

HERODOTUS AND THE NORTH CAROLINA ORAL NARRATIVE TRADITION

[*Editor's Note*: See the response by John Marincola, *Histos* 1 (1997) 154-5]

As scholars who live among books, we find it difficult to imagine the cultural world and the intellectual activity of people to whom books represented a very small part of their way of knowing the world, and a relatively new way to communicate with others or to preserve one's knowledge. In studying the beginnings of literature in the Greek world, our focus has been on the development of the epic tradition and its fixation in written texts, and more recently on the culture that lies behind the creation and performance of lyric poetry and elegy. The oral pre-history of Greek prose has been relatively neglected, although the work of Aly early in the century and of others like Lang, Murray, Thomas, and Evans on oral tradition and Herodotus in the last decade have indicated more work to be done.¹ However we are still far from placing Herodotus and his work securely in their cultural milieu. It is here where I believe some comparative study of the quite different narrative tradition of the North Carolina mountains can be helpful.

Recent work on early Greek oral tradition has been especially influenced by the work of Vansina and Finnegan on African oral traditions.² These traditions have been especially useful in establishing principles of oral historical memory and recognizing the importance of genre, purpose, and setting in the transmission of oral history. On the other hand, the differences of language and the difficulty of imagining the African cultural environment rep-

¹ W. Aly, *Volksmärchen, Sage und Novelle bei Herodot und seinen Zeitgenossen: Eine Untersuchung über die volkstümlichen Elemente der altgriechischen Prosaerzählung* (Göttingen 1921), reprinted with additions by L. Huber, Göttingen 1969). For recent work see Mabel Lang, *Herodotean Narrative and Discourse* (Cambridge MA 1984), O. Murray, 'Herodotus and Oral History,' in *Achaemenid History II. The Greek Sources (1984 workshop)* (Leiden 1987), 93-115, H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, 'Herodotus en de Meden: Historiciteit en orale traditie', *Lampas* 20 (1987) 155-67, R. Thomas, *Oral Tradition and Written Record in Classical Athens* (Cambridge 1989), J. Gould, *Herodotus* (London and New York 1989), M. B. Sakellariou, *Between Memory and Oblivion: The Transmission of Early Greek Historical Traditions* (Paris 1990 [= *Meletemata* 12]), J. A. S. Evans, *Herodotus. Explorer of the Past. Three Essays* (Princeton 1990) 89-146; R. Thomas, *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge 1992); R. V. Munson, 'Herodotus' Use of Prospective Sentences and the Story of Rhampsinitus and the Thief in the Histories,' *AJP* 114 (1993) 27-44.

² See especially J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Madison 1985), R. Finnegan, *Oral Literature in Africa* (Cambridge 1970).

resent serious barriers to the effective exploitation of the material. Imagine my surprise, therefore, when I discovered that my favorite summer retreat in the Appalachian mountains of North Carolina, Beech Mountain, was also the locale of a well-known and increasingly studied American oral storytelling tradition.³ The dean of American tale-tellers, Ray Hicks, lived on the other side of the mountain, could be visited and seen, heard, and—apart from a rather distinctive Southern Appalachian dialect—understood in his native environment. Contact with this contemporary oral tradition and the scholarship which studies it has made me consider in a different way Herodotus' place in his oral tradition.

At the outset, however, I should say that there are vast differences between these story-tellers and Herodotus. They provide useful analogies, but the parallels must be carefully scrutinized.

The tale-tellers of Beech Mt. and vicinity all are descended from one famous storyteller, Council Harmon (1807-1896), but their ancestry goes back further, to English settlers of the mid-eighteenth century. David Hicks is said to have emigrated from England around 1760.⁴ Council Harmon, David Hicks' great-grandson, had fifteen children by two wives, and an exceptional ability to recount tales.⁵ The families descended from him farm a rocky and

³ See especially the essays collected in *Jack in Two Worlds: Contemporary North American Tales and their Tellers*, ed. W. B. McCarthy (Chapel Hill 1994). This collection is an extremely valuable introduction to the study of Jack tales, containing both stories transcribed from different tellers and essays analyzing various features of transmission and performance. See also *North Carolina Folklore Journal* 26, 2 (Sept. 1978) 51-143, a special Jack Tales issue. Other Jack tales may be found in Donald Davis, *Jack Always Seeks his Fortune* (Little Rock 1992); Barbara McDermitt, 'Storytelling and a Boy named Jack,' *NC Folklore Journal* 31 (1983) 3-22; Cheryl Oxford, 'The Storyteller as Craftsman: Stanley Hicks Telling 'Jack and the Bull'', *NC Folklore Journal* 36 (1989) 73-120 and 'The Storyteller as Shaman: Ray Hicks telling his Jack tales,' *ibid.* 38 (1991) 75-186; Henry Glassie, 'Three Southern Mountain Jack Tales,' *Tennessee Folklore Society Bulletin* 30 (1964) 88-102, C. L. Perdue, *Outwitting the Devil: Jack Tales from Wise County, Virginia* (Santa Fe 1987). On the importance of studying the oral component of prose narrative, see Alan Dundes, 'Texture, Text, and Context,' in his book *Interpreting Folklore* (Bloomington 1980). For a brief introduction to Southern story-telling, see S. Bronner s.v. Story-telling in *The Encyclopedia of Southern Culture* (Chapel Hill 1989) 488-92.

⁴ His exact origin is uncertain: some say southern England or London, but most English emigration to the North Carolina mountains in this period came from the north of England, and entered North Carolina from the valley of Virginia after 1768.

⁵ See W. F. H. Nicolaisen, 'The Teller and the Tale: Storytelling on Beech Mountain,' in *Jack in Two Worlds: Contemporary North American Tales and their Tellers*, ed. W. B. McCarthy (Chapel Hill 1994) 122-49, at 125-31. His account is based on J. W. Thompson, 'The Origin of the Hicks Family Tradition,' *NC Folklore Journal* 34 (1987) 18-28 and J. H. Hicks, M. Hicks, and B. B. Hicks, *The Hicks Families of Western North Carolina (Watauga River Lines)* (Boone 1991).

mountainous land (Beech Mt., where many live, rises 5500 ft., and is not many miles from Mt. Mitchell, the highest mountain in the Eastern half of the U.S.)

The fame of these storytellers rests on their repertory of Jack tales, that is, tales about a good-natured but clever young hero named Jack, known to many of us as the hero of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' and 'Jack the Giantkiller'. These stories, a repertory of about 50 traditional Märchen, have been preserved and passed on by these farm families for over two hundred years in the cultural backwater of the North Carolina mountains. They show surprising similarities with the same stories known from Ireland, from eighteenth century English chapbooks, and from a contemporary tinker in Scotland. Jack tales can be traced as far back as the early fifteenth century.⁶ Their continued existence on Beech Mountain indicates that oral traditions can be preserved over long periods in an isolated society which is literate but uses writing for limited purposes.

While their fame rests on Jack tales, these men and women regularly tell a wide variety of tales: tall tales, personal experience narratives, historical or family anecdotes from the Civil War or the early settlement of the mountains, ghost stories, and humorous tales (commonly called by the German name, Schwanks).⁷ Ray Hicks tells stories of the early history of Watauga County alongside stories of his own adventures courting his wife, working as a mechanic, or picking galax during the depression of the nineteen thirties.⁸

⁶ See Carl Lindahl, 'Jacks: The Name, the Tales, the American Traditions,' in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, xiii-xxxiv; for the Scottish tinker, Barbara Rice Damron McDermitt, *A Comparison of a Scottish and American Storyteller and their Märchen Repertoires* (Ph.D. Edinburgh 1986).

⁷ On the tale genres employed on Beech Mt., and in much of the Appalachians, see McDermitt, *Comparison*, 129-143. Cf. also T. E. Barden, ed., *Virginia Folk Legends* (Charlottesville and London 1991), an unusually varied collection of legends collected 1937-42, many of them dealing with historical material, though of dubious accuracy.

⁸ I heard the story of 'Johnny Two-Shirt [a native American] and the Outlaws,' on a visit to Hicks' house, October 1994, when he also told me of hunting trips, combining accurate reminiscences with tall tales. He seems to have a limitless store of snake and of ghost stories. Several of his non-Jack tales are recorded on his cassette tape, *Jack Lives!* (June Appal Recordings, Whitesburg KY, 1989) and on the videotape, *Tall Tales of the Blue Ridge* (Eastern National Park and Monument Assn., Asheville 1992). More are found in Robert Isbell, *The Last Chivaree: The Hicks Family of Beech Mountain* (Chapel Hill 1996), a re-creation of the world of the Hicks family. Charlotte Ross, a Professor of Folklore at Appalachian State University Boone NC, learned from her family and other informants many historical narratives, including the story of one family's journey from Philadelphia down the valley of Virginia ca. 1690—the story was tied to distinctive andirons carried from England at great cost, which still remain in the family—and that of Dorcas Henry, who brought back to Georgia the body of her husband Tom, a Union soldier, from the battle of Chickamauga (1863)

Hicks shifts easily from one type of story to another, to illustrate a point as he is talking, to answer a question, or just to entertain. Thus I would argue that although the stories which are most studied are their Jack Tales, the modes of storytelling used for their historical and non-historical tales are similar, and can fairly be compared with those found employed by Herodotus.

