Where the community reveals itself

Reflexivity and moral judgment in Karpathos, Greece

In the mid-1930s the patrons of a coffee-house in Olymbos, a large mountain village on the Greek island of Karpathos, witnessed an odd event.[1] The local rural guard, Nikolis, entered the coffee-house carrying a leg of lamb on his shoulder, approached his co-villager Manolis, who was in a carefree mood, and struck him on the face with the leg of lamb without saying anything. Infuriated, Manolis reported the assault to the local constabulary immediately.[2] To defend himself, Nikolis said to the chief constable: 'I struck him because he was spreading rumours in the community that Sophila's newborn bastard was mine while it's his.' Manolis was taken by surprise. He did not expect that Nikolis, in his effort to discredit him as a slanderous person, would go so far as to report to the authorities a community problem such as a moral crime, to accuse him of being an adulterer. Much depressed, Manolis admitted his affair with Sophila. Although many Olymbians had suspected him to be the father of Sophila's newborn, only the *trimistiro* Nikolis dared to expose the moral offender publicly.

The above story was narrated to me in the summer of 1989 by one of the witnesses of the assault. As I enquired into the local usages of *trimistiro* (the characterization attached to Nikolis by the story-teller) I discovered that this notion pertained to a category of persons who exercised unofficial social control by publicly criticizing the moral behaviour of their co-villagers. Despite being a native speaker of Greek and a trained anthropologist studying the Olymbos culture for about two years, the concept of *trimistiro* and its sociocultural connotations had until then escaped my attention almost entirely.[3]

This chapter reflects the process of my own understanding of

transgressors of sociocultural boundaries, especially to those exhibiting any kind of excessive, immoderate, inordinate, extravagant or exorbitant behaviour. The transgressors/*trimistira* are morally assessed in terms of their success or failure in transcending the limits of social experience and hence of community knowledge within a particular context of thought or action. Olymbians praise transgressions as socially successful and, eventually, morally ideal practices if they are transcendental in character, censuring those that are trivial and transient as instances of immorality. For example, a mason whose craftsmanship is particularly ingenious, who instead of the conventional rectangular house-openings makes arched ones, will be publicly honoured as a *trimistiro* in construction.

In modern Olymbos, however, the negative connotations of *trimistiro* have prevailed over the positive ones. To most contemporary Olymbians, *trimistiro* is an offensive expression, an insult. They use it to represent the extremely shrewd and intriguing individual who employs any means of communication, but chiefly the spoken word, to impose his or her views on other people. Olymbians believe that the *trimistira* are strategic users of such sly methods of action as adulation, hypocrisy, slander and irony, and that they aim at asserting themselves by socially stigmatizing their adversaries. Other insulting nuances in the usage of *trimistiro* refer to a person's social behaviour that is locally perceived as capricious, malicious, deceitful or vulgar.

Reflecting upon its various connotations, the idea of *trimistiro* should be understood in relation to the specific contexts of its usage. Hence, the following working definition: *trimistiro* is a sociocultural category Olymbians apply to co-villagers who seem to be extremely enigmatic, that is, mysterious in the sense of exciting wonder, curiosity or surprise, as well as baffling all attempted explanation; they also imply that the *trimistira* are inscrutable in that they defy all efforts to understand them, leaving one feeling hopeless or defeated.

Perhaps the most significant local conception of the *trimistiro* is that he or she is the embodiment of an unofficial modality of sociocultural control. This view is held by a notable minority of contemporary Olymbians, a few *trimistira* and several astute observers and analysts of Olymbos culture, who all portray modern Olymbos in their narratives as being in a state of cultural crisis, attributing their anxieties about the destruction of the 'traditional'

way of life to *modernismos* (modernism).[5] A young Olympian exemplified this problem with a succinct but powerful statement: 'Olymbos leans on her *trimistira* for its survival.'

The local critics view *trimistira* as social catalysts facilitating or hindering cultural change. They ascribe this form of power to a *trimistiro*'s rhetorical manipulation of commonly available information concerning the moral reputation of each person's genealogical history. By constructing personal historical narratives about other community members, *trimistira* restructure folk knowledge, imposing upon their audiences their own interpretative perspectives. Olymbians are vocal in their anxiety about falling upon a *trimistiro* in a public place, as they fear his or her shaming reaction should he or she misconstrue their words and deeds. As a middle-aged Olymbian man put it, 'everybody is afraid of the *trimistira*; while people reproach *trimistira*, they neither renounce nor justify them'.

