

*Poet, Public, and
Performance in
Ancient Greece*

Edited by

Lowell Edmunds & Robert W. Wallace

with a Preface by

Maurizio Bettini

THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY PRESS

Baltimore and London

1997

from: Poet, Public, and Performance in
Ancient Greece, ed. Lowell
Edmunds and Robt. Wallace,
the Johns Hopkins University Press,
1997

Prose Genres for the Performance

of Traditional Wisdom

in Ancient Greece:

Proverb, Maxim, Apothegm

Joseph Russo

MY INVESTIGATION into "poet, public, and performance" takes an approach that I should explain and justify at the start. I am deliberately stretching the sense of *poet* to mean anyone who employs speech in an artistic or creative manner;¹ by *public* I mean the audience or receiver(s) of such speech; and *performance* has a double sense, being both the moment of utterance, a "speech event" shared by all present, and the specific artistic and authoritative "speech act" of someone who utters wisdom in a traditional verbal genre.²

Since our study of such speech in ancient cultures is limited to what has been recorded in writing, it is self-evident that the only performances we can study are those deemed worthy of preservation for their illustrative or anecdotal value by historians, biographers, and essayists, who offer them as "true," and those invented by playwrights, poets, and writers of literary dialogues like Plato, Xenophon, and Lucian, who offer them as fictitious in varying degree. (Of course, this dichotomy collapses along its line of demarcation between truth and fiction, since all these writers are to some extent fictionalizing social practice.) I am leaving aside representations of wisdom speech in metrical poetic form—for example, gnomic expression in Pindar, the tragedians, or Menander—for several reasons. First, their sheer bulk entitles them to monograph treatment in their own right (see, e.g., Lardinois's recently completed study of *gnômai* in archaic Greek poetry, note 6 below). Second, the force of poetic meter and diction may interfere with the verbal texture of the utterance. Third and most important, these formal poetic genres invoke a totally different concept of performance from that which I am using. They were performed in the tradi-

tional sense of that word, involving rehearsal and formal, expected recitation, whereas I am concerned with a poetics of prose performance that is radically different.

In concentrating on the creative use of prose rather than verse, I am following the way opened by some recent performance-oriented studies by American linguistic anthropologists and folklorists.³ The artistry I am concerned with involves not only the careful choice and arrangement of words and sounds—virtues regularly attributed to poetry—but also the skillful matching of words, and often of metaphor, to a specific social moment, virtues found in only some poetic genres but in all interactive prose performances. For the wisdom genres that form my topic—proverb, maxim, and apothegm—it is precisely the aptness of this match of speech to situation and its compelling effect upon the audience that are the essential poetic-performative virtues, creating a speech event the Greeks found worth preserving in memory for its embodiment of some key cultural value.

WISDOM SPEECH

The creative and spontaneous prose performances I choose to call *wisdom speech* belong to the oral tradition that expresses communal beliefs and norms for behavior through commonly understood, formally specific verbal forms. These forms were most commonly recognized in ancient Greece under the names *paroimia*, *gnômê*, and *apophthegma*.⁴ The first two correspond closely to the modern genres of proverb and maxim; the third, as I hope to demonstrate, begins with a meaning close to the modern sense of apothegm and evolves toward that of "anecdote," an elusive but documentable oral genre most often characterized by dialogic content and memorable concluding utterance.⁵

The widespread use of distinct but related genres for wisdom speech in prose has drawn little interest from Hellenists.⁶ What is particularly lacking, from the perspective of my present argument, is attention to the project of encompassing all these forms of folk speech within a single category of wisdom speech, demarcating their boundaries and their overlap with one another, and understanding their utterance as essentially emergent and responsive to specific contexts. It seems that those whose interests are primarily philological, historical, or philosophical find little in them that is significant. But to the Hellenist with a folkloric or ethnographic vision, the identification of the formal features of these genres and the analysis of their poetics of performance offer an attractive opening to the discovery of an almost invisible realm of folk literature that permeates ancient Greek culture at a relatively modest level of performance. I

say "modest" because the poetics of this literature requires a relatively minor artistry compared to that of the oral tradition behind the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Nevertheless, once we recognize it as another characteristic product of the Greek genius for artful verbal and dramatic forging of social wisdom, we should agree that its forms deserve an important place in any canon of oral genres of ancient Greek folk literature—a canon which we Hellenists have not yet constructed in adequate detail.⁷ A first task in determining the range and limits of such a canon must be to establish adequate definitions of the three genres in question and significant distinctions between them, as well as to note possible zones of overlapping reference.

PERFORMANCE

The wisdom-speech genres are, like most other Greek literature, performance genres, but not in the sense we attribute to the word *performance* when we think of literary genres like drama or epic or lyric poetry. For these, performance constitutes an elaborately framed and scheduled event, taking place before formally invited audiences in habitual settings, and involving some degree of rehearsal and memorization. But the "performance" enacted in the oral genres I am examining is not so much the province of the scholar trained as philologist or literary historian as it is of the linguist, anthropologist, or folklorist. I define this performance as *the optional and impromptu creative response to an important social and psychological situation*, the kind of performance that sociolinguists and folklorists characterize as "emergent."⁸ In the words of the noted sociolinguist Dell Hymes, it is essential to understand "the performance as situated in a context, the performance as emergent, as unfolding or arising within that context . . . as something creative, realized, achieved, even transcendent of the ordinary course of events."⁹ And yet their improvised and emergent character does not mean that the verbal utterances lack formal, structured artistry. In fact it is a characteristic of such performance that its verbal and dramatic artistry be subject to audience evaluation because it is based on recognized conventions. In a recent study of the "Seven Sages," Richard Martin has taken a similar ethnographic approach and offers the following definition of performance: "a public enactment, about important matters, in word or gesture, employing conventions and open to scrutiny and criticism, especially criticism of style."¹⁰ While a definable act of audience evaluation is only occasionally present in our written records, we may take the very fact of the speech's preservation as a mark of admiration on the part of the widest conceivable audience—the culture as a collective whole—for a successful performance.

Let me now turn to the task of identifying some distinctive formal, aesthetic, contextual, and functional qualities of the proverb, maxim, and apothegm.

PROVERB

The proverb differs from the other two genres in that its author is always anonymous and its truth is most often metaphorically expressed. Thus, in English, "the pot calling the kettle black" and "a stitch in time saves nine" are typical metaphorical proverbs, using familiar household imagery to comment on human behavior, whereas "honesty is the best policy" or "time is money" represent the less common type that states truth literally in the form of abstract principles. Most modern paroemiologists are willing to count both types as genuine proverbs, although some scholars like to identify the nonmetaphorical statements as aphorisms or maxims,¹¹ a distinction that goes back to Aristotle (his criteria for distinguishing *gnômai* from *paroimiai* are discussed below under "Maxim"). But aside from the question of a fuzzy boundary between proverb and maxim in both English and Greek, defining the proverb presents still more serious problems. It seems that no brief definition can capture both proverb form and proverb function in a way that matches the amazing versatility of this tiny oral genre.¹²

The earliest definition in Western thought is that of Aristotle, who wrote a whole treatise (no longer extant) on proverbs. But a fragment from another lost treatise ("On Philosophy") is preserved in a quotation by Synesius (*Encom. calv.* 22 = fr. 13 Rose):

Ἀριστοτέλης φησίν, ὅτι παλαιᾶς εἰσι φιλοσοφίας ἐν ταῖς μεγίσταις ἀνθρώπων φθοραῖς ἀπολομένης ἐγκαταλείμματα, περισωθέντα διὰ συντομίαν καὶ δεξιότητα.

