this belief to outsiders nowadays."³

Whether or not the story teller believes his own story--many do--he tries to persuade his audience to believe, or at least to respond with more than casual interest. As Reider Christiansen says, "A characteristic of these . . . tales is that they are rarely retold in an objective, disinterested way."⁴ Response to ghost stories,

¹Dégh, p. 67.

²Aristotle, p. 142.

³Ozark Magic and Folklore, p. 211.

⁴"A European Folklorist Looks at American Folklore," in Madstones and Twisters, ed. Mody C. Boatright, Wilson M. Hudson, and Allen Maxwell (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1958), p. 36.

says Dégh, is created by group psychosis. One sees and hears what he expects, and he expects what has been set up for him rhetorically by the storyteller.¹ The narrator in Meese's "The Art of the Teller" believes his uncle believes he heard a ghostly presence in a shed and on the road. The teller does not admit to believing the tale himself: "I don't know it to be so, but I know the man was a truthful man--he was my uncle. . . . Now, if that ain't so, I'm atellin' it just exactly as I see'd it and hear'd it."² By reiterating the fact that he is telling what he heard from a reliable source, he obviously expects his audience to believe the tale. Tellers of ghostly "jump" stories are entertainers who do not actually "believe" their stories to be true, nor do they expect the audience to believe, but they practice the art of rhetorical arrangement, appeal, and delivery in order to move an audience to an emotional response and to be physically moved to jump at the surprise ending.

If the ghost story argues from the topic of "what might be," the urban belief tale persuades by arguing from the topic of "what has and has not happened." As Aristotle says, "If a thing can come to pass in [one] form it can

¹p. 67.

²Meese, pp. 31 and 33.

come to pass in general."¹ The story of the Hook, for instance, "persuades" by suggesting that if someone has been terrorized by a madman, someone else might also be terrorized at another time in another place. If one woman discovers a sinister passenger in the back of her car, as one belief legend says, other women fear they might also have an unwelcomed rider.

Not only fear but a respect and even, on some occasions, admiration for the unknown accounts for the idea of mana or magic which heroes in ancient cultures were said to possess. No such supernatural qualities appear in the characters of American hero tales, however. As Stanley Edgar Hyman says, American folk heroes, such as Lincoln, Crockett, Johnny Appleseed, for the most part, "are distorted from real men."² As they magnify the person and his deeds, they perform the rhetorical function of Aristotle's argument by the topic of size, by degrees of more or less.³ Tristram Coffin says:

Most of the appropriate heroes and their legends were created overnight to answer immediate needs, almost with conscious aims and needs. Parson Weems' George Washington became the symbol of

¹p. 143.

²"The Symbols of Folk Culture," in Symbols and Values, ed. Lyman Bryson (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, Inc., 1954), pp. 307-12.

³p. 146.

honesty and the father image of the United States. Abraham Lincoln emerged as an incarnation of the national constitution. Robert E. Lee represented the dignity needed by a rebelling confederacy.¹

One obvious result of the rhetoric of American folk hero legend, according to Richard Dorson, is the emergent nationalism. America, too young to have a Beowulf or an Arthur, has not only Washington as the "mythical father figure and founding hero," but others like Cooper's Natty Bumppo, "a fictional drawing of Daniel Boone, who quickly passed into national mythology."² Coffin also elaborates on nationalism as a point of rhetorical invention and argument:

Every age rewrites the events of its history in terms of what should have been, creating legends about itself that rationalize contemporary beliefs and excuse contemporary actions. What actually happened in the past is seldom as important as what a given generation feels must have occurred. . . . [A nation's] folklore and legend . . . are allowed to account for group actions, to provide a focal point for group loyalty, and to become a cohesive force for national identification.³

To illustrate Coffin's remarks, one might look at the legend of John Henry as preserved in countless versions of folk

¹"The Question of Folklore in the American Twentieth Century," p. 527.

²"The Question of Folklore in a New Nation," in Folklore and Society, ed. Bruce Jackson (Hatboro, Penna.: Folklore Associates, 1966), pp. 21-25.