Therefore the *trimistira* appear to be the protagonists of moral and social criticism in Olymbos. They express reasoned opinions on any matter of concern to the community (for example a wedding arrangement), and pass judgment on its social value. The *trimistira*-critics judge social structures or institutions as embodied activities, assessing their value in relation to the moral worth of the persons engaged in them. To explore the rhetorical strategies of these critics I shall examine their intentions, ideas and actions as narrative structures of power. I shall begin with the premise that the *trimistira* are social actors who cast moral judgment on the basis of a practical rationality used by everybody in the community, suggesting that without this tradition-bound rationality it would be impossible for these critics to render their verdicts in a manner intelligible to their audiences (MacIntyre 1988: 1–12, 389–403). This view implies that the community context of rationalized moral criticism is the most significant dimension of the social existence of a *trimistiro*.

SOCIAL EXPERIENCE, NARRATIVE AND REFLEXIVITY

A theoretical framework that seems to be quite pertinent to the analysis of the folk notions of *trimistiro* is the dramaturgical approach of Erving Goffman.[6] What the *trimistira* of the Olymbian accounts and Goffman's social actors have in common

is that they 'stage' their behaviour in face-to-face social interactions in such a way as to manipulate their audiences' exercise of thought or judgment – their reflexivity – and, eventually, the definition of the situation. However, as the moral philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (1984: 115–17) has shown, Goffman's approach is not applicable to tradition-bound social interactions because of its modernist bias of emotivism. Alternatively, MacIntyre's concept of 'characters' as ideal social figures (ibid.: 27–31) is closer to the notion of *trimistiro* than Goffman's perspective of the emotivist self.

My analysis of the *trimistiro* as a manipulator of reflexivity in tradition-bound situations of moral and social criticism builds upon both Goffman's idea of 'staging' and MacIntyre's concept of 'characters'. Far from being a theoretical hybrid, such a methodological blending of heterogeneous perspectives reflects a major tendency in recent ethnographic practice (Ortner 1984; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Marcus and Fischer 1986). Ethnographers writing in this vein have succeeded in accounting for the systems of knowledge and patterns of experience of other people by making the latter co-authors to such representations rather than treating them as mere objects of study (e.g. Rabinow 1977; Crapanzano 1980; Herzfeld 1985). Some ethnographers have achieved this sharing relationship by focusing on the stories people tell of themselves and for themselves, as metaphors of social existence.[7] In their discourses, narrators construct rather than describe their cultural realities, contesting the world-views of other people, as well as their own (Crapanzano 1980; Rosaldo 1986: 97–8; Myerhoff 1986: 261–2).[8]

The *trimistira* are masters of narrative.[9] By relating stories or giving accounts of events intelligible to the community they construct discourses involving plot, setting and characterization which they use as a controlled referential background for 'staging' social criticism. Any such discourse has a personal narrative structure which is based on a strategic juxtaposition of the life-histories of the critic and the criticized.

The anthropological literature on narrative is quite extensive.[10] To account for the rhetorical strategies of the *trimistiro* I shall rely mostly on MacIntyre's (1984: 204–25) sociohistorical approach to narrative analysis. MacIntyre (ibid.: 208) argues that in order to understand a personal narrative one must situate the actor's intentions in causal and temporal order in the context of his or her

personal history, as well as the history of the setting or settings (institutions, practices, milieux) to which these intentions belong.[11]

So far I have discussed the notion of *trimistiro* by summing up the Olymbos folk knowledge of it. I have also considered some theoretical problems pertaining to the analytical representation of the *trimistiro* as a rhetorical strategist and social critic. Now I shall examine the intentions, ideas and actions of an actual *trimistiro*, an Olymbian woman whom I shall call Kalitsa, by enquiring into her discourses and practices.