Broad as their repertoire is, it nevertheless lacks many of the most important features of Herodotean history. The North Carolina storytellers show no interest in geography, ethnography, or customs, or in the histories of other peoples. Their world is an isolated one, essentially the mountains where they live, with little mention of cities, or national or state government, except as source of troubles: soldiers, the draft, taxes. In the Jack stories Jack travels widely, but rarely reaches any place which is different from the mountain landscape of the narrator. They lack, therefore, Herodotus' distinctive notion of comparative history and ethnography. Although the mountains were settled by people from several stocks, Scotch-Irish, English, German, and Welsh, their world now is homogeneous, except for intruding government officials and tourists from the flatlands. Because of the interests of folklorists, moreover, the stories which have been recorded and studied are not for the most part historical narratives, of the kind which set Herodotus apart from earlier mythographers and genealogists, but the Jack tales, that is, traditional Märchen. Nevertheless, from these storytellers and their stories we can learn a great deal about the nature of oral performance and the nature of storytelling.

Here I must make another preliminary statement. My underlying hypothesis is that in the text of Herodotus' *Histories* we possess a written text which builds upon the foundation of the *logoi* which Herodotus regularly performed orally. This written version creates a new genre by expanding, joining, and interrelating the *logoi*, and by adding other material such as lists and catalogues, but arises naturally out of the oral *logoi* which are at its heart. That the present text was conceived as a written document is I think clear, but its basis in oral performance is also clear. The text we have is not a transcription of an oral performance or performances,⁹ but is based on stories conceived and developed for oral performance and in an oral performance tradition. I will not attempt to argue this hypothesis here, except to the extent that the comparison I am making may make it seem more plausible.

⁹ As is evident from many signs, most simply the occasional use of *γράφω* to refer to the work of the author (see J. E. Powell, *Lexicon to Herodotus*, s.v. 4 and s.v. *συγγράφω*). See W. A. Johnson, *GRBS* 35 (1995) 229-55 and H. Erbse, 'Sieben Bemerkungen zu Herodot.', in *Ausgewählte Schriften zur Klassischen Philologie* (Berlin and New York 1979) 139-79, esp. pp. 139-46.

Despite various ancient references, I do not think that Herodotus ever performed before an audience by reading from a written text, a practice quite incompatible with what we know of the fifth century.¹⁰ Here I will address the circumstances under which Herodotus' stories and researches might have been orally presented, and how the above hypothesis may illuminate some aspects of the prehistory and present form of his text.¹¹

Singers and Storytellers

The ballads and songs of the Appalachian mountains are well-known. They were collected early in this century, and became popular in recordings, on the radio, and in concerts. One of the most famous singers was Jane Hicks Gentry, who recorded sixty-four folk-songs and ballads in 1916. She had started singing to entertain family and friends, but her fame grew and she eventually performed before large audiences. Her daughter Maud Gentry Long also was a singer and recorded a number of ballads and songs.¹² But only gradually did folklorists begin to record prose tales known to these women. The first major collection was recorded by Richard Chase in 1937 and published in 1943.¹³ Jane Gentry was a granddaughter of Council Harmon, and a bearer of the traditional Jack tales he told. She was a storyteller as well as a singer, accustomed to entertain in both mediums. This striking interrelation of prose and sung culture seems to be a fundamental feature of the Beech Mountain tradition. Most of these people were not professional performers: songs and tales alike were offered as a contribution to group activities. They provided entertainment at family and church gatherings, or when doing repetitive work, especially in the home. Jane Gentry and her daughter Maud Long became famous as singers. Frank Proffitt, Sr.

¹⁰ See Erbse, 'Sieben Bemerkungen.' Many have suggested that Herodotus read to his audience from a written text. Cf. e.g. J. Gould, *Herodotus* (London and New York 1989) 17. There is no reliable evidence for such reading from a written text in the fifth century, when poets, dramatists, and sophists all performed without a written text, although reading became common in later times.

¹¹ On this question see L. Canfora, 'Il 'ciclo' storico,' *Belfagor* 26 (1971) 653-70; J. Gould, *Herodotus*, 16-19; W. Rösler, 'Die 'Selbshistorisierung' des Autors: zur Stellung Herodotus zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit,' *Philologus* 135 (1991) 215-20; R. V. Munson, 'Herodotus' Use of Prospective Sentences and the Story of Rhampsinitus and the Thief in the Histories,' *AJP* 114 (1993) 27-44. I will not discuss another topic of interest, the form or underlying structure of the Beech Mountain stories in comparison with that of Herodotean stories.

¹² Bill Ellis, 'The Gentry-Long Tradition and the Roots of Revivalism. Maude Gentry Long,' in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 92-106.

¹³ R. Chase, *The Jack Tales* (New York 1943)

was best known as a banjo player and singer (his version of the ballad ‘Tom Dula’, based on a true story from the mountains, was the source of the Kingston Trio’s ‘Tom Dooley,’ which became an international hit),¹⁴ as is his son Frank Jr. Stanley Hicks made his fame as a country singer.¹⁵ Marshall Ward, the major source for Chase’s initial book on Jack tales, learned the tales from his father, who had made his own banjo and dulcimer, and regularly entertained the family with his playing and singing.¹⁶ All these men and women were or are also active storytellers; all are descendants of Council Harmon and bearers of the Jack tales he told. Ray Hicks, the most famous of this family of storytellers, is not known as a singer, although he likes to play his harmonica and sing a song between stories, and he can play the dulcimer. His father was a dulcimer maker.¹⁷ What I wish to stress here is that we are in the presence of an oral culture in which both song and prose narrative have a place and in which the same people or members of the same family may be performing in both mediums. Historical events, especially those tied to war, murder, courting or marriage, entered easily into newly composed ballads, alongside others preserved from across the Atlantic. Most of these people were subsistence farmers, who did not expect income from their songs or stories. The preponderance of an individual’s activity in one or the other area, music or storytelling, could change in the course of a lifetime, for a variety of personal or external causes, including market factors or the death of a member of the family who before had filled a given role. When a storyteller died, a younger family member might fill that role.

What are the implications for our thinking on Herodotus and his predecessors? The importance of song in the archaic period needs no explaining.¹⁸ However, while rightly studying this song culture, we are perhaps too ready to separate poetry from prose performance in the archaic and early classical period. We need to think more of the interaction of prose and poetry, even in the same people. Is it unreasonable that Solon or Mimnermus, or other

¹⁴ Cf. Isbell, *Last Chivaree*, 87-89.

¹⁵ Sheila Kay Adams, another singer, regularly tells tales as well, though not Jack tales. See her book of stories, *Come Go Home With Me* (Chapel Hill 1995). She learned her tales from her grandmother, Dellie Chandler Norton, a well known ballad singer, sitting at the kitchen table in Madison County, N.C. Many of her stories she first retold as short introductions and transitional patter for her ballads.

¹⁶ Cheryl Oxford, in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 57.

¹⁷ McDermitt, *Comparison*, 96, Isbell, *Last Chivaree*, 86-87.

¹⁸ Among a number of fine studies, perhaps most useful for general orientation is B. Gentili, *Poetry and Its Public in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore 1990), a translation of *Poesia e pubblico nella Grecia antica da Omero al V secolo* (Bari 1984). See also John Herington, *Poetry into Drama* (Berkeley and Los Angeles 1985).

members of their families, knew how to tell a good story, as well as to sing a song?¹⁹ Herodotus, we are told, was a kinsman of the poet Panyassis. We may suppose that he heard Panyassis perform his poetry, probably many times, as well as that of other poets. Panyassis is reported to have composed 9000 hexameter verses, 14 books, celebrating the deeds of Heracles, and another 7000 elegiac verses of *Ionika*.²⁰ Quite apart from his poetic ability, the length of these poems indicates that he possessed an impressive store of traditional tales on these subjects, and knew how to develop them at length. For the *Ionika* in particular, which we are told dealt with the settlement of the various *poleis*, Panyassis also would have had to deal with problems of organization and structure not unlike those faced later by Herodotus. In Herodotus' family we can presume a reciprocal interaction of poetic and prose narrative forms.

The new Simonides papyrus,²¹ which confirms the existence of narrative elegy on historical subjects, and indeed on a subject contemporary with the author, the battle of Plataea, also points to closer ties between the poetic and prose spheres than we have been willing to credit. Historical narrative can be found in both prose and verse. We had already known of contemporary historical dramas such as Phrynichus' *Fall of Miletus* and Aeschylus' *Persians*, but we still insisted on keeping the two worlds separate. Simonides' elegy indicates their closeness.²² The experience of Appalachian singers confirms that difference in genres does not necessarily mean a difference in cultural milieu.

¹⁹ Plato in the *Timaeus* finds it reasonable to have Solon compose the story of Atlantis as well as write his elegiacs.

²⁰ On Panyassis, see. G.Kinkel, *Epicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* I (Leipzig 1877) 253-65; G. L. Huxley, *Greek Epic Poetry from Eumelos to Panyassis* (Cambridge MA 1969) 177-88; V. J. Matthews, *Panyassis of Halikarnassos* (Leiden 1974); M. Davies, *Epicorum Graecorum Fragmenta* (Göttingen 1988) 113-29. Note that L. A. Okin, 'Herodotus and Panyassis' Ethnics in Duris of Samos,' *EMC* 26 (1982) 21-33 argues that Panyassis and Herodotus were not related by blood

²¹ P.Oxy.3965, with commentary by Peter Parsons; cf. M. L. West, 'Simonides redivivus,' *ZPE* 98 (1993) 1-14; A. Aloni, 'L'elegia di Simonide dedicata alla battaglia di Platea (Sim. fr. 10-18 W, 2nd. ed.) e l'occasione della sua performance,' *ZPE* 102 (1994) 9-22, C. O. Pavese, 'Elegia di Simonide agli Spartiati per Platea,' *ZPE* 107 (1995) 1-26; and D. Boedeker, 'Simonides on Plataea: Narrative Elegy, Mythodic History,' *ZPE* 107 (1995) 217-29, as well as the special issue of *Arethusa* on this topic (1996), including an article by Boedeker on Herodotus' relation to Simonidean poetic sources. The existence of such elegy had been recognized previously by E. L. Bowie, 'Early Greek Elegy, Symposium, and Public Festival,' *JHS* 106 (1986), 13-35.