Aristotle says that they are remains of an ancient philosophy that was lost in major human disasters, [remains] preserved because of their concision and adroitness.

This definition stresses their value as wisdom and some aspects of their form, but omits any consideration of the dynamics of their use in social context, their important "performative" dimension. A fairly comprehensive modern definition may be achieved by combining two descriptive passages from Abrahams:¹³

Proverbs are short and witty traditional expressions that arise as part of everyday discourse . . . nearly always stated in the form of a single sen-

tence. They are among the shortest forms of traditional expression that call attention to themselves as formal artistic entities. . . . Proverbs are descriptions that propose an attitude or a mode of action in relation to a recurrent social situation. They attempt to persuade by clarifying the situation, by giving it a name, thus indicating that the problem has arisen before and that past practice has come up with a workable solution.

As the common linguistic property of all speakers constituting any linguistic community, proverbs have no known author. Thus when any speaker, ancient or modern, uses a proverb, he or she is invoking the authority of cultural norms as embodied in inherited verbal formulas that were invented by no one but are known to everyone.¹⁴ The speaker momentarily ceases to use a personal voice in the here and now and instead uses the voice of the shared cultural tradition. Modern linguistics scholars have noted a variety of "framing" devices to mark such departures, ranging from the simple "(as) they say" to the more subtle use of a different intonation from that of ordinary speech.

In ancient Greek texts we lack the elusive intonational dimension, but can find the more overt markers preserved by our authors. Thus, Greek speakers usually indicated that a proverb was being uttered by prefacing it with a formula like the simple τὸ λεγόμενον, or occasionally with a more elaborate version like that used by Gyges to Kandaules in Herodotus 1.7: "Many good things were discovered by our ancestors, among which is 'every one should mind his own affairs,'" σκοπέειν τινὰ τὰ ἑωυτοῦ.

Platonic dialogues and Aristophanic comedy, which both simulate everyday discourse, sometimes represent a speaker using a proverb to impress the validity of his viewpoint upon his addressee. The strategy behind such usage is usually fairly obvious and does not call for special analysis.¹⁵ Other cases, however, become more complex. We may, for example, find a speaker using a proverb (or maxim) whose verbal texture subtly evokes themes or images already implicit in the dramatic situation; therefore full appreciation of the layers of meaning and the polysemy of the text demands some degree of analysis. Let us consider Herodotus's story (1.7-13) of how King Kandaules of Lydia, obsessed by his wife's beauty and the unnatural desire that his loyal officer Gyges be compelled to admire that beauty, forces Gyges to spy on her nakedness and ends up losing his throne and his life to Gyges through the contrivance of the outraged queen. This unusual story also has an unusual concentration of proverbs, with Gyges and Kandaules resorting to three proverbs within a few paragraphs. The first proverb, σκοπέειν τινὰ τὰ ἑωυτοῦ spoken by Gyges to Kandaules, carries a double meaning in σκοπέειν. In the proverb by itself, without context, the verb

σκοπέειν would mean "pay attention to." But in the context in which it is applied the more literal and visual sense of σκοπέειν, "look at," comes through clearly, prepared for by the dense vocabulary of vision that immediately precedes it (εἶδος, εἶδεος, ὀφθαλμῶν, θεήσεαι γυμνήν, θεήσασθαι γυμνήν), and reinforced by Kandaules' sharply pointed proverb, "people's ears happen to be less reliable than their eyes," ὅτα γὰρ τυγχάνει ἀνθρώποισι ἑόντα ἀπιστότερα ὀφθαλμῶν.¹⁶ Thus, a strongly voyeuristic motif animates the entire action.

In Gyges' second proverb, "a woman when she takes off her chiton takes off also her *aidôs*," ἅμα δὲ κιθῶνι ἐκδυομένη συνεκδύεται καὶ τὴν αἰδῶ γυνή, the meaning of *aidôs*—"sense of shame, modesty, decent respect"—is rendered ambivalent, or indeed polyvalent, as its meaning continually shifts with the unfolding of the story. First the queen, because she was seen naked, may be considered, following the proverb, as a woman stripped of simple *aidôs* in the sense that she has lost her personal "modesty" or "decency," which was violated through indecent exposure to an outsider's gaze. But next we are shown the reverse side: she is presented as a woman possessed of a supreme sense of personal shame because she feels so driven to avenge the outrage and restore her proper respect. And then again she may be seen as a woman indeed without *aidôs* (in the sense of decent respect for humane or community values), because she can so easily have her husband murdered through deceit and take another man into her bed! Some of this polyvalence is, to be sure, inherent in the semantics of the very word *aidôs*; but the shifting meanings, the play of ambiguity within the proverbial truth itself, are best highlighted through dramatic embodiment in continually unfolding narrative form, as Herodotus, ever the consummate storyteller, cleverly exploits the ambiguity of ethical choices faced by his characters.

Within this narrative artistry we should not overlook the purely verbal artistry of Herodotus's proverbial play. Kandaules' ὅτα γὰρ τυγχάνει ἀνθρώποισι ἑόντα ἀπιστότερα ὀφθαλμῶν is characterized throughout by strong repetition of t-consonants (τ, θ) and alphas. In addition the key word *anthrôpoisi*, the human focus of the general observation, is placed at the exact center, and introduces -nt- and -op- combinations that will reappear in *eonta* and *ophthalmôn*, as well as echoing the long omega that opened the proverb in its first syllable and will close it in the last. In Gyges' second proverb, word order is again artfully arranged so as to place the key action of "stripping" at the exact center, with the ironic movement from physical stripping of a garment to metaphorical stripping of virtue almost iconically rendered in the two long middle-voice verb forms that, lying adjacent to one another, flaunt their formal parallelism even as they refer to different realms of being.

Another example of the play of proverbial polysemy is in Herodotus 7.162, the dramatic moment when the Sicilian tyrant Gelon receives a delegation from the Greek alliance asking him, in the spirit of Panhellenism, to join in the battle against the Persian invader. Gelon, himself protected by geography from the threat of Persian incursions and untouched by any sense of obligation to defend mainland Greece (he has his own barbarians, the Carthaginians, to deal with), refuses to contribute any forces unless he is given chief military command of the entire coalition. When this vainglorious request is rejected by the Spartan and Athenian delegates, Gelon sums up the situation with wisdom speech in the form of a powerful metaphor: tell the Greeks, he says, that "her spring is taken from the year," ἐκ τοῦ ἐνιαυτοῦ τὸ ἔαρ ἐξαπαίρηται, an utterance that is clearly a proverbial expression based on a folk metaphor.¹⁷ Again there is subtle sound play at work within brief compass: *exarairêtai* seems phonetically to repeat and include, and so in iconic manner to swallow up, *ear*; the opening *ek* seems momentarily canceled by the initial *en-* of *eniautou*, but then reaffirmed by the initial *ex-* of *exarairêtai*; and so there may be subliminal punning on whether the Greek springtime of hope is "in" or "out." Even the exact echo of the article *tou* in the closing *-tou* of *eniautou* may contribute, in the realm of Jakobson's "sound shape of language," to the tension between affirmation and contradiction that subtly informs this entire utterance.

Herodotus as narrator feels immediately obliged to explain the metaphor and says simply that the loss of the finest season refers to the loss of the finest army, that of Gelon. But effective symbolism is polyvalent and open; it succeeds by tempting us to see widening circles of significance. In the statement "the spring is taken from the year," the reference to seasons of the year evokes the idea of cyclic recurrence. Thus the first implicit meaning is that this springtime of opportunity, once lost, will not be at hand again for some time. A deeper implication is that it cannot in fact return until the other seasons have been experienced, a cycle that must include winter, the harshest season. Hence Gelon's proverb speaks with two voices: a first voice simply pointing out opportunity lost, and a second, more subtle, voice conveying a warning of hardship to come.