³"The Question of Folklore in the American Twentieth Century," p. 526.

ballads describing the prowess of a black man who competed by hand with a steam drill. G. B. Johnson says in his Tracking Down a Negro Legend, "Whether or not John Henry was a flesh-and-blood man, there are thousands of Negroes who believe that he was, and many of them can give intimate details of his career." Gordon Hall Gerould adds, "The reality of his exploit is far from satisfactory. It is significant for all legend-making, however, that many white men, as well as the Negroes to whom he is a hero, have no doubts about him."¹

The needs of a time and a place may create a rhetoric that argues for a larger-than-life-size hero. Even so, says Max Lüthi, "Man constructs for himself a moral world; he sets goals, but also limits." The tasks and abilities of the American folk hero offer great opportunities, but the interdictions place limits that lead him through difficulties to further goals--always frustrated but never destroyed by new commands, limitations, and tasks.² Thus the legend, whether urban belief, hero, saint's, or local, fulfills in one respect or another the Ciceronian purpose for rhetoric: to teach, to please, and to move.

¹The Ballad of Tradition (New York: Oxford University Press; A Balaxy Book, 1957), p. 265.

²p. 78.

In a study of the rhetoric of folk verse or song, one discovers a question he also finds concerning the rhetoric of myth: does the song come into being as an expression of a belief already extant in the subject matter, or is it composed in order to move an audience toward that belief? The answer probably is "both." Kenneth Burke says that ideologically "if people believe something the poet [even the unknown collective folk poets] can use this belief to get an effect."¹ Examples are Negro spirituals which, says B. A. Botkin, "survive as an expression of Negro fantasy on the plane of self-gratification," and social songs such as blues and work reels which "are living social documents, organizers as well as interpreters of social thought--folk protests."² In other words, the spiritual about luxurious ease in an opulent heavenly afterlife was composed by blacks who experienced only toil and privation in this life, but every performance of the song served as discourse to persuade one to forebear and to hope for a better existence in a world to come. "When I'm Gone" is one of a vast collection of "death wish" folk songs which makes references to and foresees the end of earthly troubles and humiliations:

¹Terms for Order, p. 14.

²"The Folk and the Individual," p. 130.

I'm gonna fly from mansion to mansion,
 when I'm gone,
 I'm gonna fly from mansion to mansion,
 when I'm gone.

CHORUS:

It'll be Lawd, Lawd, Lawd, when I'm gone,
 It'll be Lawd, Lawd, Lawd,
 It'll be Lawd, Lawd, Lawd, when I'm gone.

I'll be done with 'bukés and 'buses when
 I'm gone, [etc.]

I'll be done with troubles and trials,
 when I'm gone, [etc.]

I'm gonna walk and talk with Jesus,
 when I'm gone, [etc.]

I'm gonna set at the welcome table,
 when I'm gone, [etc.]

I'm gonna eat and never get thirsty,
 when I'm gone, [etc.]¹

As social and historical events changed, so did the rhetoric of folksongs. Blues and other socially conscious songs record and argue the plight of the lonely and the deceived. "I'm All Out an' Down" illustrates the pathetic situation of a man a long way from home, working from pay-day to payday to please a woman more interested in his money than in himself:

Honey-ay-ay
 I'm all out an' down,
 Honey-ay-ay,
 I'm broke, babe, and' I ain't got a dime,

¹Alan Lomax, The Folk Songs of North America, pp. 471-72.

Don't ev'ry good man gets in ha'd luck sometime,
 Don't they, baby?
 Don't they, baby?

.

Honey,
 What you want me to do?
 Honey, I'm down in the bottom in the mud up
 to my knees,
 Workin' for my baby an' she's so hard to please,
 Ain't you, baby?
 Ain't you, baby?

.

With the hard work, the small pay, and the slight hope of a satisfying relationship with the woman, the man vents his frustrations by whipping his mules ("puttin' my 'nitals on wid my line"):

Honey,
 I'm all out an' down,
 Honey,
 Worked all the summer and part of the fall,
 Had to take my Christmas in my overall,
 O Lawdy!
 O Lawdy!
 I'm down in the bottom, skinnin' for Johnny Ryan,
 Puttin' my 'nitals, honey, on the mule's behin',
 Wid my line, baby,
 Wid my line, baby,
 Honey. . . .¹

Alan Lomax quotes a dialogue between two men, Natchez and Leroy, which illustrates the rhetorical effect of blues:

Natchez: Some people say that the blues is a cow
 wanta see her calf, but I don't say it that

¹Ibid., pp. 583-84.

way, I say it's a man that's got a good woman, and she turns him down and that gives you the blues.