²² On the evidence for historical elegy, see now Boedeker, 'Simonides on Plataea,' 218-19.

A second observation about the cultural milieu of the Beech Mountain story tellers can be made. Both singers and storytellers learn their songs and tales as children, most frequently from their grandparents or mothers. Ray Hicks as a child delighted in visiting his grandfather Ben, and hearing from him the tales that Ben had learned from his grandfather Council Harmon. Maud Long learned her songs and tales from her mother Jane Gentry as they were working wool: long hours of picking burrs, briars, and dirt from the wool were made shorter by Jane's tales and songs. Frank Proffitt Jr. learned the stories from his father during work breaks, after hoeing one section of a field and before beginning another; Donald Davis from his grandmother during long visits as a child; and Orville Hicks from his mother Sarah, a granddaughter of Council Harmon, while he was doing chores, and from his second cousin Ray Hicks.²³ Grandparents had more time to tell stories, especially to keep vivacious children occupied, and tedious work could be made lighter by sharing a story. Many children forgot these stories as they grew up, but a few preserved them, to retell on public occasions, or to their own children. In some cases there may be some differences between stories transmitted by men and women. Donald Davis learned from his grandmother semi-magical Jack tales which featured a passive-aggressive, long-suffering hero; from his uncle Frank instead he learned hunting tales and tall stories, encouraging more active responses.²⁴

We should consider the possible role of the mother or female servants in the transmission of traditional stories and poetry in ancient Greece. Plato has his Socrates ironically compare Hippias' stories in Sparta to the tales of old women (*Hipp. maj.* 285D). Could Herodotus' mother have told him stories of the settling of Ionia, or the defeat of Croesus, while he was still a child? Was the story of Gyges an important step in a mother's socialization of her child: a wife was not a possession to be shown off like a new horse? Herodotus does report the importance of the mother's influence for conveying customs and values, e.g., in the story of the Athenian women on Lemnos (6.138.2). Herodotus apparently belonged to a prosperous family, and might have been free of many chores, but as a child he would have heard stories told by the women of the family as they wove, even before he joined the men at symposia or other gatherings.

Now I would like to turn to more particular considerations of narrative technique and performance. I will comment on a performance recorded by

²³ Long: Bill Ellis in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 93-95; Proffitt: Carl Lindahl in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 28-29; Davis: J. Sobol in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 206-8; Hicks: see the information accompanying his cassette tape, 'Carryin' On: Jack tales for children of all ages,' June Appal Recordings, Whitesburg KY 1990.

²⁴ J. Sobol in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 208.

storyteller Ray Hicks of the story of 'Jack and the Three Steers' or 'Jack and the Robbers.'²⁵ This version is rather short, about ten minutes on the tape, but suggests some useful features of oral performance, which I will consider under the three headings of texture, text, and context.²⁶ A transcript of the story is given in the appendix.

Texture

Even mountaineers remark the distinctiveness of Ray's speech, the unusual sounds of the words, and his frequent pauses. He is distinctive in appearance as well: about six feet eight and thin, he speaks with earnestness and an occasional dry chuckle, punctuating his speech with his hands, or occasionally waving his long arms about like a windmill. When in telling 'Jack and the Three Steers' he plays the farmer driving his steers, Ray's voice becomes directly mimetic—'Sook, Buck, saw, Buck' and later when he has Jack imitate the steers' bellowing. Dialogue allows for variety in delivery, hints rather than full imitation. The characters of the story—robbers, Jack, the woman, the farmer—are clearly differentiated by voice. In other stories witches or ogres have special voices: the witch in 'Hardy Hard-Ass' has a high-pitched, but strong voice.²⁷ 'The Three Steers' does not offer the opportunity, but Ray has a unique way of voicing narrator's comments. He may express amazement at the action or speech of one of his characters with a simple but drawn out 'Gawd,' as when in 'Hardy Hard-Ass,' Will refuses to give food to the beggar.²⁸ Later in the same story, his voice sounds awestruck as he reports the magic meal Jack eats with the beggar who will befriend him.²⁹ Ray normally does not smile, but will if his audience smiles or laughs, and then

²⁵ Ray Hicks *Telling Four Traditional 'Jack Tales'* (Folk-Legacy Records, Sharon CN, 1964). The story is tale type 1525, the Master Thief, in Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson, *The Types of the Folktale* (FF Communication 184, Helsinki 1961). Another similar tale of thievery is 'Jack and the Old Rich Man,' also told as 'Jack and the Doctor's Girl,' a version of which is told by Frank Proffitt, Jr. in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 34-55. There are several English variants of this type in K. M. Briggs, *Dictionary of British Folk Tales in the English Language* (London 1970-71, 2 vols. in 4). See also E. W. Baughman, *Type and Motif Index of the Folktales of England and North America* (The Hague 1966), under Type 1525. The 'Rhampsinitus and the thief' story in Herodotus 2.121 belongs to the same tale type.

²⁶ The terms are those of Alan Dundes, cf. note 3 above. Texture refers to the linguistic features, including stress, pitch, tone, and onomatopoeia; text to the single telling of a folklore item; context to the specific social situation in which the particular item is employed.

²⁷ McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 12

²⁸ McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 14.

²⁹ McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 17.

perhaps he will repeat the phrase or intensify it, as he does here with the farmer looking for the shoe in the road.

The story is told in cola rather than in sentences, with frequent repetition as the teller searches for the right word, or goes back to introduce a detail. This repetition, which does not seem to impede the story, is common even with stories the teller knows well, and points to the recreation of the story as it is told, rather than a simple recitation of a memorized text. The repetition, although different in form, recalls Herodotus' technique in his written text of repeating a preceding verb as a participle in the following sentence. Other repetitions create refrains and emphasize the structure of the story, like the robbers' 'Dead men tells no tales' or the farmer's 'Sook, Buck.' Hicks' frequent pauses create a kind of free verse. They do not conflict with syntactic units, but in some passages come more often than the syntax requires. Pauses occur most frequently after the subject is stated, to permit clarification, or create narrative suspense.³⁰ This recording, however, does not convey what is so evident in performance: the long pauses, as the teller contemplates the situation Jack is in, the bursts of laughter, and of course the facial expressions and gestures.³¹

Armed with this experience of oral performance of traditional tales, we must imagine Herodotus performing one of his stories, before it was fixed in the written text.

As with Ray Hicks, Herodotus' dialect would have affected both the audience's comprehension and the way they interpreted what they heard: it would have sounded foreign, somewhat like Homer, bringing an air of Ionia to Thebes or Sparta—and for Athenians, a reminder that this man's city was subject to their fleet. The Appalachian speaker whenever he or she performs for someone outside his community must adjust his dialect, both for comprehension and to appear more educated. Already Jane Gentry had tried to normalize her dialect, especially in the first part of her stories, though once the story was flowing, the dialect forms returned. In this story, for instance, we note Ray alternating between the dialect 'clumb' and stan-

³⁰ There are manifold problems in transcribing accurately this delivery, which is generally shared by all the storytellers. See Bill Ellis and W. B. McCarthy, 'Notes on the Text. Transcribing Jack Tales in Performance,' in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, xxxv-xlii. This book is notable for its effort to transcribe accurately and present in a typographically clear format the prosody and inflection of the spoken stories. The text of 'Three Steers' in my appendix does not attempt this.

³¹ Cf. the report by G. Kinkead ('An Overgrown Jack,' *New Yorker* July 18, 1988, 33-41, at 34), of Ray Hicks beginning a story at a festival: 'He slips out his false teeth, lowers his head, eyes shut, and shouts, 'Jack and his mother was outta vittles, seein' it hard!' He screws up his face till his forehead nearly meets his chin. 'Gosh, oh gosh,' he whispers, eyes popping, the essence of impressionability.'

dard ‘climbed.’³² Some of the alternation of dialect forms in Herodotus even in the written version may reflect this phenomenon. The audience would be struck by the dialect, but also by the appearance of the speaker. Ray Hicks performs at national storytelling festivals in overalls, as if in costume. But the visitor to Ray’s house discovers that they are not a costume, they are his clothes.³³ Did Herodotus dress as an Ionian when in mainland Greece? If there is any truth to the notion that the so-called Anacreontic vases, showing men with parasols and earrings, indicate a kind of Ionian dress, Athenians and Spartan alike must have been extremely aware of Herodotus’ strangeness as he was speaking.³⁴

Frequent dialogue, in Herodotus’ stories as in the Jack tales, encourages mimicry. The different voices, for example, of Candaules, Gyges, and Candaules’ wife—respectively overbearing and thoughtless, shocked and frightened, firm and in control—or of Solon and Croesus, would be essential parts of the performance. The interjection—‘something bad had to happen to Candaules’ required a special delivery, as did other authorial intrusions in his stories—‘these would have been Cretans,’ ‘Here they devised an absolutely simple-minded trick, in my opinion’.³⁵ In the Gyges story, the voice would clearly mark *γυμνήν*, repeated at the end of successive sentences (1.8.2, 3), or the repetitions of *θεήσασθαι*, *έθηεῖτο* (1.9.2, 10.2). The written text still bears marks of oral performance, in which the speaker clarifies, dramatizes, and interprets with his voice and body.

In addition to dialogue, the Jack tales employ verse: some of the Jack tales include songs, sung by the performer.³⁶ Who does not remember their childhood delight and apprehension at hearing the giant’s song in ‘Jack and the Beanstalk,’ ‘Fee, Fi, Fo, Fum. . .’?³⁷ One Jack tale is named for a song, ‘Fill, bowl, fill,’ whose verses, sung when Jack gets the better of the king, can

³² On such variation, even in the same sentence, see Isbell, *Last Chivaree*, 37-38.