JUXTAPOSING REALITIES: THE SOCIAL AND NARRATIVE ACTION OF THE *TRIMISTIRO*

My first encounter with Kalitsa took place in her house in Olymbos. I set up this meeting very carefully. As I was aware of the capricious manner of this category of persons, I asked a community notable, Mihalis, a man related by marriage to Kalitsa's family, to let her know of my impending visit. At first Kalitsa was rather hostile towards me. She wanted to know why I wanted to hear her life history. I suddenly realized that my enquiring strategy was wrong. In the tradition-bound society of Olymbos life histories were sources of community knowledge and, therefore, sources of social power for a *trimistiro*. Thus I decided to tell her the purpose of my visit:

—Mihalis sends me to you. I want to ask you about the *trimistira*, who are they and what do they do?

—The *trimistira*, eh? That's me! Everyone in the village knows me as an irritable and irascible person (*arathimi*). As I've no vices of my own, I never put up with other people's.

Listen to this story and you'll understand what a true *trimistiro* does. I'd been in deep mourning for seven years, for my brother who died of consumption at 31, when one day, on the last Sunday of Carnival, my father urged me to attend that evening's dance so as to forget my troubles. Reluctantly I agreed. I put on a black mantle, covered my head with its hood, and went to the dancing place. There I sat with the chaperones [to the girl dancers]. To honour my appearance, the dancers began singing praises of my niece, my late brother's only child. Among the dancers was Minas, a distant relative of mine and

renowned musician and singer, who, on seeing me, asked a man to bring him some water. The man soon returned with a pitcher. Then, as Minas was dancing right behind me, he snatched the pitcher and emptied its contents on me, making me all wet. Enraged, I sprang up and attacked him fiercely. Oh, if only you'd been there to hear what I told him. I called him by his grandmother's father's name, Kostaras. I said: 'Oh you, Kostara![12] Oh you, Kostara with the *pikalami*!'[13] – He was a fisherman and used a fishing rod to catch fish. – 'Aren't you ashamed of yourself?' I couldn't stop myself. I kept on insulting him: 'You scoundrel! You insensitive man! You ass! You rotter! Like your *yenia* (lineage), you're all worthless.' Minas couldn't stand the insults and soon left the dance. Next morning, he went to see my father to complain about my defaming conduct. When my father said he'd no right to wet me at the dance, Minas replied that he did what he'd done for my own good. He explained he hadn't wanted to mock me or my family but simply my clothing, and that he'd wet me in order to urge me to end my mourning. But what he'd done was unacceptable. He could have told me what he intended to do; he could have asked me nicely to uncover my face. And I'd have told him – because I'd no intention of getting into trouble with him – to leave me alone, not to talk to me, to stop meddling in my affairs. But he didn't. So he got what he deserved.

Kalitsa's narrative helps raise several methodological questions about the comprehensive study of the transformation of social experience into critical knowledge in Olymbos.[14] One such question concerns the distinction between anthropology and folklore especially, the epistemological boundaries of any anthropological enquiry based on a body of information gained and preserved by folk knowledge (Herzfeld 1987: 64–7; Cowan 1990: 58–9; Stewart 1991: 122–30).[15] If one tried to understand Kalitsa's narrative through such a framework of analysis, one would certainly identify her as a *trimistiro* on the basis of her irascible and audacious social behaviour but would be unable to follow her rhetorical strategies aimed at shaming Minas. A second question, related to the first one, is whether the local folk knowledge about *trimistiro* is a lived ideology, that is, an actually experienced and uncritically enacted form of consciousness. This view suggests that Olymbians, in the accounts they give of the *trimistira*, may be mystifying, intention-

ally or unintentionally, the hegemonic structures of power in their society.[16] Finally, there is a question concerning the narrative realities of Kalitsa's text. Are the characters represented in her text mere references reflecting the 'objective' reality of the incident or, rather, the concrete symbolic embodiments of certain community ideas about morality and cultural hegemony strategically juxtaposed by Kalitsa through narration?

With the above questions in mind, let me turn to the analysis of Kalitsa's narrative. One way of exploring this narrative is to view it, following Crapanzano (1980: 5), not only as a fragment of the narrator's personal history but also as a part of her autobiography.[17] I shall begin by presenting Kalitsa's and Minas' personal histories in a genealogical context of action; next I shall explore the broader historical background of the hegemonic power relations in Olymbos in the period from the mid-1910s and early 1920s (the time in which Kalitsa and Minas were born) until the 1950s (when the conflict between the two of them occurred); then I shall discuss the ceremonial situations in which Olymbians express themselves as a symbolic community; and, finally, I shall interpret Kalitsa's story, situating the various nuances of her social and narrative action in specific 'personal historical' contexts.

