Anderson discovers in *The Double* a "morphological inventory of the mythological mind in modern garb" (p. 167). Following Bakhtin's lead, he argues that the underground man bears a strong resemblance to the ancient figure of the trickster. Much of his interpretation would apply equally, if not more fruitfully, to the narrator of "The Dream of a Ridiculous Man." "Living on the most tenuous edge of society, [the trickster] was paradoxically the one being in contact with life's protean vigor of the Golden Age" (p. 31).

Anderson treats Myshkin of *The Idiot* as a reflection of the mythological Dionysos, who traditionally functioned as "the purest expression of ecstatic hope who suffers the final humiliation of ignominious disintegration" (p. 72). Within this framework, Nastasia and Aglaia resemble Dionysos' maenads. He goes on read *The Devils* as an allegory of the human desire "to exceed natural limits and its inevitable confrontation with those very limits" (p. 164). He makes a rather extensive analysis of the effects of Stavrogin's masklike countenance and character. His reading could have been greatly buttressed by reference to Frank's work on this subject.

Indeed, the major shortcoming of this intriguing book is Anderson's failure to take into account much relevant, often recent important work on Dostoevskii. Although he has carefully studied the general literature on mythology, the most recent citation in his bibliography is from 1979, and the most recent reference to work focusing on Dostoevskii is from 1975. Thus he has not responded to key writings of Morson, Terras, Belknap, Jackson, Frank, Vetlovskaja, and Dalton. Nevertheless, Anderson has written a compelling book which shows, yet again, that the work of a novelist of genius can yield up rich new veins of material for the persistent, careful investigator.

Robin Feuer Miller


This collection of six papers grew out of an oral literature symposium, held on the University of Missouri-Columbia campus in 1984. It was devoted to the question: how does the fact that a literary work has roots in oral tradition affect its reading and interpretation?

The Introduction by John M. Foley, the editor of the collection, surveys the work of the pioneers of oral literature research—Milman Parry and Albert Lord—and gives the gist of the papers.

The first essay, by Albert B. Lord, investigates "several specific cases of the merging of the world of orality with that of literacy as it is manifested in the development of oral traditional poetry" in Yugoslavia. These worlds were, as he shows, separate in diverse regions of Dalmatia, Serbia, and Montenegro until the end of the seventeenth century, when the bridge began to be built. This development intensified later with the appearance of popular books and brochures (which Lord surveys), and, since the middle of this century, of radio and television. A survey of the ring composition in a Medjedovic's song concludes this study which is a significant addition to Lord's classic *The Singer of Tales*. 
Ruth H. Webber in "The Cantar de Mio Cid" attempts to demonstrate "what can happen to the interpretation of a work when there is a division of opinion among critics as to whether it is of oral traditional origin or composed in writing by a learned poet." According to traditionalists, the text of the Cantar dating probably to 1207 is one in a chain of successive versions; for individualists, it represents the date of composition. Webber claims that the text was the product of a skilled and creative poet, who was versed in age-old techniques of oral composition. Her survey of the battle among numerous critics has produced fine research in some specialized areas. But she has to admit that "the most informed minds are unable to reconcile their differences and reach a consensus as to what that interpretation should be."

Gregory Nagy examines a situation in which epic and praise poetry coexist in one culture. The author's initial concern is the use of the terms kleos and ainos (both meaning 'praise') in ancient Greek poetry, which leads to a discussion of the poetic ontology of the Pindaric lyric.

Alain Renoir in a brilliant comparative essay discusses the composition of a few poems which fall into the limbo between oral and written performance. He elaborates the guidelines modern scholars should heed when attempting to interpret ancient poems fashioned in accordance with oral-formulaic rhetoric but presumably composed in writing. He finds that the text itself occasionally provides clues regarding the actual composition. Thus, within the context of oral-formulaic tradition, the evocation of flashes of light emitted by weapons and pieces of clothing cue us to a full-fledged slaughter in several Germanic poems. Likewise, the formulaic theme of "the beasts of battle"—a wolf, an eagle or hawk, and a raven—in Anglo-Saxon poetry anticipates the ensuing battle. It could be mentioned parenthetically that the theme of the beasts of battle has a parallel in the Russian Igor Tale, a literary poem with roots in folklore:

The birds in the forest of oak portend his [Igor's] misfortune.

The wolves conjure the tempest in the ravines.
The screeching eagles call the beasts to the feast of bones.
Foxes bark at scarlet shields (1. 107-10).

This picture is obviously based on actual observations of battlefields. In typical fashion Renoir makes several shocking comparisons, for instance, elaborating upon the similarity of certain poems with a copy-caricature of a Buggati automobile he saw in Hollywood.

Robert P. Creed in his "The Remaking of Beowulf" argues that "the Beowulf-poet preserved something important from the heathen past by making parts of that past acceptable to his newly adopted Christianity." The Germanic culture that produced Beowulf was, according to him, more conservative than the Ancient Greek and Old Indian culture that produced the Homeric epics and Vedic hymns. What the Beowulf-poet preserved from the old is noticeable in syllables bound together by alliteration. But he turned the old god into an almost superhuman hero: thus, the tale of the beneficent heathen god is transformed into a tale of the beneficent hero.

In his essay, Walter J. Ong tackles the problem of the interpretation of orality-literacy relationships. He bases his discussion essentially on Werner H. Kelber's study The Oral and Written Gospel (1983), which demonstrates that the movement