MAXIM

A challenging, but ultimately not very rewarding, question is how to distinguish the proverb from the maxim. Most modern paroemiologists, as noted above, accept that proverbs come in both metaphorical and nonmetaphorical varieties and say that the second type are synonymous with maxims. Others prefer to see two distinct genres and follow more strictly the distinction made

by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*: "proverbs also are metaphors from one species to another" (καὶ αἱ παροιμίαι μεταφοραὶ ἀπ' εἶδους εἰς εἶδος εἰσὶν, 3.11, 1413a15), whereas "a maxim is a statement not about a particular fact, such as the character of Iphicrates, but of a general nature . . . about such things as concern conduct and should be chosen or avoided in conduct" (ἐστὶ δ' ἡ γνώμη ἀπόφανσις, οὐ μέντοι οὔτε περὶ τῶν καθ' ἕκαστον, οἷον ποιός τις Ἰφικράτης, ἀλλὰ καθόλου . . . περὶ ὧν αἱ πράξεις εἰσὶ, καὶ αἰρετὰ ἢ φευκτά ἐστὶ πρὸς τὸ πράττειν, 2.21, 1394a22–26).¹⁸ The difference amounts to very little, since the degree of metaphor may be ambiguous and both types of wisdom statement have the same "performance" function. Proverbs instruct or comment by using one topic or activity metaphorically to represent another (English, "all that glitters is not gold"; Greek, "the elephant doesn't catch a mouse," CPG 1.74), whereas maxims do the same by using a truism to imply coverage of all particular instances that may fall under the general heading (English "everything comes to him who waits"; Greek, "nothing to excess"). Aristotle was aware of the impossibility of clearly separating the two and allows for borderline cases, saying that "some proverbs are also maxims" and citing as an example the cryptically understated "an Attic neighbor" (ἐτι ἔνιαι τῶν παροιμιῶν καὶ γνώμαί εἰσιν, οἷον παροιμία, Ἀττικὸς πάροικος, 2.21.12, 1395a19–20).¹⁹ He presumably means that this can be taken either (maxim-wise) as a literal truism, or extended (proverb-wise) in metaphorical application to situations in which neither neighbors nor people of Attica literally figure.²⁰

Among the main features of maxims, according to Aristotle (*Rhet.* 2.21), are that they can be the final part of the logical structure called the enthymeme; that they are more appropriate for the arguments of older men than younger ones; and that rustics are especially prone to using them, and are among the people who apply maxims to areas where they lack experience. Thus he seems to view their proper use as characteristic of sophisticated and philosophical expression, to be used by those who have a right to be authoritative. Demetrius (*On Style* 232) would seem to be continuing Aristotle's view when he contrasts the "demotic and common" wisdom of the proverb with the more "ex cathedra" quality of the man who speaks in maxims and exhortations. It might appear that Demetrius diverges from Aristotle by assuming that proverbs characterize common people's speech, whereas Aristotle said that rustics characteristically used maxims. But their comments may be reconciled by noting that both authors share the judgment that rustics (and young people) lack the knowledge to use maxims properly and so are prone to inappropriate *gnômologia*.²¹

However we may view the sometimes blurred line dividing maxims from proverbs, it is important to emphasize that although *formally* often distinct,

both proverbs and maxims were put to the same *functional* use: to persuade the listener and move him to correct action by utterance of familiar, unassailable wisdom. This is clear from the examples quoted by Aristotle, typically from speeches in epic or drama. These maxims are of course versified,²² and thus represent a phenomenon quite distinct from the "emergent" utterance of the prose maxim according to the ethnographic criteria for performance that I have been applying. Such spontaneous emergence of maxims in fact seems less easy to identify with certainty in the kinds of prose texts I have been examining. It is likely that many maxims escape our notice because they are simply general statements that do not "call attention to themselves as formal artistic entities," to use Abraham's language, as do proverbs and apothegms. This is because they exhibit less poetic artistry than proverbs and less contextually framed dramatic force than apothegms. Thus the identification of maxims in an author like Herodotus, who is normally a good source of verbal and nonverbal²³ folk behavior, can be highly problematic, despite a recent study that attempts to show that he used them frequently.²⁴ Although it would take a lengthy investigation to establish the facts, it may be that maxims are less characteristic of the interactional prose discourse represented by authors like Herodotus, Xenophon, Plato, and Plutarch, and more common in poets like Pindar, Bacchylides, and the tragedians, in the didactic sections of biographical accounts like those of Diogenes Laertius, and in oratory. Because Aristotle continually exhorts his reader to employ maxims for effective and persuasive oratory, we may assume that they were widely used, but I suspect that their use was less spontaneous and more calculated than that of proverbs and apothegms, hence more characteristic (at least in the fourth century) of written style than of spontaneous oral discourse.

If their instructive and manipulative purpose makes proverbs and maxims similar, it sets them apart in some crucial respects from the third and most complicated of the wisdom genres, the apothegm.

APOTHEGM

The apothegm, unlike the proverb and maxim, is not so much tribal or traditional wisdom that the addressee in some sense already shares with the speaker, as the clever and inspired creation of an important individual at a critical moment, which has entered the social memory. The Greeks developed an extensive tradition of preserving the opinions and sayings of famous individuals, a preservation that would have been oral and anecdotal for centuries before attaining formal documentation in the highly literate postclassical era.²⁵

We find extensive citation of apothegms in writers like Plutarch and Diogenes Laertius, and the apparent antecedents of this tradition are seen in Herodotus and Xenophon.

The authority of the apothegm is based on what I conceive as an underlying Greek ideology concerning verbal performance, namely that there is a special value and force inherent in the wise and pithy saying uttered by a distinguished individual at the opportune or critical moment, a point in time for which the Greeks have a special word, *kairos*. Such a belief in authoritative *muthos* or *logos* was so generally shared and accepted that no overt declaration or defense of its principles would have been necessary. Yet a brief but revealing defense of one aspect may be found in the introduction (172b-e) to the possibly spurious treatise of Plutarch on the "Sayings [Apophthegmata] of Kings and Commanders." In putting forth an argument for the usefulness of his treatise, the author offers a curious theory about words versus deeds. He explains that the best understanding of the ethos and policy of history's leading figures is to be found not in their deeds but in their words. The reason for this, he continues, is that men's actions are subject to the influence of chance, whereas their words, being free of such influence, are under their full control and therefore offer the best index of their minds and characters.

In light of the sociolinguistic vision I have sought to develop here, this Plutarchean statement fails to grasp the social, contextual, and interactive nature of speech events, conceiving the entire activity as that of the speaker. Indeed (pseudo-)Plutarch writes as if there existed only speech acts and no such thing as speech events! Or, invoking modern Bakhtinian theory, we may say that Plutarch fails to grasp the essentially dialogic character of any and every utterance, even that to which no response is given.²⁶ Every genre constitutes speech in reaction to earlier speech in that genre, and all the more so if the genre is oral. Therefore, insofar as it is a reaction, speech is never fully determined and controlled by the speaker. Plutarch, however, needs to imagine the speaker's full control of speech as a defense against the power of chance, Tyche. Such an optimistic vision (or fantasy) of human control includes the power to recognize the *kairos* and make the best social strategic use of it.