Leroy: That's right. When I have trouble, blues is the only things that helps me. For instance, the rent situation. . . . I worked on levee camps, extra gangs, road camps, and every place, and I hear guys singing Ummmp this and Ummmp that, and I believe they was really singing from their heart, expressing how they felt to the people.

Natchez: I've known guys that wanted to cuss out the boss and was afraid to go up to his face, and I've heard them singing those things. He make like the boss or mule stepped on his foot and say, "Get off my foot, goddam it!" He really be talking to his boss--"you sonofabitch you, you got no business. . . ."

Leroy: Yeah, blues is a kind of revenge.

Natchez: I been around where they have prisoners chained together. Some of them have great big balls hanging on their legs or some be tied to a stake.

Leroy: I remember a friend of mine were in a much badder place than that what you're talking about. It were so tough down there that they didn't put chains on um. They let them go. They tell um to run, you know,--"RUN!" The dogs is there to catch you or track you whatsoever you run to.

Natchez: The point is that those fellers have the blues too. . . . You singing from your heart--the way you feel. It's not for nobody to play behind you. . . . Of course there's some people haven't had no hardships, they don't understand how it is with the poor man.

Leroy: For instance, classics and stuff like that. They can't play the blues even if they wanted to. I mean, it takes a man to have had the blues to play the blues.¹

¹Ibid., p. 574.

Like the blues, a product of the post-Civil War South, other types of folksongs are discourses on human relationships, man-woman, boss-hired hand, police-outlaw. "The Old Chisolm Trail" speaks for the cowboy who works from dawn to dusk for a trail boss who later deducts his "keep" (living expenses) from his pay, and when the cowboy wants to quit,

I went to the boss to draw my roll,
He had it figured I was nine dollars in the hole.

After a verbal and physical altercation with the boss, the cowboy vows:

I'll sell my outfit just as soon as I can,
I won't punch cattle for no damn man.
I'll sell my horse and I'll sell my saddle:
You can go to hell with your longhorn cattle.¹

This version of "The Old Chisolm Trail" is a protest song, illustrating the difficult and thankless life of the cowboy. In other, perhaps better known versions, the folksong pictures the cowboy as the rough-and-ready, carefree out-of-doors superman:

Oh, I ride with my slicker and I ride all day,
And I pack along a bottle for to pass the time
away.
With my feet in the stirrups and my hand on the
horn,
I'm the best damned cowboy that ever was born.

CHORUS:

¹Alan Lomax, ed., Hard-Hitting Songs for Hard-Hit People (New York: Oak Publications, 1967), p. 103.

Come-a ki-yi-yippee, a ki-yi-yippee, a ki-yi-yippee-yay.

Oh, I know a girl who's a-going to leave her mother,
All the devils down in Hell couldn't stir up such
another,
She rides on a pinto and she works on the drag,
With her petticoats a-flopping like a pair of
saddlebags.

Oh, I'm out night herding on the Lone Squaw Butte,
When I run my sights on a lone coyote,
He's a-helling and a-yelling and as he drifts by
I snakes out my lasso and I loops him on the fly.

.

Oh, Abilene city is a dang fine town,
We'll all liquor up and twirl those heifers round;
Then back once more with my bridle and my hoss,
For Old John Chisum is a damned fine boss.

I never hankered for to plough or hoe,
And punching steers is all I know.
With my knees in the saddle and a-hanging to
the sky,
Herding dogies up in Heaven in the sweet by-and-by.¹

As rhetoric this latter version argues from the invalid topic of "making a statement about the whole, true only of individual parts,"² the romance, adventure, and personal freedom one finds in the "Old West" of tradition. Effective rhetoric it is, however, as generations of movies and continuous publication of western novels attest to the search for and acceptance of the romantic over the realistic view.

The more realistic version of "The Old Chisolm Trail" identifies it as an occupational song, one which

¹Alan Lomax, Folk Songs of North America, p. 371.