³³ Joseph Daniel Sobol in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 4.

³⁴ On this question see most recently M. C. Miller, ‘The Parasol: an oriental Status-symbol in Late Archaic and Classical Athens,’ *JHS* 112 (1992) 91-105, and Sarah D. Price, ‘Anacreontic Vases Reconsidered,’ *GRBS* 31 (1990) 133-76.

³⁵ Hdt. 1.8.2; 1.2.1; 1.60.3.

³⁶ C. Paige Gutierrez, ‘The Jack Tale: a definition of a folk-tale subgenre,’ *NC Folklore Journal* 26 (1978) 85-110 at 104-5 says over one-third of examples have a song, rhyme, or catch phrase, although songs are least common. Gutierrez gives several variants from the songs of the Beech tradition.

³⁷ Gutierrez, ‘The Jack Tale’, 104 gives several different versions of this verse. It was already known to Shakespeare, *King Lear* III.4.180-81.

be more or less explicitly erotic, as Jack brags of his seduction of the king's wife and daughters. The lilting tune well captures Jack's sense of triumph.³⁸

Herodotus frequently refers to poets,³⁹ and he refutes at length Homer's account of Helen, quoting four lines of Homer while doing so (2.116,⁴⁰ cf. also Dionysius of Phocaea's quotation of Homer at 6.11.2). His familiarity with the poetic tradition is not surprising, given the probable mixture of prose and poetic culture that I have remarked. It is not often noticed in this context, however, that he also reports twenty verse oracles, a total of ninety-three hexameter lines and two trimeters,⁴¹ and twenty-one lines of epigrams.⁴² These verses represent a notable intrusion of song into Herodotus' narrative. Certainly both oracles and epigrams required special delivery.⁴³ Like the songs in the Jack tales, they serve a variety of functions. Both oracles and epigrams emphasize special moments of the narrative such as the fall of Croesus, Herodotus' interpretation of the Trojan war, the Athenian victory over Chalkis, the tyranny of Cypselus and Periander, the fall of Miletus and crippling of Argos, the Persian attack on the Greeks of Europe, the Athenian resolution to resist, and the battle of Thermopylae. In addition, the oracles pose the quandary, fundamental in Herodotus, of divine knowledge and human interpretation.

The use of verse for the oracles clearly privileges them. Their contrasting form and their particular delivery in performance or in reading aloud suggests that we consider the question of their authenticity in the light of

³⁸ Sobol, in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 8-9. The music is given in Chase, *Jack Tales*, 95.

³⁹ He names Hesiod, Sappho, Alcaeus, Solon, Arion, and Aeschylus, and quotes Homer, Simonides, and Pindar. For his use of 'poetic' devices in his *History*, see C. J. Herington, 'The Poem of Herodotus,' *Arion* I, 3 (1991) 5-16. Cf. also G. Nagy, *Pindar's Homer: The Lyric Possession of an Epic Past* (Baltimore 1990).

⁴⁰ I take the six verses in 2.116.4-5 to be an interpolation, following Schaefer and other editors.

⁴¹ Hdt. 1.47.1, 55.2, 65, 66, 85.1, 174.5; 3.57.3-4; 4.155.3, 157, 159; 5.92b.2 bis, 5.92e. 1; 6.19.2 and 77.2, 86g; 7.140.1-3, 141.2-4, 148.2, 220.3-4. No verse oracles are cited in Books 2, 8, or 9. On oracles in Herodotus, see R. Crahay, *La littérature oraculaire chez Hérodote* (Paris 1956); J. Kirchberg, *Die Funktion der Orakel in Werke Herodots* (Hamburg 1965); D. Asheri, 'Erodoto e Bacide: Considerazioni sulla fede di Erodoto negli oracoli (Hdt. VIII 77),' in *La profezia nel mondo antico*, ed. Marta Sordi (Contributi dell'Istituto di storia antica, 19, Milano 1993) 63-76.

⁴² Hdt. 4.88 (the dedication of Mandrocles of Samos), 5.59-61 (the Cadmeian tripods); 5.77.4 (the Chalkis epigram), 7.228 (three Thermopylae epigrams). The Cadmeian verses have clearly been recomposed as verse, either by Herodotus or his source.

⁴³ There are also some embedded phrases which scan metrically: I find these less important for delivery, since they still would have been spoken quite differently from the Homeric verses, oracles, and epigrams, however those were done.

their function in the narrative performance. There seem to be no other reliable verse oracles from the fifth century or earlier: all our other information points to Delphi and other oracles giving a quite different type of response.⁴⁴ Quoted dialogue and speeches were a part of Herodotus' narrative style: should we not suspect that the verse oracles as well were invented by Herodotus as part of his oral performance, to make the telling of his story more vivid and dramatic? This question merits a much fuller treatment, since the role of interpretation of signs, oracles, and culture is such a fundamental aspect of Herodotus' history. But the comparison with the Appalachian tradition suggests that songs and verse tags are part of the narrative techniques of the effective storyteller, which Herodotus did not forego.⁴⁵

Text

In oral performance, each performance of a text is different. The rule so familiar from Homeric studies is often ignored in considering prose. The validity of the rule has been thoroughly documented with North Carolina Jack tales. The story is fixed, has a name, and can be discussed as a unit, but each performance will be different in length, phrasing, and perhaps vocabulary.⁴⁶ Different narrators tell the same story slightly differently: one, Marshall Ward, who most often told the stories to school children, always liked to have Jack marry at the end.⁴⁷

Sometimes the teller adjusts the story itself to the audience, just as he or she modifies the dialect. When only men and friends are present, Ray Hicks will allow himself to be more broad and vulgar, but in public performance he censures himself. The story he regularly tells as 'Hardy Hard-Head,' he admits, was told by his grandfather as 'Hardy Hard-Ass,' a name which in fact fits the story better.⁴⁸ In another story, 'Jack and the Heifer Hide,' there is an episode where Jack secretly watches a woman entertain a man while her husband is away. Three recorded versions of the episode, by Ray Hicks,

⁴⁴ See especially J. E. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle* (Berkeley 1978). Differently H. W. Parke and D. E. Wormell, *The Delphic Oracle* (Oxford 1956).

⁴⁵ See also Evans, *Herodotus*, 133-34. We need not doubt that the relative of Panyassis could compose hexameter verses. In other types of folk tales, the riddle, in verse or prose, plays a prominent role, not unlike that played by some of Herodotus' oracles.

⁴⁶ The narratives may differ even in sequence of events: a performance of the 'Three Steers' by Orville Hicks, a second cousin of Ray's, that I heard in Chapel Hill in April 1995 put the 'shoe in the road' episode first, rather than second, as Ray did in the recording.

⁴⁷ Nicolaisen, in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 134.

⁴⁸ Sobol, in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 6.

Marshall Ward, and Hattie Presnell, a woman of the same family, but a generation older, can be compared.⁴⁹ Hattie Presnell's is shortest: she says simply that Jack saw the woman prepare a meal of roast pig and baked pies, which the two sat down to eat. Marshall Ward has the woman set out several kinds of food, and a bottle of brandy and a bottle of whiskey. When the man comes, Jack, peering through a crack in the floor, 'never saw so much huggin' and kissin' in all his life.' Hicks, in his version, describes the meal, with 'hog meat and beef and chicken meat', and how the couple 'took hands, went and danced around the table.' Then

she went to the cupboard and brought out pure corn whiskey and wine—it was aged: it had turned brown. And one glass was all you'd a needed to make you kick a, running—of that wine, one drinkin' glass full. And so, he said, when they drunk, got whiskey and wine, they took hands and, said, boys they did dance a buck dance around that table.

Here the plot of the Jack tale offers a set moment, the woman receiving the man while her husband is away and serving a meal, which 'provided much scope for personal embellishment.'⁵⁰ In the case of these three performances, it is clear that the female narrator suppresses any mention of sexual contact, and focuses on the food, while the male narrators allude to the adulterous situation more or less indirectly. However, in this particular case different gender perceptions are probably not the only factor, since Hattie Presnell was recording this for a collector a generation ago, and in general her recorded stories are very short.⁵¹ In another case, a woman narrator is more risqué: in the tale sometimes known as 'Jack the Giantkiller,' Jack, after killing some flies, makes himself a belt with a slogan: Hicks gives the slogan as 'Big man Jack, killed seven at a whack', but the ballad singer Jane Gentry told it as 'Old Stiff Dick, killed seven at a lick.'⁵² I give only two examples from many: each performance by each narrator produces a separate text.

If this represents a common practice of storytellers, then it is probable that Herodotus in oral performance regularly retold his story creating details

⁴⁹ Nicolaisen, in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 136-40.

⁵⁰ Nicolaisen, in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 139.

⁵¹ When Orville Hicks performed the story at the Beech Mt. Storytellers' Festival, July 22, 1995, he passed over this part very quickly: the woman served only some chicken and a bottle of wine, and no physical contact of the woman and her visitor was mentioned, though it was clear that the visit was surreptitious.