This is why so many stories of Plutarch and Diogenes aim at perpetuating the memory of how a wise or authoritative person delivered a wise and pithy utterance, perfectly matched to its "kairotic" moment. We are witnessing the recording of an oral tradition that preserves the nearer past just as epic recitations and their eventual recording preserved the more remote heroic past. While that earlier past, with its legacy of myth and heroic legend, may have

enjoyed greater ultimate prestige, the more recent past offered paradigmatic examples of more immediate and practical worth for modeling daily behavior.

Of course, once tradition has made an apothegm familiar, it may be subject to quotation and reuse and may eventually approximate the maxim and proverb in function, as seems to have happened with some of the philosophers' apothegms quoted by Diogenes Laertius. But there is good evidence for arguing that the original nature of the apothegm remains quite distinct from that of the other two wisdom genres.

Although apothegms were liberally quoted by Greek writers, it turns out to be extremely difficult to define the limits of this popular form of speech. The etymology of *apophthegma* (the preposition *ἀπο-* plus the verb *φθέγγομαι*) suggests either the meaning "utterance, declaration," or the different sense "retort." "Retort" would be the most accurate translation if we allow the Greek preposition *ἀπο-* to have the particular force appropriate to verbs denoting speech: the sense of giving back an utterance particularly called forth by the social context operating upon the speakers, as in the verb *ἀποκρίνομαι*. In many cases the apothegms cited by ancient authors fit this category precisely. There are, however, abundant examples of apothegms cited as merely clever sayings, in effect *bon mots*, where context is *not* a factor. Here the meaning must be "utterance" rather than "retort" and the *apo-* would seem to denote simply the act of putting *forth* a statement, much like the *de-* in Latin *declamare*, "declaim," or the *aus-* in German *Ausspruch*.

A survey of the uses of the term over several centuries suggests that in ancient Greece the meaning of *apophthegma* retained a certain ambiguity while gradually shifting its semantic focus. Originally it most likely designated the "retort," whose significance came from a strict relation to the context in which the "saying" was said. Then it came to be understood in the more general sense of "saying," a virtual synonym of the maxim or *gnômê*. And finally there is the emergence of a meaning no longer connected with the root sense of speaking (*phtheng-*), the apothegm as merely an "anecdote."²⁷

An argument for this sequence can be made from the fact that the earliest (fourth-century) uses of the word, first in Xenophon and then in Aristotle, clearly conceive the apothegm as a clever saying whose cleverness consists in its high degree of *responsiveness*, as a retort or summation, to a specific *context*. By the second century A.D., in Plutarch's four books of sayings called *Apophthegmata*, his understanding of the term is still close to "retort," since most of his quoted apothegms are statements whose significance derives from their context. But we also find a few cases where an *action* or *decision* has taken the place

of an utterance: Plutarch reports not what the person *spoke* but merely what he or she *decided* (e.g., nos. 6, 7, 18, and 19 of the 31 *apophthegmata* attributed to Lycurgus). For Plutarch, then, we see that the meaning of apothegm no longer requires a response to context, but may now be stretched to include an anecdote, *apomnêmonema*, without any clever and quotable closing remark. By the third century A.D., in Diogenes Laertius's *Lives and Opinions* (*Gnômai*) of *Eminent Philosophers*, we find "apothegms" of famous persons preserved as clever sayings worth quoting in their own right, without context, and in effect identical to the maxims or *gnômai* of Diogenes' title. In his *Thales* (1.35), for example, Diogenes simply lists seven *apophthegmata* (which are in fact philosophical precepts) after several pages quoting clever and wise opinions that are actually *responses* to questions and situations but are *never* called apothegms. For Diogenes also, the word *apophthegma* has lost any sense of "response" or "retort," but for him it has become synonymous with *gnômê*.²⁸

The evidence of the earlier Greek prose writers seems to suggest an intrinsic connection between apothegm and anecdote, which would follow from the fact that apothegms are inherently embedded in a brief story. Herodotus, the earliest surviving prose author, although he seems not to have the word apothegm in his vocabulary, nonetheless offers several good examples of anecdotes culminating in the characteristic apothegmatic response.²⁹ Some responses, indeed, are so memorable that we have only to quote them and the entire preceding scene or anecdotal moment springs instantly to the mind of any reader familiar with the *Histories*: "My men have become women, and my women men" (8.88); "Of all these many thousands, not one will be alive a hundred years from now" (7.46); "It is true that I would not have received such honors from the Spartans had I been a Belbinian, but neither would you although you are an Athenian" (8.125); and the almost untranslatable Οὐ φροντὶς Ἰπποκλείδῃ (6.129). Perhaps the cleverest specimen of anecdotal retort is in the scene on the eve of the Battle of Salamis, as Themistocles tries to convince the reluctant council of generals to make the decisive naval engagement at Salamis rather than the Peloponnese. The Corinthian commander attempts to win the point with the pithy saying "in contests those who start prematurely are whipped"; but Themistocles wins the duel of sayings by "capping" his adversary with a better retort: "Yes, and those who get left behind are never crowned" (8.59).

The earliest recorded use of statements specifically identified as *apophthegmata* is in the closing scene of book 2 of Xenophon's *Hellenica* (2.3.56). The context is tightly structured, and the specific sense of a "retort" that is cleverly responsive to context seems already well established.

Xenophon is describing the death of the Athenian politician Theramenes in

404 B.C. at the hands of the oligarchic, pro-Spartan faction called the Thirty, led by the arch-conservative Critias. The historian's report (2.3.15–56) is detailed and vivid, as he dramatizes the deterioration of these two men's friendship through a series of political arguments between them, culminating in a set of opposing speeches they make before the Athenian Boule. The story closes in a striking manner as book 2 ends with the recounting of two apothegms delivered by the victim just before his death. Since these are the first apothegms identified as such in Greek literature, it is worth looking closely at their context, form, and content. We shall see that these three aspects are perfectly interwoven to present an artistic finale to the tale of Theramenes' death: the narration is capped, in its closure, with a well-performed genre of verbal art.

Theramenes is charged by Critias before the Athenian Boule of 500 with disloyalty to the oligarchic movement and with chameleon-like shifts in his political allegiance; but he defends himself well, so that the Boule seems predisposed to acquit him. Critias cleverly counters by declaring him officially removed from the Boule's jurisdiction and subject solely to the power of the Thirty. He then orders the group in charge of political executions to remove Theramenes from the meeting. Theramenes, as he is being dragged through the marketplace by armed guards, keeps protesting loudly about the injustice being done him, calling on gods and men to witness it. Finally Critias's chief henchmen, a certain Satyrus, is so annoyed by Theramenes' noisy outbursts that he threatens him, in a succinct Greek sentence. He tells him "he would suffer [lit., "lament"], should he not keep quiet," οἰμώζοιτο, εἰ μὴ σιωπήσειεν. "And one utterance [ῥῆμα] of his is reported as this," says Xenophon: Theramenes' retort "And if I do keep quiet, don't I then suffer?" ἄν δὲ σιωπῶ, οὐκ ἄρ' οἰμώζομαι; Xenophon's narrative from this point is worth quoting in full:

And then when he was being compelled to die and drank the hemlock, they said he tossed out the remaining dregs following the custom of *kottabos* and said: "Let this be for the handsome Critias!" [Κριτία τοῦτ' ἔστω τῷ καλῷ]. Now I am not unaware of the fact that these apothegms are not noteworthy, yet I judge that quality admirable in the man, that when death was before him neither intelligence nor playfulness deserted his spirit. (2.3.56)

The historian felt obliged to interrupt his narrative and insert an apology for including two apothegms that readers may think "not noteworthy," οὐκ ἀξιόλογα. Yet his storyteller's instinct led him to use them, and to use them most effectively as capstones to the dramatic end of Theramenes' life and as significant manifestations of the man's intelligence and wit. His first apothegm plays

successfully on Satyros's threatening statement by reversing the order of the verbs "lament" and "keep silent," and moving the verb *σιωπάω* from second clause to first clause in the conditional sentence. Theramenes' rhetorical transformation plays cleverly with the reality underlying the situation: the hopelessness of Theramenes' position renders Satyros's threats gratuitous and therefore meaningless. Both statements point to the inescapable fact that Theramenes will end up suffering (meaning dead) no matter whether he laments aloud or not. Thus his retort uses verbal play to epitomize this irony, creating a pair of conditional statements whose mirrorlike reverse symmetry serves as a verbal icon for the "heads I win, tails you lose" situation facing the speaker.