²Lanham, p. 109.

describes the life and duties of a person involved in a particular line of work. Lumbermen have their "The Jam on Gerry's Rock," railroaders have "Drill, Ye Tarriers," and miners have, "It's the Miner's Life for Me." Work songs may also describe the various occupations, but they are devised and sung at the task, says Theresa K. Blakeley, "To increase the efficiency of the effort by timing the work stroke, setting a steady work pace, or whiling away the tedium of the working hours."¹ The rhythm of the song depends upon the type of work to be done and the required motion of the tools one wields. Sometimes a leader sings and the others join in the chorus as they pull a line, slam a sledge hammer, or operate a saw. Rhetorically, work songs move an audience to an active response. The lyric or story song elicits an emotional response, but according to Abrahams and Foss, the "metrically rigid action song tends to excite a physical [response]."² One such work song, "East Colorado Blues," from gangs who laid the railroad westward, sets the rhythm for hammering nine-pound mauls down on steel spikes and for pick axes hacking out the rock:

This is the hammer--HUNH! . . . (The Hammer comes
down)
Killed John Henry--HUNH! . . . (Another blow)

¹Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, s. v. "Work Songs."

²p. 149.

Can't kill Me--HUNH! . . . (Another stroke)
 Can't kill Me--HUNH! . . . (The hammer rings on
 steel again)
 My hammer falls from my shoulder--HUNH!
 Steel runs like lead--HUNH!¹

In the American South, Negro axmen, chopping timber in the forest, chanted:

When I was young and in my prime, (hah!)
 Sunk my axe deep every time, (hah!)
 Now I'm old and my heart's growing cold, (hah!)
 Come on, Mister Tree, you almost down, (hah!)
 Come on, Mister Tree, want to see you
 hit the ground. (hah!)²

Prisoners chopped cotton on a prison farm to the rhythm of "Johnny, Won't You Ramble":

Well, I went down in Helltown
 To see the Devil chain down,
 Johnny, won't you ramble?
 Hoe, hoe, hoe!
 Well, I went down in Helltown
 To see the Devil chain down,
 Johnny won't you ramble?
 Hoe, hoe, hoe!

Ol' massa an' ol' missis,
 Sittin in the parlour.
 Jus' fig'in an' a-plannin'
 How to work a nigger harder.

.

I looked on the hill
 An' I spied ol' massa ridin'
 Had a bullwhip in-a one hand,
 A cow-hide in the other.

¹Alan Lomax, Folk Songs of North America, p. 526.

²Ibid., p. 514.

"Ol' massa, ol' massa,
 I'll give you half a dollar."
 "No, no, bully boy,
 I'd rather hear you holler."¹

Work songs, relieving the tedium of the task and setting a pacing rhythm to systematize the chores, served the singer-worker rhetorically. But rhetorical effects extended far beyond the immediate activity. As Alan Lomax says, "Every new job brought a fresh style with a special rhythm. Without these songs the South, as we know it, would never have come into being."²

Folksongs, no less than folk tales, created and enlivened folk heroes. John Henry, a descendant of Old John, the trickster slave, represented to the post-war South the hard-working, hard-loving individual a machine might replace but could never subdue. The ballad's many variants identify John Henry as a Mississippi rouster, an Arkansas spike driver, a pile driver on the docks, or an Alabama, Michigan, or even Jamaica tunnel worker. L. R. Chappell's extensive study of the ballad sources indicate that John Henry, a six-foot, two-hundred-pound black man, worked at the Big Bend Tunnel of the Chesapeake & Ohio Rail Road in West Virginia about 1870. When the railroad management brought the newly invented steam engine to the tunnel,

¹Ibid., p. 527.

²Ibid., p. 514.

John Henry challenged its efficiency against his own:

John Henry told his captain,
Says, "A man ain't nothin' but a man,
And before I'd let your steam drill beat me
down, Lawd,
I'd die with this hammer in my hand.

For thirty-five minutes he swung a twenty-pound hammer in each hand, drilling two seven-foot holes to beat the steam engine which drilled only one hole nine feet deep.

John Henry hammerin' on the right-hand side,
Steam drill drillin' on the lef',
John Henry beat that steam drill down, Lawd,
Lawd,
But he hammered his fool self to death.

Like many folk heroes, John Henry as a child precociously adumbrated his destiny:

John Henry was just a li'l baby
Settin' on his daddy's knee,
He pint his finger at a little piece of steel,
Lawd.
"Steel gon' be the death of me."

His heroic status is enhanced by his earthy humanity, particularly as it reveals his attraction to women:

John Henry had a little woman,
Just as pretty as she could be,
The only objection I'ze got to her, Lawd, Lawd,
She want every man she see.

John Henry had another woman,
The dress she wore was blue,
She went walkin' down the track and she never
look back,
And I wish my wife was true.