⁵² Jane Gentry would apologize for the direct language of her ballads and stories (Ellis, in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 97).

and supplying interpretation as he saw fit, at the same time adjusting the story to his audience. Since we have only the fixed written version, we can only guess how Herodotus shaped his story to his audience. In speaking of Athens' decision to fight against Persia (7.139), would he have defended himself at Athens as he does in his written text? Surely not. In Corinth, or the Peloponnese, would the Corinthian flight at Salamis have been reported? Probably not in the words we find at 8.94. Herodotus' stories testify to his discretion, even in risqué narratives like the Gyges story or the thief's meeting with the daughter of Rhampsinitus: would he have told the stories in the same words at a symposium, where the wine flowed freely? Being aware of the many paths which Herodotus' stories may have taken when performed before different audiences, we can recognize that the written text represents a particular choice of tone and content, aimed at an absent audience. In writing his *History*, Herodotus tried to perform for an audience of future readers or listeners, crafting a pan-Hellenic account which could speak to a variety of persons.⁵³

The Appalachian storytellers can easily lengthen or shorten stories, by including more episodes or simply telling them with more detail. The whole scene of the surreptitious meal to which I just referred runs 43 words in Presnell's version; 200 as told by Hicks, and 246 words in Ward's account. In addition, the mode of telling certain incidents can be distinctive to a certain performer: Ray Hicks is particularly proud of his little bird that gives advice about plugging the sieve in 'Hardy Hard-Ass.'⁵⁴ Not only details of episodes, but whole episodes and sequences of episodes can be added or subtracted, depending on the mood of narrator and audience and the time available.⁵⁵ The story, 'Jack and the Three Steers,' is usually told independently, but could be just one episode in a longer adventure of Jack's.⁵⁶ One of the reasons why 'Jack and the Heifer Hide' is so popular is that it includes a series of separate episodes, only loosely connected. This episodic construc-

⁵³ On Herodotus' consciousness of future readers, see W. Rösler, 'Die 'Selbsthistorisierung' des Autors: zur Stellung Herodotus zwischen Mündlichkeit und Schriftlichkeit,' *Philologus* 135 (1991) 215-20; on his audience in general, see A. Momigliano, 'The Historians of the Classical World and their Audiences: Some Suggestions,' *ASNP* 8,1 (1978) 59-75 (= *Sesto contributo alla storia degli studi classici e del mondo antico* (Rome 1980) 1:361-76); S. Flory, 'Who read Herodotus?,' *AJP* 101 (1980) 12-28; J. Malitz, 'Das Interesse an der Geschichte. Die griechischen Historiker und ihr Publikum,' in *Purposes of History: Studies in Greek Histrography from the 4th to the 2nd Centuries B. C.* (Leuven 1990) 323-50.

⁵⁴ Sobol, in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 12, 15, 16.

⁵⁵ Cf. B. McDermitt, *Comparison*, 333-35 for episodes added and subtracted between two performances by the same person in 1980 and 1982.

⁵⁶ Cf. T. McGowan, *NC Folklore Journal* 26 (1978) 78: the story is often combined 'with a set of other stealing episodes to form a longer tale called 'Jack and the Doctor's Girl.'

tion recalls the long-recognized episodic structure of Herodotean narrative.⁵⁷ The additive technique found in Herodotus' text apparently reflects the earlier oral stage, in which he could have chosen individual stories or sequences of stories to perform.

Interestingly, Herodotus' written text seems to preserve a number of parallel stories or explanations which might have been omitted in oral performance. One example can do for many. The false Smerdis is unmasked by multiple revelations: first Cambyses on his deathbed reveals his murder of his brother, then Otanes' daughter discovers the truth, then Praxaspes makes his speech (3.65, 68-69, 74-75). Any one of these would be sufficient motivation for the conspiracy which deposed the imposter. The presence of all three in one narrative may be the product of the opportunity offered by the composition of a written text. Similarly episodes of a long tale might be told or omitted at will. Large parts of the Croesus story could be passed over, with little or no modification to the basic tale. Not only could the digressions on Sparta and Athens be dropped, but the Atys tale, the testing of the oracles, the shout of the dumb son, and other episodes. Most of these stories could be told independently, out of context, on other occasions. The technique applies not only to 'folk tales' such as the Croesus story or the rise of Cyrus, but to 'historical' narrative as well. The full narrative of the battle of Salamis runs some 86 chapters (8.40-125), but for oral performance could have been greatly reduced, or focused on certain episodes. The catalogue of Greeks (43-48) could be omitted, as well as the events at the Isthmus (70.2-73) the revenge of Hermotimus (104-106), and the retreat of Xerxes (113-120). The Salamis narrative is in fact highly episodic, and it would be possible to tell at a given performance any one incident, or a series of them, without difficulty.

Appalachian Jack tales are not concerned with historical narrative as found in Herodotus' account of Salamis. The Appalachian story repertoire, however, includes much more than the traditional tales, as I have noted. The variety of different types of tales, ranging from Märchen to historical anecdotes, tall tales, and family stories, shows a significant overlap with Herodotean tale types. What distinguishes Herodotus' work is not that many of his tales are 'historical,' but the structural and thematic unity which he is able to create from these stories, and the investigations and critical evaluation by which he discovered and weighed them.

In considering the shaping and combination of stories I should note the interrelation between written and orally transmitted material in the Appalachian tradition. Hicks and other narrators base their traditional tales on those learned from parents, grandparents, or other relatives. Some at least of

⁵⁷ Cf. especially H. R. Immerwahr, *Form and Thought in Herodotus* (Cleveland 1966).

these may well have been based not on direct oral tradition but on chapbook versions printed in England in the eighteenth century, although very few parallels have been found. However, many narrators currently telling stories have read Chase's 1943 collection of Jack tales and are aware of his versions, most of which were collected on Beech Mountain. Chase thought that his role was to preserve the story, not the telling, so he modified and combined stories to fit his own notions and his intended audience of children. The mountaineers both reject his book and learn from it. Thus Hicks will say that he tells a story as his grandfather did, not as Chase did. On the other hand, one story, 'Jack and the Bull' which Chase did not collect on Beech Mt. and was previously unrecorded there, now has entered their repertoire. One storyteller says that reading Chase had reminded him of the story, which he had forgotten.⁵⁸ Ray Hicks learned 'Jack's hunting trip' from his grandfather Ben. Chase also heard the story from Ben Hicks, but adapted it. Now Ray has reshaped the story, using both his memory of his grandfather's story and Chase's adaptation, together with his own original material.⁵⁹ In recent years some storytellers, especially those with professional ambitions, have been learning new tales and new techniques, and including them in their performances. In addition, there has been a revival of story telling by those who have no ancestral connection with the tradition, but who like and admire the stories, and are spreading them far beyond Beech Mt.⁶⁰

We may imagine a similar relation between written and oral narrative in Herodotus' case. In this scenario, Hecataeus' book would have been a source for information or stories like any other, and would be adapted by Herodotus along with his other material to form part of his own narrative. The notion of plagiarism or copying research is irrelevant: what was important was telling the story as well—or if you wish, as truly—as possible.⁶¹

Books and audio and video cassettes have made it possible for the Beech Mountain stories to be recorded and disseminated. A traditional storyteller like Ray Hicks is pleased to put his stories on tape, because he loves them

⁵⁸ Stanley Hicks told it to Cheryl Oxford, but (of course) with variants from the written version: Oxford, 'The Storyteller as Craftsman,' 97.

⁵⁹ Oxford, 'The Storyteller as Shaman,' 102-3.

⁶⁰ Donald Davis is a native North Carolinian (from Haywood County) who learned the Jack Tales from his mother, but in his books tries to reach a modern audience, especially of young people. He has made a number of tapes and written several books of stories, including *Jack Always Seeks his Fortune* (Little Rock AK 1992). Cf. Sobol in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds* 204-12, and the bibliography there. Revivalist storytellers are treated in *Jack in Two Worlds*, 153-271.

⁶¹ This attitude may explain some of the features of Herodotus' presentation of Hecataeus noted by S. West, 'Herodotus' portrait of Hecataeus,' *JHS* 111 (1991) 144-60.

and believes in their importance. These different opportunities have necessarily modified the telling of stories. Some tellers recall that in the old days a story might last two evenings, as their grandfather kept a family group entertained during a long winter. Now stories rarely last over half an hour, and at festivals the time allowed is usually only twenty minutes, hardly time to get into a story. The versions on the tape *Ray Hicks Telling Four Traditional Jack Tales* run from ten to thirteen minutes, because of the medium: the producers clearly wanted the variety offered by four stories, but had only about fifty minutes of tape time. Some of the same stories were recorded by Cheryl Oxford in 1991 and ran two or three times as long.⁶² As with Homer, we may believe that the decision or opportunity to record his stories in writing allowed Herodotus to compose on a scale he never would have done otherwise.

At what state in his development did Herodotus begin to think of a written text and how much was the collection of *logoi* and of information driven by the desire to produce a written text rather than a spoken performance? Even when composing a written text, Herodotus is aware of constraints on length, and apologizes, e.g., for going on so long about Samos (3.60). I cannot answer this question, for even if Herodotus conceived relatively early the ambition to record his researches, it still would have been perfectly possible for him, as a *logios aner*, to share the stories he knew. Perhaps, in fact, telling stories was the best means to collect them. Visiting a city, he could exchange tales, and learn new ones.⁶³ I can imagine him telling the story of Polycrates in Corinth, and discovering the story of Periander and Lycophron, and tell-

⁶² Oxford, 'The Storyteller as Shaman,' p. 181: the story 'Jack and the Varmints' took 27 minutes to tell, although the identical story, though with the name 'Big Man Jack, Killed Seven at a Whack,' takes 12 minutes on the tape, *Ray Hicks Telling*.