The concluding apothegm is the concentrated expression of anger of an unfairly condemned man. The custom of *kottabos* was ritually performed in banquet or symposiac contexts as a public affirmation of love. The loved one (normally a male friend) was "toasted," as it were, with an implied wish for good health in the public gesture of tossing the dregs of one's wine goblet accurately over a distance to land in a bowl. The success of the toss was in effect a "love oracle" demonstrating the success of the romantic liaison (much like the modern ritual of plucking daisy petals saying "she loves me, she loves me not"). In his final gesture and apothegmatic accompanying statement, "to the handsome Critias," Theramenes manages to use the conventional love formula in a context that totally reverses its meaning: since the former friend (and perhaps, lover?) has become, most literally, a deadly enemy, so the customary wine has been replaced by deadly poison. His use of apothegm as his final act in life wittily distills the speaker's political and biographical reality to an essence that is simultaneously verbal and gestural. The final unity of language and action in the *kottabos* gives an excellent demonstration of how the apothegm's full meaning is inextricably connected to a dramatic social context. Speech that is usually action only metaphorically (as in the term "speech act") becomes indissolubly fused with real, physical action when a social ritual is performed. And the impact is magnified when the ritual is parodied.

This pair of apothegmatic utterances were already well established in oral tradition: one is "reported," *λέγεται*, the other "they said," *ἔφασαν*. Thus Xenophon's rhetorical disclaimer that these apothegms are "not noteworthy," contrasting with his emphatic and dramatic use of them, suggests that he shared his culture's evaluation of them as extremely successful performances.

When we move to later centuries, however, the meaning of apothegm, as we have noted, seems to lose its clear dimension of verbal performance. Surveying Plutarch's four books of apothegms, *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*, *Sayings of Spartans*, *Sayings of Romans*, and *Sayings of Spartan Women*, it is impossible

to limit the apothegm to verbal utterance alone. Several of the citations would be more accurately called anecdotes, *apomnêmonemata*, since they contain no quoted memorable *saying* but rather a memorable *incident* that has become a good *story*. Plutarch sometimes uses the phrase λόγος ἀπομνημονεύεται to introduce an apothegm, and in this phrase we may discern the potential for emphasis to shift from what was once said to what is now recounted.

The evidence suggests that we posit an evolutionary semantic model in which the meaning of apothegm was extended from "retort" to "utterance" and then loosened even further to include "report," "reminiscence," or "anecdote." In the third meaning the term ceases to refer internally to what the character said and is now conceived from an external perspective, as the "story" told by the narrator about his character.

But the task of defining the full semantic parameters of the Greek *apophthegma* may still be incomplete. Inasmuch as the statement made in an apothegm often comments on a present situation by metaphoric comparison, an apothegm could be equivalent to an *allêgoria* (not modern "allegory" but more narrowly a "speaking in other terms"). Demetrius twice describes the kind of statement he calls *allêgoria* (*On Style* 99, 151; translated by Grube as "hidden/veiled meaning")³⁰ and illustrates it with the very same quotation that Aristotle uses in *Rhetoric* 2.20 to illustrate an *apophthegma*: "Be careful lest the cicadas sing for you from the ground" (meaning "you are in danger of having your trees devastated by the enemy"). Aristotle also characterizes this apothegm as similar to Laconic and "riddle-like" (*ainigmatodê*) sayings. We should then perhaps subdivide apothegms into two classes, the direct and the "allegorical" or "riddling."³¹

If the verbal performance of wisdom is in fact a central phenomenon in Greek culture,³² it seems inevitable that Greek speakers over time should develop multiple terminology with overlapping meanings, as well as multiple meanings for a single term. We do the same thing when in English we use the four terms *adage*, *proverb*, *maxim*, and *saying* loosely to denote more or less the same form of traditional speech; the French are similarly redundant with *dicton*, *proverbe*, *sentence*, and *maxime*, and the Italians with *proverbio*, *detto*, *motto*, *sentenza*, and *massima*. In the case of ancient Greek terminology, multiple labels seem to have gone hand in hand with some widening of the definition of the form, beginning with the overlap between *paroimia* and *gnômê* and continuing through the constantly widening sense of *apophthegma*, including its eventual overlap with *gnômê*.

I conclude by reaffirming the larger issue that emerges from my specific examples. The pervasive presence of several closely related, distinct, but some-

Chorus and Community in Euripides' *Bacchae*

Charles Segal

THIS ESSAY explores the implications of the remoteness of the chorus from the city and the values of the city in Euripides' *Bacchae*. There is, I suggest, a strong connection between the attack on the city from outside by a foreign band and its collapse from within in the devastation of the Theban royal house. This situation results from and reflects the ambiguous status of Dionysus, who is both a native of Thebes and a foreign invader and thus has the status of both insider and outsider. My concern, however, is not so much the nature of Dionysus as the role of the maenad chorus.

The city reflected in the *Bacchae* has no communal center because there is no chorus of citizens who can speak as a community of involved fellow citizens. Instead, the dominant collective voice is that of the barbarian followers of a beautiful but dangerous god who is even more unpitying than they. Even when the chorus does sympathize with the common woes of mortality in gnomic generalities, the contexts make its utterances problematical. The mortal sufferers at the end are driven out of their city, and this collapse of the civic authority has been prefigured in the ruin of the king's palace and in Dionysus's figurative breaching of the walls of Thebes (585-603, 653-54). The survivors, in the closing moments of the play, can only comfort one another as private individuals, alone, defeated, and on the verge of exile.

Because the chorus of the *Bacchae* stands in an adversarial relation to the human protagonists, it has less interaction on the stage with the members of the polis than does the chorus in most tragedies; and even that interaction is narrowly focused on the conflict between Dionysus and Thebes. The effect is to create a sharp division between the chorus's world, defined by the cult of the god and the imagery of animal energy and a landscape of mountains, rivers, and forests, and the world of the city, defined by its walls, prison, and the palace of the authoritarian king.¹

times overlapping genres for the performance of wisdom through authoritative speech, perfectly matched to occasion and sometimes to action, and appreciated as such by its audience, deserves to be studied in its full range and complexity within the conceptual framework of an oral poetics of prose discourse. Any adequate pursuit of this investigation must necessarily rely on methodologies drawn from recent work in key areas of the social sciences dealing with the emergent and contextual significance of certain kinds of speech, where, as in the better-known area of oral poetry, convention and creativity join to produce verbal art.

competitive aspect of Aesopic wisdom, see Stefano Jedrkiewicz, "The Last Champion of Play-Wisdom: Aesop," *Itaca* 6–8 (1990–92) 115–30.