They took John Henry to the tunnel,
And they buried him in the sand.

Every little woman come down the road, Lawd, Lawd,
Say, "There lays my steel-drivin' man."¹

Casey Jones was another real-life person who became a legendary character by the rhetoric of folksong. An engineer for the Illinois Central Railroad, he was killed in a spectacular collision with another train when he tried to make up lost time on the run between Memphis, Tennessee, and Canton, Mississippi. Casey grew to larger-than-life hero status during the lifetime of his survivors who objected in vain to his being called "a rounder," meaning a roué or a rake²:

Come all you rounders, I want you to hear
The story of a brave engineer;
Casey Jones was the rounder's name,
On the big eight-wheeler of mighty fame.

Like John Henry, Casey represents man against machine:

Now Casey said, "Before I die
There's one more train that I want to try,
And I will try ere many a day
The Union Pacific and the Santa Fe.

.
Fireman says, "Casey, you're running too fast,
You run the black board the last station you
passed."
Casey says, "I believe we'll make it through,
For the steam's much better than I ever knew."

¹Ibid., p. 561.

²Ibid., p. 555.

Noble and brave, "he tried to do his duty." The ballad ends on a note of didactic pride as a rhetorical appeal to the railroad man and to those who admire him:

Headaches and heartaches and all kinds of pain
They all ride along with the railroad train,
Stories of brave men, noble and grand,
Belong to the life of a railroad man.¹

The rhetoric of the folk ballad, "Jesse James,"² argues from one of Aristotle's invalid or fallacious topics, the use of a single, unrepresentative example,³ specifically the fact that Jesse James, an outlaw himself, deserves sympathetic, heroic status merely because he was treacherously shot in the back by one of his own men. The ballad admits in the first stanza that Jesse was a robber:

It was on a Wednesday night, the moon was
shining bright
They robbed the Glendale train.
And the people they did say, for many miles
away,
'Twas the outlaws Frank and Jesse James.

Stanzas three and four describe in straightforward style other crimes committed by the James boys, but offer no editorial condemnation, in contrast to the epithet "dirty little coward," affixed consistently to the name of Jesse's killer Robert Ford:

It was his brother Frank that robbed the Gallatin
bank,
And carried the money from the town.

¹Ibid., pp. 564-65.

²Gerould, pp. 283-84.

³Lanham, p. 109.

It was in this very place that they had a little
race,

For they shot Captain Sheets to the ground.

They went to the crossing not very far from there,

And there they did the same;

And the agent on his knees he delivered up the keys

To the outlaws Frank and Jesse James.

The ballad appeals to pathos by calling attention to the bereft James widow and her brave, therefore pathetic, children:

Jesse had a wife to mourn all her life,

The children they are brave.

'Twas a dirty little coward shot Mister Howard

[the alias Jesse took]

And laid Jesse James in his grave.

The argument emphasizes the idea of betrayal: Jesse is shot one Saturday night while he is at home with his brave family by a man who had been a guest in the home. Ignoring crucial circumstances of Jesse's own guilt (another "invalid topic" for argument), the ballad implies that regardless of what Jesse James himself represented, true evil existed only in the person of a man, a "thief and a coward," who would accept his hospitality and his leadership before killing him.

The ballad ends on a note completely remote from the logos of the folksong as a whole, in order to further distract the audience from the issues involved:

Jesse went to his rest with his hand on his
breast.

The devil will be upon his knee.

He was born one day in the county of Clay,
And came from a solitary race.

What is intended as pathos becomes to the astute reader bathos, but the rhetoric of folklore, even invalid rhetoric on occasion, has the power here to cloud the issues in order to glorify Jesse James as an American type of Robin Hood.

In spite of fallacious reasoning which argues the case of a non-heroic hero, however, the ballad "Jesse James" argues for a basic American ideal--fair play. Robert Ford did not play fair in denying Jesse James the choice and opportunity to defend himself. John Henry, Casey Jones, and other American folk heroes died as a result of conflicts with their adversaries, whether men or machines, but they made their choices and they faced their adversaries openly. Effective rhetoric of American folklore argues from topics of American themes with which the audience identifies--fair play, personal choice, and poetic justice for all. Even the reversal of these themes is argument. The spirituals from the days of slavery, blues, some occupational and all protest songs, for example, deny the existence of personal choice and opportunity in certain situations, but their rhetoric is by way of artistic proofs, appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos. They argue for identification and change. In the folk tale the underdog triumphs, the trickster is tricked. Folk beliefs argue for health,

wealth, and the pursuit of happiness, desires not necessarily unique to any one national group but persuasive topics of invention in the rhetoric of American folklore.