⁶³ Differently from the Beech Mountain storytellers, the European Märchen tellers were travellers by profession and inclination: tinkers, soldiers, migratory farm workers: cf. Linda Dégh, *Folktales and Society: Story Telling in a Hungarian Peasant Community. Expanded edition with a New Afterward* (Bloomington 1989 [reprint of the 1969 edition with new photographs and Afterward, 287-309]) 63-93. Even the North Carolina storytellers learn from each other, listening to each others' stories, and deciding what to borrow for their own use. Interestingly for the comparison with Herodotus, in the Hungarian community revisited by Dégh in 1980-87, 'the most popular stories are historical episodes of the near past as experienced by individuals. These tales—of the exodus from Andrásfalva, the aimless wandering, the flight through battle zones, the settlement in Kaskad, conflict with Hungarians, Uplanders, and Serbians (Székelys came out the winners), injustice in land parceling, compulsory delivery, and deceiving authorities for the sake of survival—never wear out their actuality and always stimulate comments, corrections, and parallel stories' (309). Much the same might be expected of Herodotus' stories of the Greek encounters with the Persians, and other adventures of recent times. How many stories he might have told of post-478 events, which he did not in his written text!

ing the same story in Sparta, and hearing of the daring Spartan Archias. His method of inquiry, then, may have included, alongside simple questions, stories which evoked stories. This procedure would explain some of the ‘Greekness’ of foreign stories: Herodotus’ Greek story would evoke a story from an Egyptian or Persian *logios*—or from a Greek *logios* who could tell Egyptian or Persian stories—which then would become part of Herodotus’ next performance of the story. Herodotus’ performance in turn would represent his adaptation of the story to his own style and to his audience.⁶⁴ Naturally, we cannot be sure that our text represents the *final* stage of Herodotus’ researches—only the one that was written and preserved.

Narrators unconsciously adjust their stories to their own environment. In the traditional Jack tales of Beech Mt., many signs show the antiquity of the stories: Jack deals with kings, lions, and unicorns, and is paid in guineas, which have not been used in the United States for two hundred years. But the king lives in a mountain wood frame house, not unlike Ray’s, with a porch on the front, where he may be found sitting.⁶⁵ Jack and his brothers regularly need to clear ‘newground,’ as was done in the mountains. The motivating factor in almost all the stories is poverty: Jack must go out to find something to support himself and his mother.⁶⁶ It is not hard to see that this reflects the ever-present poverty of the mountains, and Ray’s own desperate poverty as a child. No doubt another reason for Herodotus’ hellenization of stories is a similar assimilation to his own world and that of his audience.

On the other hand, Ray Hicks and other narrators are aware of the distance between the world they describe and their audience, and often function as interpreters: Ray regularly explains what a guinea is, or a hackle (which he calls a hackerd), or some other item that he realizes or supposes is unclear to his audience, fulfilling the role of encyclopedic informant so often played by Herodotus. Ray especially, more than other narrators, believes he knows Jack’s world: his style is so vivid because he uses details from his own experience, which becomes Jack’s too. In the story ‘Hardy Hard-Ass,’ the first trial set for Jack and his two brothers is to fetch water using a sieve. The brothers, Will and Tom, spend all day gathering a tiny amount, but Jack listens to a friendly bird (wonderfully mimicked by the narrator), on its advice uses moss and mud to make the sieve watertight, and completes his task in

⁶⁴ See the excellent example of a Limba storyteller’s version of the story of Adam and Eve, in Finnegan, *Oral Literature*, 322-25.

⁶⁵ E.g., in a performance of ‘Whickety-Whack, Into my Sack,’ at the Beech Mountain Storytellers’ Festival, July 22, 1995.

⁶⁶ There are exceptions, such as the giant in ‘Jack and the Firedragon’ and the cheating king in ‘Jack and King Marock.’ In ‘Hardy Hard-Ass’ a witch has put a hex on a young girl and must be defeated.

one trip. Often in telling this story Ray will stop to explain that he himself used to use this trick, when as a boy he had to go to the well with a leaky bucket. This sense of knowing Jack's world allows Hicks better than most other storytellers to draw vivid and imaginative word pictures, to take us into Jack's world. These authorial comments do not seem to disrupt the unity of the narrative, as the speaker holds the audience with voice and eyes.⁶⁷

The process of story-telling which I am describing is not tied to a written text: Hicks and most other mountain story tellers did not learn their stories from a text, but from hearing them told and retold. A good narrator must have an excellent memory for plot, for detail, for a telling phrase. Perhaps most importantly he must have a visual memory. Donald Davis, a younger and more self-conscious and educated story teller, though one who learned the Jack tales orally, states that the stories are preserved in his memory in images: 'By hearing the same story told over and over in slightly different ways, what you finally absorb is not one particular version of a story, but instead the underlying picture. . . . Remembering the words is irrelevant, because, once you have the picture in your mind, you can describe it in many different ways until you see that the people who are listening see it too.'⁶⁸ As he told a student audience, 'You can tell it long, you can tell it short. You can put in a lot of detail, you can keep out a lot of detail. It's not scripted at all, in no sense is it scripted.'⁶⁹ Davis has become a professional story-teller, and so has learned to be extremely flexible in responding to the needs of different audiences or situations. Ray Hicks, on the other hand, does not like to be pressed by time to cut what he considers enjoyable elements from the story. When told he has only fifteen minutes to tell a story, he says he can't tell them that short, and prefers to play his harmonica and sing. Nevertheless the length of his stories, as I have said, fluctuates enormously.

Herodotus possessed in full measure the visual sense to which Davis alludes. His extraordinary vividness make his stories memorable, whether he is noting how Candaules' wife neatly placed her garments on the chair in their bedroom, or how Cleomenes sitting in the stocks cut himself to mincemeat, working from his knees up to his belly. For this very reason we must expect that the details were not fixed in a tradition, but often were

⁶⁷ Hicks' stories are unusually rich in such metanarration: cf. Oxford, 'The Storyteller as Shaman,' 155, 160. For the idea of metanarration in modern folklore studies, cf. R. Bauman, *Story, Performance, and Event: Contextual Studies in Oral Narrative* (Cambridge 1986) 98-100.

⁶⁸ D. Davis and Kay Stone, "'To Ease the Heart': Traditional Storytelling,' *Storytelling Journal* 1 (1984) 3-6, at 6 (quoted by J. D. Sobol in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 210-11).

⁶⁹ Quoted by Sobol, in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 211.

supplied by Herodotus' own visual imagination. Again, we may expect that the opportunity to record these stories in written form presented him with a difficult choice: to elaborate more pictorially the visual detail of his narrative so as to convey the scene better, or to shorten his account lest his unseen audience become impatient. His genius is to have so often hit the right measure.

Context

Many factors enter into the context or setting of an oral performance. I will consider two: the occasion and the purpose of the stories. Both of these are closely tied to the role of the audience in the performance. Ray Hicks tells stories constantly, with friends or strangers: on his front porch, in the barber shop or the grocery store, or at a national story-telling festival.⁷⁰ However, he began to be aware of himself as a storyteller when a local schoolteacher invited him to tell Jack tales to her students. Other tellers tell stories only on special occasions, when they are invited to visit schools or universities, or to festivals. Some are singers and intersperse their ballads or folk songs with stories.

What occasions did Herodotus or other Greek storytellers have for performance? Our information is restricted, but the possibilities are almost endless: basically, wherever men or mixed groups gather and wish to be entertained or informed. Several specific occasions are suggested by our sources.

1) The symposium. This has been much studied as the locale of poetry, but we know that prose narratives were popular entertainment at symposia as well. In Plato's *Symposium*, Aristophanes, Socrates, and Alcibiades, all relate narratives. Aristophanes tells a fable invented for the occasion, Socrates a narrative of an earlier conversation, and Alcibiades' (217B-221B) a personal narrative concerning recent historical events.⁷¹ Part of Alcibiades' account is a first person narrative of an unusual courtship experience, as are many stories told on Beech Mt. Many years before, Xenophanes had invited a dinner party tale with his questions, 'Who are you, where are you from, how old are you, sir, and how old were you when the Mede came?' (F 18 Diehl).⁷² In the fifth century, Ion of Chios recalls Cimon telling at a symposium a story of his own cunning in dealing with the allies (*FGrHist* 392 F 13), and Aristo-

⁷⁰ In October 1996, Hicks was an invited story-teller at the Jonesborough, Tennessee, National Storytelling Festival for the twenty-fourth year.

⁷¹ Note that Plato's Alcibiades ties his stories to the epic tradition of praise by his quotation at 220C of Homer's 'what this great man did and endured' (*Od.* 4.242, 271).

⁷² On historical memory at symposia, see W. Rösler, 'Mnemosyne in the Symposium,' in *Sympotica*, ed. O. Murray (Oxford 1990) 230-37.

phanes' Bdelycleon teaches Philocleon to tell Aesopic fables in a symposium to smooth over difficulties (*Wasps* 1256-61), though Philocleon's stories do not serve the purpose (*Wasps* 1320-21). Herodotus would have been a welcome and entertaining guest at an Athenian symposium. Many of the tales from his *History* would be appropriate there.

2) The palaestra. Men gathered here to exercise, observe the young men, and talk. Plato reports how Socrates on his return from Potidaea went to the palaestra of Taureos and was immediately questioned about the battle (*Charm.* 153a-d). When Herodotus visited a palaestra in Athens or other cities, many would have wanted to question him on the *nomoi* and geography of different countries; or hear his stories of harem intrigues or great battles.

3) Private houses. Sophists were invited by Callias to perform in his house, according to Plato's *Protagoras*. In the *Hippias Major*, Hippias says that in two days he will give his narrative *epideixis* of Nestor's advice to Neoptolemus, at the *didaskaleion* of Pheidestratus, where he had been invited by Eudicus (286A-B). He had put together and performed this presentation previously for the Spartans.