84. Kurke (supra, n. 77) 106.

85. As a skolion: Praxilla fr. 3 = *PMG* carm. conviv. 14; cf. *Ar. Vesp.* 1238; *Pelargoi* fr. 430K = fr. 444 K-A; Kratinos *Kheirones* fr. 236K = fr. 254 K-A. See 3. in Kurke's list for further evidence; Kurke (supra, n. 77) 104. For parallels with Theognis, see Ruth Scodel, "Ἀδμήτου λόγος and the *Alcestis*," *HSCP* 83 (1979) 51–54.

86. Evidence surveyed by Joseph Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle: Its Responses and Operations, with a Catalogue of Responses* (Berkeley 1978) ch. 5 ("Chresmologues and Oracle Collections").

87. *ARV*², p. 329 (134). Cf. J. D. Beazley, "Hymn to Hermes," *AJA* 52 (1948) 337. He takes XIPONEIA as feminine singular (cf. Ὀδύσσεια and similar titles): it could also be neuter plural. Cf. also H. R. Immerwahr, "Book Rolls on Attic Vases," in Charles Henderson Jr., ed., *Classical, Mediaeval, and Renaissance Studies in Honor of B. L. Ullman*, vol. 1 (Rome 1964) 21 (4); Kurke (supra, n. 77) 92. For an index of related school scenes, see F. A. G. Beck, *Album of Greek Education* (Sydney 1975); the kuathos in question is 75a–b (with illustrations pl. 14).

88. For the semantics and history of γνῶμολογία, see Konstantin Horna, "Gnome," *RE* suppl. 6 (1935) 74–75. "Gnomology" is one of those words, like "myth" or "historian," that we use with deliberate anachronism in speaking of the classical and archaic periods. Karl Bielohlawek, "Hypothek und Gnome: Untersuchungen über die griechische Weisheitsdichtung der vorhellenistischen Zeit," *Philologus* suppl. 32, no. 3 (1940) 4–6, discusses early evidence of gnomology in Homeric epic.

89. See Vetta (supra, n. 45) 117–31, 149–55.

90. West (supra, n. 23) 54.

91. See Nagy (supra, n. 3) 46–51 for a critique of West in this matter.

92. This essay was originally written in the spring of 1987. I am grateful to Gregory Nagy for discussing it with me at that time; to Emmett Bennett for a set of detailed comments; and to *intervenuti* at the University of Venice, where it was delivered orally. I am grateful to J. P. Small for help with the present revised version; to Andrew Ford for a set of detailed comments; to Shifra Rubin for comments on style; and to my fellow editor Robert Wallace for both meticulous proofreading and challenging questions on presentation of evidence. Never was it truer that any remaining faults, etc.

Prose Genres for the Performance of Traditional Wisdom in Ancient Greece: Proverb, Maxim, Apothegm

1. As Roman Jakobson says, "Any attempt to reduce the sphere of poetic function to poetry [alone] . . . would be a delusive oversimplification"; "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," in T. A. Sebeok, ed., *Style in Language* (New York 1960) 356. On this and the following page Jakobson gives good examples of poetic structuring devices used to shape everyday prose discourse, including his now famous analysis of the political

slogan, "I like Ike." My attempts below to trace poetic expressiveness in Greek wisdom speech have been inspired in part by Jakobson (cf. also his *Selected Writings*, vol. 4 [The Hague 1966] 637–38, and R. Jakobson and L. Waugh, *The Sound Shape of Language* [Bloomington 1979]) and by the helpful comments of this chapter's anonymous referee.

2. The distinction between speech event and speech act is a staple of sociolinguistic research. See, for example, D. Hymes, *Foundations of Sociolinguistics* (Philadelphia 1979) 52–53. Speech act itself is a concept associated with the linguist-philosopher J. L. Austin and his seminal book *How to Do Things with Words* (Oxford 1962).

3. Most influential for my orientation have been D. Hymes, "Breakthrough into Performance," in D. Ben-Amos and K. Goldstein, eds., *Folklore: Performance and Communication* (The Hague 1975), and reprinted in Hymes's *In Vain I Tried to Tell You: Essays in Native American Ethnopoetics* (Philadelphia 1981); R. Bauman, *Verbal Art As Performance* (Rowley, Mass. 1977), and *Story, Performance, and Event* (Cambridge 1986); and C. L. Briggs, *Competence in Performance* (Philadelphia 1988). For the successful use of performance-centered scholarship to direct our search for meaning away from ancient Greek speech as purely text and toward its context, see R. P. Martin, *The Language of Heroes* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1989) esp. pp. 4–10, for a statement of method and further bibliography; and his essay "The Seven Sages As Performers of Wisdom," in C. Dogherty and L. Kurke, eds., *Cultural Poetics in Archaic Greece* (Cambridge 1993) esp. 115–19.

4. I am aware of the existence of other Greek wisdom genres generally called "precepts" in English, the Greek *hypothēkai* and *chreiai*. The former are commonly attributed to traditional wise men like the Seven Sages, and the latter to professional philosophers of late antiquity (see Hock and O'Neil *infra*, n. 22). Neither belongs to the realm of *emergent* wisdom speech as defined below.

5. The best definitions of anecdote offered by recent scholarship confirm their characteristic tendency to combine two key components: the brief *story* about an important or familiar personage and his memorable *utterance* at a key dramatic juncture. See A. Taylor, "The Anecdote: A Neglected Genre," in J. Mandel and B. Rosenberg, eds., *Medieval Literature and Folklore Studies: Essays in Honor of Frances P. Utley* (New Brunswick, N.J. 1970); B. Botkin, "Anecdote," in M. Leach, ed., *Standard Dictionary of Folklore and Mythology*, vol. 1 (New York 1950) 56; and Bauman (*supra*, n. 3) 54–55. The presence of dialogue and of a final noteworthy "saying" is seen as characteristic of the best anecdotes but not strictly required of the genre—exactly the situation we find for the ancient *apophthegma*, as discussed below.

6. There have been, to be sure, some rewarding studies of the proverb (J. F. Kindstrand, "The Greek Concept of Proverbs," *Eranos* 76 [1978] 71–85; R. Strömberg, *On Some Greek Proverbial Phrases* [Göteborg 1947], and *Greek Proverbs* [Göteborg 1954]; A. M. Ieraci-Bio, "Le concept de *paroimia*: *Proverbium* dans la haute et la basse antiquité" in F. Suard and C. Buridant, eds., *Richesse du proverbe*, vol. 2 [Lille 1984] 83–94; J. Russo, "The Poetics of the Ancient Greek Proverb," *Journal of Folklore Research* 20 [1983] 121–30). Studies of the *gnômê* have tended to be collections of sententious quotes from authors like Menander, or from earlier poets (e.g., E. Ahrens, *Gnomen in griechischer Dichtung* [Homer, Hesiod, Aeschylus] [Halle 1937]); but the recent dissertation of A. P. M. H.

Lardinoi, *Wisdom in Context: The Use of Gnomic Statements in Archaic Greek Poetry* (Diss. Princeton University 1995), is exemplary in incorporating modern methodology and literature in its analysis of *gnómai*. The apothegm and anecdote remain only minimally investigated. W. Gemoll's *Das Apophthegma* (Leipzig 1924), the only serious investigation of the Greek apothegm, in fact devotes most of its space to other topics.