CONCLUSION

Folklore, being traditional activity, argues traditionally; it uses arguments and persuasive techniques developed in the past to cope with recurrences of social situations.

Roger D. Abrahams

In the beginning American folk literature was the word spoken on the immigrant's boat, or around the frontier campfire, or at the bedside in a cottage. If that word echoed European tales, it soon took on New World images and references. As a dynamic process, folk literature is more than a treasury of traditional tales, songs, and proverbs one has heard before and wishes to hear again. Variants prove that American folk literature develops and expands as it incorporates into traditional frameworks contemporary metaphors and up-dated episodes. Folklore is renewed in the ever-changing American culture groups--rural, urban, suburban--and in the ever-evolving occupations. While both the whaling and the petroleum industries, for example, operated to produce oils for light and lubrication, folklore of the oil field differs from lore of the whalers. Similarly folklore of the trucking industry, related to lore of the wagon train, is also a tradition unto itself, with terminology, for one example, unknown to its pioneering

ancestor: truck stop, citizen's band radio, radar unit ahead. In Sky Man on the Totem Pole, Christie Harris tells of American Indian folk reverence for the thunderbird, an archetypal symbolic creature from beyond the earth, and associates it with the spaceman of the twentieth century in his silver-like garments and his flying apparatus which takes him beyond the earth to the moon itself. Thus scientific wonders capture one's imagination, etiological myths evolve. Few inventions of folk literature can be more contemporary than the vast body of lore developing around Unidentified Flying Objects--folklore so persuasive that countless narrators and believers anticipate, even attempt to dictate, whatever future scientists and governmental agencies may discover and make public about UFO's.

For the most part, however, the naive arts of storytelling and folk singing do not claim to be "rhetorical"; yet rhetorical they are. Each time a narrator reports and enhances the life and activities of an ancestor or a national hero, he persuades his audience to take pride in his heritage. Whenever a signer recalls the girl who whistles to get her man, or laments the tragic death of a young man on Springfield Mountain, or bemoans the disasters to human dignity caused by the boll weevil or the chain gang, he persuades his listeners to rejoice, to pity, or to protest.

In addition to the countless topics of invention or subject matter with which folk literature persuades its audience, it also draws upon the other for canons of rhetoric: arrangement, style, delivery, and artistic appeals. Arrangement, or form, governs the bedtime story which takes a listener "once upon a time" to a never-never land of make-believe and evokes a response to the magical and mystical. Form also governs the myth, which tells of the proud beginnings of a people; or the urban belief tale, which persuades an audience that the event happened near his own neighborhood quite recently. Style in folk literature, as it corresponds to the diction and identifying images of the audience, persuades him to respond to something he knows or might have known. As it differs from the diction and idiom of the audience, style takes the listener outside himself to a unique locale and time, and thus encourages him to respond to the unusual or even quaint. In methods of delivery we see what Roger Abrahams calls the "shaping hand of the artist and its effect on an audience,"¹ while the artistic proofs appeal to the listener's logical or pre-logical senses, his respect for the speaker, and his emotional state in order to create a cathartic condition.

¹"Introductory Remarks to a Rhetorical Theory of Folklore," Journal of American Folklore 81 (1968): 146.

As folk beliefs profess a knowledge the audience shares, as they suggest actions the audience is willing to try, or as they warn of taboos the audience prefers to avoid, they identify and persuade.

The persuasive arts of traditional rhetoric were assigned to assist the orator in legal matters, but Aristotle recognized the uses of persuasive discourse which existed beyond the law courts. The judge of written discourse or literature, he said, is the reader.¹ By the same token, the judge of folk literature is the audience. When the teller and the tale persuade an audience to respond by listening, feeling, acting, and often by retelling, the rhetoric of folk literature is effective.

¹p. 141.

GLOSSARY

The following terms are defined according to their use in the foregoing study.

Aggie joke: a type of numbskull tale which ridicules the mentality of students from Texas A & M University.
Example: "Why does it take four Aggies to change a light bulb? Because it takes one to hold the bulb and three to turn the ladder."

Anthypophora: the rhetorical device for asking a question and answering it. Example: "Have you heard about Jody? No, I suppose you have not."