4) Festivals. The concourse of people from different cities at the major festivals offered an excellent venue for performances of all kinds, and not just the athletic and music contests which were scheduled. Historical narrative would not be strange to festival audiences. The newly discovered historical elegy by Simonides most probably was composed for a festival at Plataea, although other occasions have been suggested.⁷³ like the Eleutheria at Plataea, the Panathenaia at Athens, or the great pan-hellenic festivals would have been natural occasions for prose narrative performances as well.⁷⁴ We know that sophists used the festivals as occasions to advertise their skills—no doubt they were taking advantage of a practice already established by performers in both prose and poetry.⁷⁵ There are parallels in the North Carolina context. Both singers and storytellers regularly perform at church gatherings or civic celebrations. Recently, the folk singer Doc Watson, after the death of his son Merle, established an annual folk singing festival, at which Ray Hicks and other story tellers regularly perform as part of the program. In Plato (*Hipp. Maj.* 363D), Hippias states that he regularly

⁷³ P.Oxy.3965, cf. West, 'Simonides redivivus', Aloni, 'L'elegia di Simonide,' and Boedeker, 'Simonides on Plataea' (above, n. 21).

⁷⁴ I use 'performance' of any kind of narration to an audience, not necessarily of a staged and organized 'public appearance'.

⁷⁵ Sophistic epideictic performances were just one facet of the Greek practice of 'more or less formalized competitions in 'wisdom', which included poets and medical practitioners. See G. E. R. Lloyd, *The Revolutions of Wisdom* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London 1987) 85-102 (the quotation is from p. 85).

presented himself at the Olympic festival, ready to speak on a number of prepared topics, and to answer questions. Many of Herodotus' *logoi* would lend themselves to presentation in a public gathering, and would invite the kind of audience interaction implicit in Hippias' description of himself.⁷⁶

5) On campaign, with the army or the fleet. During the *Pentecontaetea*, Ionians and Athenians would have been together on campaign frequently. Major expeditions, like the two years in Egypt and the sieges of Samos or Potidaea, would have meant long months of bivouacking. Besides these, each year the fleet went out and spent months traveling from one island to another. Each night, when the ships were beached, in a harbor or along a coast, the men would sit around the fire, sing songs, tell stories.⁷⁷ Did Herodotus ever travel with them? He may have accompanied the fleet to Egypt in the 450's, or Pericles' expedition to the Black Sea in the 430's. I have no evidence: I just suggest this as an alternative to the 'merchant Herodotus' often hypothesized.

In a performance, the audience is essential. Present, reacting—often vocally—they are the test of the success of the speaker. They will evaluate his voice and appearance, his rank and city, and the truth, persuasiveness, and entertainment value of his tale.

On Beech Mountain stories have been told to entertain children or adults, but there was often an underlying dimension of instruction as well. The pleasure of the stories bonded the communities across generations and families. Historical anecdotes reminded the audience of its past and of examples of character to be admired, imitated or feared.

The narrators themselves have seen the Jack tales as having educational value, though in different ways. Marshall Ward was an elementary school teacher for many years, and regularly told the stories to children, adjusting them to avoid moral scandal, or explaining that Jack was forced into certain situations, but was not a bad person. Ward notes that old Council Harmon was turned out of his church two or three times for telling the stories.⁷⁸ Ray Hicks has had the same problem: preachers would charge that the stories were not true, and that Jack was immoral. Hicks defends Jack: he is clever, but not a cheater. Jack outsmarts people.⁷⁹ As he once explained in an interview, he tells younger storytellers who are disturbed by Jack's deviousness,

⁷⁶ The probability of such performances is quite independent of the reliability of the reports of Herodotus reading at the festivals, which are late and dubious. See the analysis by Johnson, 'Oral performance,' 240-42.

⁷⁷ Cf. Dem. 50.32-33 (by Apollodorus), a gathering of trierarchs and others on Thasos in 361 B.C.

⁷⁸ As quoted in McCarthy, *Jack in Two Worlds*, 71.

⁷⁹ McDermitt, *Comparison*, 305-6.

‘you-uns ainst seein’ through it. You git your back up agin the wall. You have to trick a little to live.’⁸⁰

Ray respects Jack’s cleverness in adversity, because he has felt it himself. He doesn’t talk of natural cosmic balance, or inevitable vengeance for wrongdoing. He sees Jack as never mean or vicious, but foolish sometimes, clever often, and always resourceful. He sees the stories as telling important truths about the world, truths that a person must know to survive. The stories constantly warn of the dangers of foolishness and of greed, of unwillingness to listen to advice, of confidence that money and power make one superior. Jack sometimes acts out the foolishness himself, but more often shows how resourcefulness and good will can turn the tables on his adversaries. When Jack is helped by friends with magical advice or gifts, it is because he has treated them well, sharing his food or helping them in some way. Hicks sees the stories in a moral light: ‘Lovin’ the people, that’s hit.’⁸¹ Fundamentalist preachers, condemning fiction in all circumstances, represent a Platonic view of poetic mimesis. Hicks’ audiences, however, are entertained and learn a bit of the world as well. Ray Hicks, like Marshall Ward, Donald Davis, and others who tell Jack tales, sees his stories not just as entertainment, or a bit of the traditional past, but as a vital insight into the workings of human beings, and the nature of the human situation.

Herodotus gives clues as to how some audiences reacted to his presentations. They disbelieved his story about the Persian constitutional debate (3.8.1, cf. 6.43.3). He did not expect them to like what he said about the importance of Athens’ decision to resist the Persians (7.139). In fact, each audience might enjoy his stories, but would also test them for their value as statements about the world. As Eumaeus evaluated the stories of Odysseus (*Od.* 14.361-65), Herodotus’ audience would evaluate his account first by the way he told the story and how it seemed to fit his appearance and reputation, and then by their own experience, knowledge and belief. In such circumstances, it is obvious that Thebans and Spartans, Athenians and islanders would often react differently, and in fact each individual would bring his or her own experience to his judgement. One indication of Herodotus’ awareness of different audiences is his story of the packs of troubles, τὰ οἰκῆια κακά (7.152), which he inserts at the point when the Greeks are gathering to resist the Persians. It is a warning to his audience, as he writes about those who had no excuse to Medize, against trying to judge the problems or actions of others. He concludes regarding the Argives, ‘and not even the Ar-

⁸⁰ *New York Times*, 22 June 1992, pp. A1, A14. Hicks often insists that there is truth in his stories: Isbell, *Last Chivaree*, 80.

⁸¹ In B. McDermitt, ‘Storytelling and a Boy named Jack,’ *NC Folklore Journal* 31 (1983) 3-22, at p. 19 and p. 9.

gives acted most shamefully,' οὕτω οὐδ' Ἀργείοισι αἴσχιστα πεποίηται; there were others who acted as badly.⁸² At the same time he defends himself from the objections of his imagined audience: 'I say what is said to me,' τὰ λεγόμενα (7.152.3). This passage is from the written text, but it suggests the interaction which Herodotus may have had with his audience at his oral performances.

In 7.152 Herodotus, like Ray Hicks, invites his audience to go beyond the immediate and literal meaning of his narrative to consider the larger world behind it. They should not stop at the impulse to condemn, but attempt to arrive at an understanding of the human situation. This is exactly the technique he shows other narrators employing. When in 5.92, Socles recounts episodes from the life of Cypselus and Periander, Socles expects his audience of Spartans and their allies to go beyond the individual events to an understanding of the evil of tyranny and a decision not to reinstall the tyrant Hippias at Athens. When king Leotychides tells the story of Glaukos to the Athenians, he expects them to see the importance of preserving a trust (Hdt. 6.86).⁸³ The comparison with much less sophisticated North Carolina storytellers suggests that this is an oral technique, and that Herodotus, in his oral performances as in his written text, wished his audience to make Solon's wisdom their own, to consider the end, and the nature of the human situation, τὰ ἀνθρώπινα.⁸⁴

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⁸² Cf. on this passage G. Nagy, 'Mythe et Prose en grèce archaïque: l'Aïnos,' in C. Calame, *Métamorphoses du Mythe en Grèce Antique* (Geneva 1988) 229-42.

⁸³ On the very large question of the interpretation of meaning in Herodotus, whether omens, oracles, signs, or historical events, cf. e.g. S. West, 'The Scythian Ultimatum (Herodotus IV, 131, 132),' *JHS* 108 (1988) 207-11; P. A. Stadter, 'Herodotus and the Athenian Arche,' *Annali della Scuola Normale Superiore di Pisa, classe di lettere e filosofia*, ser. III, 22 (1992) 781-809; C. Dewald, 'Reading the World: The Interpretation of Objects in the Histories,' in *Nomodeiktēs. Greek Studies in Honor of Martin Ostwald*, ed. R. M. Rosen and J. Farrell (Ann Arbor 1993) 55-70, and J. Moles, 'Herodotus warns the Athenians,' *Papers of the Leeds International Latin Seminar* 9 (1996) 259-84.

⁸⁴ A version of this paper was delivered at All Souls College, Oxford, in May 1995. I am grateful for the comments offered on that occasion, and for the advice of Tom Mc Gowan of Appalachian State University and Terry Zug of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill on Appalachian storytelling.

APPENDIX
JACK AND THE THREE STEERS⁸⁵
(Tale Type 1525D)

Jack and his mother, they was without of flour and nothing to eat. So he says, ‘Mama,’ he says, ‘I believe I can make it and get us something to eat.’ And he headed off. She let him go. Looked like it was just have to go; peat (?)⁸⁶ was on the table. And so he headed off and got lost in the woods—dark woods—dark in the daytime. And so it come night on him, and it let in raining. And finally at last, he kept crawling and pulling around in the woods, and he looked and he seed a little light down in a holler, a-shining, and a little dim, way down in a lonesome holler through the dark, and hit a-raining. And so he kept pulling and got there.