7. It may come as a surprise to classical philologists to learn that scholars in folklore have long accorded serious research and full genre status to jokes, tall tales, taunts and jeers, curses and blessings, lullabies, jump-rope and hand-clap rhymes, gossip, "memorates," monologues, "novelles," ghost stories, and personal experience narratives, in addition to the better-known legends, Märchen, and ballads that are commonly thought of as the staples of oral folk literature. Although some native Greek genres can perhaps never be uncovered from our limited surviving records, a few forms comparable with those named in English may await our discovery. What to call them will of course pose a challenge, except in those lucky instances where the "native category" has been internally labeled (e.g., *ainos*, *psogos*, *ainigma*). For good methodological and theoretical discussion of this issue see D. Ben-Amos, "Analytical Categories and Ethnic Genres," *Genre* 2 (1969) 275-301.

8. "Emergence" essentially characterizes performance that evolves as the natural and unpremeditated result of social interaction. See Bauman, *Verbal Art* (supra, n. 3), esp. pp. 37-45 on the "emergent" quality and structures of "optional" performance (such as wisdom speech) in contrast to "conventional" performance (such as formal recitation); see also Bauman, *Story* (supra, n. 3). Hymes, *In Vain* (supra, n. 3) 79-82, reviewing the development in recent scholarship of a technical sense of "performance," notes the different approaches taken by linguistics and folklore: "In contemporary transformational generative grammar the term performance treats overt behavior as a realization, quite likely imperfect, of an underlying knowledge on the part of a speaker. In contemporary folklore the term performance has reference to the realization of known traditional material, but the emphasis is on the constitution of a social event, quite likely with emergent properties."

9. Hymes, *In Vain* (supra, n. 3) 81.

10. Martin (supra, n. 3). Martin's groundbreaking application of recent anthropological and folkloristic scholarship to ancient Greek cultural "performance" has to some extent inspired my own investigation.

11. This definitional problem leads even the most knowledgeable proverb scholars to positions that essentially straddle both views. Cf. Peter Seitel, *Proverbs and the Structure of Metaphor among the Haya of Tanzania* (Diss. University of Pennsylvania 1972) 14: "A proverb is a metaphorical representation, or description, of the situation about which it is spoken. . . . Metaphor is a central feature of the phenomenon of proverb use. . . . Metaphorical proverbs are taken to be the most general proverbial type. Literal proverbs (aphorisms, apothegms) may be seen as a special case of the more general metaphorical type."

12. As recently as 1988, the folklorist Briggs (supra, n. 3, 101-4) complains about the inadequacy of current definitions, noting that most focus on either textual or contextual

features without doing justice to both; that many scholars still cannot reconcile culture-specific types with their desire for a cross-cultural comparative model; and that almost all definitions are tautological and imbued with a priori and intuitive assumptions.

13. Roger D. Abrahams, "Proverbs and Proverbial Expressions," in R. M. Dorson, ed., *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction* (Chicago 1972) 119, 121.

14. For further description of universal characteristics of proverbs, with abundant examples, see the early fundamental studies of A. Taylor, *The Proverb* (Cambridge, Mass. 1931) and B. J. Whiting, "The Origin of the Proverb," *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 13 (1931) 45–91, and the excellent recent articles of Abrahams (supra, n. 13) and F. A. de Caro, "Riddles and Proverbs," in E. Oring, ed., *Folk Groups and Folklore Genres: An Introduction* (Logan, Utah 1986).

15. The well-known κοινὰ τὰ τῶν φίλων at the end of Plato's *Phaedrus* (279c6), for example, simply illustrates the point being argued. Even when Plato is more involuted, as at *Symp.* 174b4–5 when he has a speaker give us only a distorted version of a known proverb which includes additionally a pun on Agathon's name, the speaker's purpose is playful but not particularly complicated on the semiotic level. Similarly Aristophanes often gets a laugh by having one of his characters pun on a proverb or deliberately distort it. For further discussion see D. Tarrant, "Colloquialisms, Semi-Proverbs, and Word-Play in Plato," *CQ* 40 (1946) 109–17, and its sequel in *CQ* n.s. 8 (1958) 158–60.

16. This is not listed as a proverb in Strömberg, *Proverbial Phrases* (supra, n. 6), whereas Gyges' two proverbs are. Yet one close echo in Heraclitus, ὀφθαλμοὶ τῶν ὄτων ἀκριβέστεροι μάρτυρες (101a D-K), and one more distant one, κακοὶ μάρτυρες ἀνθρώποισιν ὀφθαλμοὶ καὶ ὅτα βαρβάρους ψυχὰς ἐχόντων (107 D-K), suggest we have a familiar proverbial topic and phrasing. Its use here in a context of overt association with two distinct proverbs should make its proverbial status evident. Strömberg (pp. 8–9) acknowledges the unclear boundary between proverbs and maxims and other "winged words," but understands Gyges' utterances to be proverbs not maxims because they are treated as familiar traditional wisdom. For discussion of the unusual concentration of three proverbs in this one episode and the resulting problematic of reconciling conflicting modes of traditional wisdom, see Russo (supra, n. 6).

17. My colleague Lowell Edmunds has kindly supplied me with parallel phraseology in Arist. *Rhet.* 1.7.34, 3.10.17; Athen. 3.99d (attributed to the orator Demades); and Eur. *Suppl.* 447, which show that the "springtime" is a commonly understood Greek metaphor for "the pick of" or choice part of anything.

18. Good analysis of the difference between the metaphorical and general qualities of proverbs and maxims—following Aristotle—is offered by N. Barley, "A Structural Approach to the Proverb and Maxim with Special Reference to the Anglo-Saxon Corpus," *Proverbium* 20 (1972) 737–50; and of the distinctly metaphorical quality of proverbs, by P. Seitel, "Proverbs: A Social Use of Metaphor," *Genre* 2 (1969) 143–61, and his dissertation (supra, n. 11).

19. Beginning with the scholiasts, this proverb has been interpreted negatively to mean that an Athenian neighbor is a restless or troublesome one. See the well-known description of the Athenian character given by the Corinthian delegate at Thuc. 1.70 (cf.

further 3.13 and 4.92.4), and Isoc. *Antid.* 299–300 (cited by William M. A. Grimaldi, *Aristotle, Rhetoric*, vol. 2: *A Commentary* [New York 1988] 271).

20. The problem of distinguishing *paroimiai* from *gnômai* according to Aristotle's criteria is pursued further by Lardinois (*supra*, n. 6, 15–17). He observes that Aristotle, in the *Rhetoric* and elsewhere, cites several proverbs that are nonmetaphorical, contradicting his own stated criterion. Noting that Aristotle once refers to those who “coin” *gnômai* (*gnômotypoi*, *Rhet.* 1395a 7), Lardinois concludes that while both proverbs and maxims are “generalizing statements about particular actions,” maxims do not have to be traditional but can be striking original formulations. Then it would follow that those maxims that are also proverbs would be those that have long become familiar and are therefore perceived as traditional. A similar view, less clearly stated, may be gleaned from Strömberg, *Proverbial Phrases* (*supra*, n. 6) 8–9. Kindstrand, “Greek Concept” (*supra*, n. 6) 74, would make the distinguishing criterion not so much traditionality as ethical content, suggesting that it was because many proverbs “were too popular in character without any ethical content and did not express the ancient wisdom” that Aristotle judged some proverbs not to be maxims.

21. It is of curious interest that this traditional association is continued by K. Rupprecht, “*Paroimia*,” *RE* 18, pt. 2 (1949) 1707–35, where it is claimed (1708) that proverbs (not maxims) are naturally spoken by farmers. Aristotle would probably have agreed that proverbs, *instead* of maxims, are what farmers *ought* to be speaking.

22. It is well known that the playwright Menander captured Greek traditional wisdom so aptly in well-turned phrases that many of his verses became traditionally cited maxims. Collections of his iambic trimeters were made in later antiquity and valued as compendia of sententious wisdom, a tradition that has continued even into modern times, when *Menandri Sententiae* are available in various editions.