Apocope: the rhetorical device for the omission of final letters on words. Examples: "thinkin'," "waitin'."

Argument: in discourse, the proof of the statement; in folk literature, the development of the idea or the subject matter.

Arrangement: the canon of rhetoric concerning form and organization of the oration or the piece of folk literature.

Artistic appeals: methods the narrator adapts to his purpose to cause the audience to accept, respond to, and identify with the speaker and his subject matter. Also called artificial proofs, they include logos, ethos, and pathos.

Bruja: Spanish word for witch; one who invokes evil powers.

Characterismus: the rhetorical device for naming a person for some identifying characteristic. Example: a large man named "Mr. Greatbody."

Chiasmus: the rhetorical device for "crossing over," a reversal of syntax in otherwise repetitive phrases or clauses. Example: "You can take the man out of the country but you can't take the country out of the man."

"Come-all-ye": the opening phrase of a type of folk song which appeals to an audience to identify with the singer through mutual interests, occupations, or problems.

Conclusio: in discourse, the final summation of the issues; also called the peroration; in folk literature, the conclusion or end marker.

Confirmatio: in discourse, the arguments for and against the issues; in folk literature, the development of the tale.

Curandero: Spanish word for healer; one who aids another for the sake of good, as opposed to a witch who acts for the sake of evil.

Deliberative discourse: that which advises or informs.
Examples in folk literature: fables and proverbs.

Delivery: the canon of rhetoric which considers the narrator's physical voice, movements, and gestures.

Diaeresis: the rhetorical device for dividing genus into species for explanation. Example: "I would give the world--the sun, the moon, and the stars--for you."

Ellipsis: the rhetorical device for the omission of a word easily understood. Example: "The man came up to me, said, 'How far to Fargo?'"

End markers: statements which bring the piece of folk literature to a close. Examples: "They lived happily ever after"; "That's all she wrote"; "The rock's still there, I reckon."

Epideictic discourse: that which praises, blames, or commemorates. Examples in folk literature: hero legends and songs.

Ethos: the character or personality of the speaker used as an artistic appeal to inspire the audience's trust and identification.

Evil eye: a malevolent power certain persons are said to possess, consciously or unconsciously, and to exercise by staring fixedly at someone.

Exordium: in discourse, the introduction or opening statement designed to catch the audience's attention.

- Fairy tale: a story set in the unidentifiable past ("once upon a time"), having as its subject matter the marvelous and the fantastic.
- Fakelore: Richard Dorson's term for pseudo-folklore; that which is created by a specific author or artist in imitation of traditional lore.
- Folk belief: faith in the power of omens, signs, tokens, etc., accepted by an individual or a group as influences on conditions and results.
- Folk informant: one who reports that a piece of folklore exists, as distinguished from the narrator who tells the tale in his own personal fashion.
- Folk literature: tales, songs, proverbs which come from the oral tradition without an identifiable author, but which can be or have been printed.
- Folklore: traditional creations of a culture group; folk literature, graphic and mimetic arts, domestic arts, occupational lore, etc., which are passed from generation to generation, or exist within a culture group.
- Folklorist: one who collects, studies, or analyzes folklore.
- Folk narrator: one who tells the piece of folk literature by applying his personal qualities of style, delivery, and "performance," as distinguished from the informant who merely reports that the piece of folklore exists. A folk singer serves in the same capacity as a narrator by relaying and adapting folksongs to his own purposes and by his own methods of delivery.
- Folk song: any song of unknown origin from oral tradition, whether lyric or ballad.
- Folk tales: an inclusive term for any traditional prose narrative of unknown origin. Generally told for entertainment, some may illustrate a truth or point a moral. Folk tales include nursery and fairy tales, anecdotes, tall tales, jump stories, etc.
- Formulaic openers: recognized patterns which begin a folk tale or song and indicate the tale type. "Once upon a time" introduces a fairy tale; "In the beginning" opens a myth; "Come all ye . . ." invites those of similar

sympathies to share an experience described in a folk song.

Function: (noun) in folk literature, any organic element which advances action or establishes logos, pathos, or ethos.

Hero legends: stories concerning events in the life of a historical person or a legendary character who has achieved heroic status.

Identification: Kenneth Burke's term for rhetoric; persuasion by identifying speaker with audience (and vice versa) through mutual interest, understanding, emotions, etc.