And when he got there he pecked on the door, and hit a-dripping off of the house and wet. And a little woman come out. She said, ‘Great...’ said, ‘Law me!’ Said, ‘What is you a-doing here?’ Said, ‘This is the highway robbers’ house.’ And says, ‘Son,’ says, ‘they kill everybody that comes here.’ Says, ‘They say ‘dead men tells no tales.’

Well, he stood there and talked with her awhile in the rain, and he was a-getting so wet, and he says, ‘Well, bedad,’ he says, ‘I’m a-coming in! I’d just as soon die, be killed, as to drowned out here.’ She says, ‘Well,’ says, ‘come on in then,’ said, ‘just as you please.’ And there was a little pile of straw was a-laying over in the room. Don’t know what they had it there for, but a little pile of straw. And, so, he was wet and drowsy, and he went over and laid down in that little pile of straw, and he got warm and went off to sleep.

And, up in at midnight, the robbers had come in with their stuff and put their guns out on the table and was a-dividing it—what money they’d got and other stuff. And so, Jack kindly roused and made a mumble of a fuss. They says, ‘What’s that, old lady?’ ‘Oh,’ she says, ‘I forgot to tell you’uns.’ Said, ‘It was a little old boy come in.’ Says, ‘I told him that you’uns would kill him, but he said... he said he’d just as soon be killed as to drown out there in the rain.’ And said, ‘He just come on in.’

⁸⁵ From *Ray Hicks Telling Four Traditional ‘Jack Tales,’* recorded and edited by Sandy Paton. Texts transcribed by Lee B. Hagerty. Reproduced courtesy of Folk-Legacy Records, Inc., Sharon, Connecticut. Not to be transcribed without permission. The notes are my own.

⁸⁶ This probably should be transcribed ‘Pete.’ It apparently is a version of the wolf-at-the-door expression, where the closer Pete is, the worse the food situation is. Cf. Oxford, ‘The storyteller as Shaman,’ 113, quoting Ray Hicks: ‘when it got under the table, you was a-eatin the crumbs. The crumbs that was left. and when it [Peat] got on the table, you looked at the table and nothin on it. . . .They’d say, ‘Old Peat’s about on the table.’

And he said, 'Well,' says, 'get up.' Says, 'What's your name?' He says, 'My name's Jack.' Said, 'Well,' said, 'we kill everybody that comes here.' Said, 'Dead people tells no tales.'

Well, Jack was ragged and looked pitiful, and he says, 'Well,' he says, 'I ain't got nothing.' He says, 'You'uns is robbers, no doubt, and a-robbing for what you get, but,' said, 'if you rob me you don't get... kill me you don't get nothing.' Says, 'Me and my mother is without of anything to eat, is why I'm out like this.'

Well, they got to looking at him and got sort of sorry for him. And they said, 'Jack, do you reckon you would be a good hand to steal?' He said, 'Bedad, a man ought to be a good hand,' he said, 'if it would save his life!' 'Well,' they said, 'it could save it.' Says, 'There's an old farmer back over yonder,' he said, 'some way he's... that he watches his stuff, and it's come out where you're here and you can do the job for us.' Said... said, 'We've tried every way.' They said, 'He's got three steers,' and said, 'we've tried every way to steal them, but,' said, 'we can't get them.' And said, 'We was a-figuring on trying it tomorrow, but,' said, 'being you've happened out to be here, we'll... if you'll get them for us,' said, 'we'll give you three hundred dollars apiece and spare your life. Well,' said, 'now in the morning he'll be a-taking the first one to town.'

Well so, Jack got up a-feeling awful bad about it; his heart was a-beating up in his neck, still thinking that he was a-going to be killed—he would fail. So, he went down by the lower end of the house, and the robbers had had a calf or something tied down there, and had forgot and left the rope. So he just snatched the rope off of the pin and wrapped it around him and went on down to the old road where he was a-driving the ox to town to sell it, and he looked up and seed a stooping tree. And he says, 'Ah, bedad,' he says, 'I might fool that old man and not have to hurt nobody to get that steer.' And, account of the robbers being in that country, struck his mind, too. So he clumb... climbed this stooping tree over the road and rolled the rope around him and fixed it, and got it around his neck like he was hung. And hung there, and the old farmer come along, 'Sook, Buck, saw, Buck,⁸⁷ let's get to town.' And he got on around that turn where Jack was there a-hanging like that, and he looked—says, 'Law me!' Says, 'I'll not get to town today.' Says, 'Hit'll be a funeral!' And says, 'No doubt that them robbers has hung a boy, and it's out of my settlement.' And says, 'I better just tie my ox

⁸⁷ Buck is used for a male animal, here a steer. It is used of a bull by Stanley Hicks, in Oxford, 'Storyteller as Craftsman,' 111. Sook and saw are words for commanding a cow: sook to call it, cf. H. Kurath, *A Word Geography of the Eastern United States* (Ann Arbor 1949), 30, 63 and saw to make it stand still, cf. Kurath, 64, and G. R. Wood, *Vocabulary Change* (Carbondale 1971) index s.v. saw boss.

and get back and get my neighbors and get him down, and (it will) be a funeral, in place of going to town.’ Said, ‘I’ll just tie him here, now, and I’ll get him directly.’

Well, he tied his ox and struck back and told it all over the community there was a boy hung there, and had about fifty or a hundred men a-going with him, that the robbers had hung a boy in a tree, and had them all alarmed.

And so Jack, just as quick as he got out of sight, untied and got the steer and struck up to the robbers’, and was back with it in about two or three hours. And the robbers said, ‘Good gracious,’ they said, ‘you’re the beatingest hand to steal that’s ever been on this job!’ Said, ‘You’re a-doing well.’ He said, ‘Bedad, a man has to do something, if it will save his life.’ And he said, ‘I don’t believe in hurting nobody.’ ‘Well,’ they said, the next one... you’ll go with the next one in the morning.’ And Jack laid and never slept too much. He was worried, a-studying yet, it was two to go, and didn’t know how he would get them.

So, he got up the next morning, and there laid a brand new woman’s slipper where they’d dropped it on the floor. And (it is)⁸⁸ said, some way he just snatched it and just put it in his pocket. And said, he got down to the road and set down. And said, directly he heard the old farmer a-coming with the second one. ‘Sook, Buck, saw, Buck, let’s get to town before the market closes.’ And said, he heard him a-coming pretty close and he just eased out and throwed that slipper in the road.

And the old farmer come up and said, ‘Saw, Buck! Saw, Buck!’ Looked, and picked it up, and said, ‘Law me!’ Said, ‘There’s a brand new slipper them robbers has lost.’ Said, ‘If I had the mate to that,’ he said, ‘I believe they’d be exactly to fit for my old lady.’ Said, ‘Just her fit, no doubt.’ Said, ‘Just looks like her size. But,’ said, ‘they’ve lost it, and it wouldn’t be any use without the mate to it.’

Well, so he throws it back down, and don’t take it with him. And, ‘Sook, Buck, let’s get to town,’ and started on. And Jack just went out and grabbed it. And he forgot to notice which foot it went on, never paid any attention. And Jack took a near-cut through the woods, about a mile ahead, and set it in front of him again.

Said, ‘Sook, Buck, saw, Buck!’ Said, ‘Law me!’ Says, ‘Hain’t I a fool!’ Says, ‘There is the mate to that shoe, and me a mile on this-a-way.’ Said, ‘Hain’t I a fool!’ Says, ‘I ought to have put the other one in my pocket.’ Says, ‘They’ve lost one back there and they’ve lost the other one here.’

⁸⁸ Here it is wrong, I think, to suppose an ellipse of ‘it is’: ‘said’ is used regularly by Hicks to introduce sentences, even when no one in the story is speaking. Cf. also ‘they said’ further along.

So he said, 'Saw, Buck,' and tied him, and grabbed that one up and run back to get the other one, and got mistaken in which place the other one was laying and got excited so, and them a-being new, till they said he run there nearly till twelve before he quit running, his tongue a-hanging out. And by that time, Jack had that one and was in to the robbers. And him a-running yet with his tongue a-hanging out, saying, 'It looked like it was right here, where I seed that slipper. No, it was up there.' And he'd run there. 'No, I believe it was that turn right back down yonder.' And just run, they said, that his tongue was a-hanging out, before he give up. And then, when he went back, his steer was gone.

Well, they said, 'Great, Jack! You're the beatingest!' Said, 'You've done made six hundred already, and a-saving your life! Well,' they said, 'now, in the morning, is the third one.' Said, 'You bring hit and we'll give you nine hundred bucks and your life is saved. We won't hurt you; just to keep your mouth shut about us.'

Well, so Jack goes back and just sets down, and he can't figure on ary a thing to get that one with, the heart beating in his neck. And, finally at last, he heard him a-coming. 'Sook, Buck, saw, Buck; get to town.' Said he had to think of something or he was gone. Said it just happened to think, fly in his mind, that he could get up in the laurel and bawl like two oxens, two steers, and get him up in there after him and dodge him like a rabbit. And he just went up in the laurel. 'Moo, maw! Moo, maw!'

'Just as I expected; they just got loose!' And says, 'I'll get up in there and catch the other two, and just take them all three on to market today.' Said, 'Just what I thought! They just got loose!'

And so, he got up in there after Jack, and he'd jump across thick laurel and keep him after him, and, 'Moo!' on one ridge, 'moo!' 'Yeah, that's them,' he'd say. And then, directly—Jack was awful; he'd rabbit hunted a lot—and he give him a dodge like a rabbit and got him tangled with his britches under some thick laurel, and the spikes in his britches, and him there a-pulling and hung up. And he jumped out and got the steer and took out, and while he was a-getting out of them green briars and laurel and stuff, and got on in. And they paid him the nine hundred, and he went back. And said him and his mother lived good for then awhile.