23. D. Lateiner, *The Historical Method of Herodotus* (Toronto 1989) 26–30, calls special attention to this author's many vivid representations of nonverbal communication, thus demonstrating the importance, in principle, of giving both word and gesture equal status within the kind of performance we have been discussing. Martin's definition of performance quoted earlier, and his study of the Seven Sages (*supra*, n. 3), rightly includes gestural along with verbal behavior, a topic I could not include in my own study.

24. M. Lang, *Herodotean Narrative and Discourse* (Cambridge, Mass. 1984) 58–67, claims to find sixty-two maxims in Herodotus and is tempted to add twelve more. A few of these maxims deserve rather to be identified as nonmetaphorical proverbs, since they are specifically introduced by their speakers as familiar sayings (e.g., “Everyone should mind his own affairs” [discussed earlier], or “Not every end is seen in the beginning,” 7.51.3). But most of the others are simply general statements of principle, like “injustice is the enemy of justice,” “all human life is brief,” or “the Spartans think one thing and say another,” and Lang allows no means of distinguishing between any general statement and the maxim as a formal entity. Her discussion suffers from an inconsistency and plurality of definitions: on the one hand, she freely equates proverbs with maxims, while on the other she attempts to make fine distinctions between “proverb-like sayings,”

"sentences," "true maxims," "proverb-like maxims," expressions that are "truly proverbial," "maxims that are most like proverbs," the "uncrystallized expression of a *sententia* or *gnômê*," and phrases that "seem to be *gnômai*, but no one is proverbial." Such fluid criteria allow her to equate maxims with an excessively broad range of general statements, so that all boundaries between ordinary speech and special wisdom performance seem lost. The investigation of Herodotus's use of maxims, proverbs, and apothegms presents a special challenge, because while he does not provide labels for these genres, he is nevertheless inclined to represent speech acts and speech events that contain them. The subject needs a rigorous and thorough investigation with modern linguistic and paroemiological methods.

25. For recent discussions of the emergence of literate habits against a cultural background that was pervasively oral, see R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 1992), and W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge, Mass. 1989).

26. This conception of discourse occurs in Bakhtin's writings, and is best presented in his essay "The Problem of Speech Genres," included in C. Emerson and M. Holquist, eds., *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays* (Austin 1986).

27. This sequence is essentially that put forward by W. Gemoll in *Das Apophthegma* (Leipzig 1924) 4-6, although with minimal discussion of the process of development and no attempt at explaining it. He observes briefly that for Plutarch *apophthegma* and *apomnêmonema* have become synonymous: in the more narrowly philosophic tradition represented by Hermogenes the Cynic (late second century A.D.) it is *apomnêmonema* and *chreia* that are similar; but more often in the philosophical and biographical traditions it is *chreia* and *apophthegma* that are virtually synonymous, both referring to the memorable action and saying, usually in combination, of a famous wise person. I have omitted the *chreia* from my study because it belongs essentially to the post-Platonic written anecdotal tradition. The most recent full discussion, R. F. Hock and E. N. O'Neill, *The Chreia in Ancient Rhetoric*, vol. 1: *The Prolegomena* (Atlanta 1986) 3-10, locates the origins of the *chreia* in the Socratic circle and understands all the sayings and anecdotes reported in Diogenes Laertius to be essentially *chreiai*, although Diogenes himself never applies this term to the anecdotal material he quotes.

28. This process of abstraction from context followed by circulation as an independent saying is described as early as Herodotus (1.129), who concludes his anecdote about Hippokleides dancing away his marriage to Kleisthenes' daughter by quoting the protagonist saying "Hippokleides doesn't care," οὐ φροντὶς Ἴπποκλείδῃ, and then commenting "it is from this that this is quoted," ἀπὸ τούτου μὲν τοῦτο οὐνομάζεται.

29. One likely indicator that Herodotus lacks the vocabulary for identifying his apothegms and anecdotes as the formal genres ἀπόφθεγμα and ἀπομνημόνευμα is his use of the general word τοῦτο to refer to both of them (1.129, quoted in n. 28). The Greek ἀνέκδοτος (= "not given out," i.e., unpublished or unmarried) has nothing to do with our modern concept of the anecdote. See K. J. Dover, "Anecdotes, Gossip, and Scandal," in *The Greeks and Their Legacy*, Collected Papers, vol. 2 (Oxford 1988) 45.

30. G. M. A. Grube, *A Greek Critic: Demetrius on Style* (Toronto 1961) 85, 96.

31. Gemoll (*supra*, n. 27) 3 suggests a threefold division into *Lakonika* (Chilonian, thoughtful, short and striking); *asteia* ("urbane," playful, riddling); and *Kynika* ("of the Cynics," serious-amusing).

32. For good discussion of the wider sociological reality, as well as the extension of "performance" to include nonverbal behavior, see Martin (*supra*, n. 3).

Chorus and Community in Euripides' Bacchae

I gratefully acknowledge a fellowship at the National Humanities Center in 1993-94, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, during which this study was written; and I thank the editors and anonymous reader of this volume for helpful comments.

1. See C. Segal, *Dionysiac Poetics and Euripides' Bacchae* (Princeton 1982) ch. 4, esp. 89-93.

2. See, e.g., Eur. *Med.* 824-45 and *Hipp.* 30-33; and Soph. *Ant.* 152-54, 1015-18, 1246-49; *OT* 19-23 and 159-63; *El.* 4-8; *OC* 14-18, 55-63, 668-719.

3. E. R. Dodds, ed., *Euripides, Bacchae*² (Oxford 1966) ad loc. (p. 165) compares *Orestes* 902ff.

4. The battle that Dionysus threatens, of course, never occurs, one of the false leads that Euripides sometimes injects into his prologues: see Richard Hamilton, "*Bacchae* 47-52; Dionysus' Plan," *TAPA* 104 (1974) 39-49.

5. For some of these themes of group and isolation, with different emphasis, see A. J. Podlecki, "Individual and Group in Euripides' *Bacchae*," *AntCl* 43 (1974) 144-45, 164.

6. See Segal (*supra*, n. 1) 242-47. On the elusiveness of the chorus in the play, see also S. Goldhill, "Doubling and Recognition in the *Bacchae*," *Metis* 3 (1988) 137-56 at 143-44. M. Arthur's excellent study, "The Choral Odes of the *Bacchae* of Euripides," *YCS* 22 (1972) 145-79, emphasizes the ambiguity of the chorus, but concentrates on its gnomic morality rather than its role in the expression of a civic ethos.

7. See Arthur (*supra*, n. 6) 169 and Segal (*supra*, n. 1) 242, 247. It would be interesting to know how Aeschylus presented his chorus in his lost *Pentheus* and *Lycurgus* dramas.

8. See C. Segal, *Euripides and the Poetics of Sorrow* (Durham, N.C. 1993) 120-35.

9. We may compare also the chorus's horror of Medea's deed in *Med.* 1251-93, where it expresses the sentiment, if not of the city, at least of ordinary women in the city (cf. 1090-1115). Our judgment of the chorus in the *Bacchae*, of course, must be qualified by the lacuna near the end; and it is possible that it uttered some statement of compassion after Agave's funeral lament. Given the present state of the text, we can only establish large probabilities and base our conclusions on the words and gestures of the chorus in the text that survives.

10. J. March, "Euripides the Misogynist," in Anton Powell, ed., *Euripides, Women, and Sexuality* (New York 1990) 61-62, attempts to give as positive an interpretation as