Inartificial proof: testimony from eye witnesses or documentation normally outside the speaker's artistic control. In folk literature, however, such proof can be useful to the narrator as he chooses to call it to the attention of his audience to establish his own credibility.

Invention: in discourse, the choice of subject matter.

Jump story: a story incorporating repetitive details designed to startle an audience and cause it to "jump" at the surprise ending.

Legend: a prose narrative dealing with events in an identifiable past and sometimes concerning historical persons.

Litotes: the rhetorical device for understatement for the purposes of emphasis or intensification. Example: "Was she beautiful? Not much, she wasn't"--meaning she was quite beautiful.

Little Audrey stories: a type of numbskull story told according to a formula: an event + "Little Audrey just laughed and laughed because she knew" + a misinterpretation of the event. Example: "Little Audrey's teacher told her she would drive him to distraction, but Little Audrey just laughed and laughed because she knew she did not have a driver's license."

Little moron joke: a type of numbskull tale involving a question, "Why did the little moron . . . ?" and an

answer describing the character's gross misunderstanding of a word or situation. Example:

"Why did the little moron pinch his tongue?"

"To prove he could hold his licker."

"Little stories": in American Indian folk literature, fables and tales designed to teach object lessons to children.

Local legends: those associated with a geographic place or history.

Logos: the rational argument in discourse; in folk literature, the thesis or subject matter.

Mal de ojo: Spanish term for "evil eye."

Migratory tales: those which "travel" from one area to another. They contain essentially the same themes and elements of structure, but they take on local details and features so that they are associated with and believed to have happened in the region where they are told.

Myth: a traditional prose narrative which explains origins, natural phenomena, animal characteristics, rituals, and customs.

Narratio: the second part in the arrangement of discourse; background material or the statement of facts.

Numbskull tales: also called noodle tales; short anecdotes about comically stupid characters acting absurdly. In American folk literature, the tale type includes Little Audrey, Little Moron, and Aggie jokes.

Occupational songs: those which celebrate or warn against a particular line of work or profession.

Oxymoron: a rhetorical device for a paradoxical phrase.
Example: "She continued to whine in happy sorrow."

Parelecon: the rhetorical device for adding superfluous words. Example: "Where is the chicken at?"

Partitio: in discourse, the statement of what is to be proved.

Pathos: an appeal to the audience's emotions; the artistic proof which persuades or identifies by way of pity, terror, humor, or other emotions.

Proverb: a statement expressing a general truth or a piece of wisdom. The true proverb is always a complete sentence, as "Asking costs nothing." Proverbial phrases suggest truth or wisdom by making metaphorical statements, as "to be in hot water"; or by literary allusions, as "sour grapes."

Rhetoric: the art of persuading an audience to act or to feel, or both.

Saints legends: prose narratives dealing with the life or miracles of a Christian saint. Also called religious legends.

Shaman: American Indian term for a person who possesses supernatural powers to cure or cause disease.

Style: the canon of rhetoric concerning the use of figures of speech, the type of diction, and grammar in discourse.

Superstition: an irrational fear of taboo, usually so called by outsiders or unbelievers.

Swifties: proverbs or quotations enhanced by adverbial puns. Example: "I shot an arrow into the air," Longfellow said sharply.

Tale type: the classification of prose folk literature, as myth, legend, fairy tale, numbskull joke, etc.

Tall tale: a comic, extravagant narrative told primarily to entertain.

Trickster tale: a narrative about a character, either animal or human, who, through greed, deceit, or stupidity, tricks his fellow creatures and often ends up being tricked himself. In some cultures, the trickster is also the culture hero who tricks for good as well as for mischief or evil.

Triskaidekaphobia: a fear of the number thirteen.

Urban belief tales: those which have a contemporary city setting, reported as true events, but which contain traditional variations of a legendary nature.

Variant: folk literature that has undergone changes as it is retold by different narrators in various locations; identifiable versions of a basic tale or song.

Voodoo: a cult of witchcraft derived from Haiti and French West Africa. Among southern American Negroes both the evil force and the practitioners are called hoodoo.

Work songs: those designed to inspire laborers to perform or produce by setting forth a work rhythm or pattern.

Zeugma: a rhetorical device wherein one verb controls several words of clauses, one accurate and one an ironic misfit. Example: "In his line of work, he skins his knuckles and his fellow man."

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