NARRATING KALITSA: EVENTS, SITUATIONS AND CONTEXTS IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Kalitsa is an illiterate Olymbian woman aged 77 years. She is unmarried and lives alone in a spacious and untidy house of her own in Olymbos. She comes from a traditional family of shepherds and talented poet–singers like her father Filipis and brother Orgis.

Kalitsa's autobiographical motive may be resolved into two components, her unmarried status and Orgis' life and death. On several occasions Kalitsa stressed to me that she remained single because she became a second mother to her niece, Orgis' only child, looking after her until the girl was married. To understand the significance of Orgis' life and death to Kalitsa herself one must approach this relationship from the perspective of Orgis' marriage and its social implications. Orgis was married in Olymbos in the mid-1940s. His wedding was controversial. He married up, being one of the first shepherds to take as wife a *kanakaria*, that is a first-born daughter from a family of *kanakaridhes*, the powerful and prestigious landowners of Olymbos (Capetanakis 1979;

Philippides 1973; Vernier 1984; Daskalopoulou-Kapetanaki 1987; Kavouras 1991; Skiada 1991). Although richly dowered and morally virtuous, the young *kanakaria* was not a perfect bride as she was socially defective in a very particular way. She carried the genealogical stigma of 'consumption', as both her sisters and mother had died of the disease. That Orgis died also of consumption two years after the wedding is a tragic coincidence of especial symbolic significance to Kalitsa.

In her narrative, Kalitsa associates Orgis' physical death and misfortune in marriage with her own social death and poor marital status, reversing the causal relationship between Orgis' death and unlucky marriage to account for her own unfortunate status as a mature unmarried woman in Olymbos.[18] On the one hand, Orgis' normatively successful marriage was ended by an unpreventable physical cause (an incurable disease) and, on the other, the cultural effect of this event on Kalitsa's life caused her own social death – she mourned her brother's loss for many years and became a second mother to Orgis' orphan girl. By connecting the two worlds in causal and temporal terms Kalitsa creates the dramatic background of her social and narrative contexts of action. Her inscrutability may be partly understood in relation to her commuting freely between these two worlds. Moreover, the symbolic association with the world of her dead brother enables Kalitsa to justify in practically rational terms her living a private and, eventually, paradoxical life in Olymbos.

To understand why Orgis' marriage was controversial, beyond the point of the genealogical stigmatization of the bride as a 'consumptive', one should approach this event as a manifestation of the dramatic sociocultural developments that occurred in Olymbos in the years of the Italian Occupation (1912–43). One such major institutional transition was the substitution of the Italian market economy for the long-standing tributary system of the Ottomans (Philippides 1973: 36–9; Vernier 1977). In the ensuing context of radical socioeconomic change, several repatriated rich emigrants from Olymbos became economically more powerful than the *kanakaridhes* (the landowners) and challenged the latter's political and symbolic hegemony. They spent a lot of money on community feasts and in donations to the Church, aiming at surpassing the *kanakaridhes* in social prestige (Vernier 1984; Kavouras 1992).

The process of the social reproduction of the hegemonic culture

of the *kanakaridhes* is reflected in the customary inheritance system of Karpathos (Mihailidhis-Nouaros 1984; Vernier 1984). The long-standing practice of bilateral primogeniture ensured the indisputable continuation of the social hierarchy of the *kanakaridhes*, as nuptial candidates should be equally ranked in order to be acceptably married. As is typical in most kin-based hierarchical societies, in pre-war Olymbos the reproduction and legitimization of the existing power structures rested on marriage arrangements (cf. Campbell 1964: 263–8; Vernier 1984; Kavouras 1992). Any cross-marriages between people of different social rank were censured by the *kanakaridhes* as immoral relations, and the fallen protagonists were punished by disinheritance. Such was the social domination of the *kanakaridhes* until the 1910s (when several rich emigrants returned to Olymbos) that nobody could challenge their hegemonic practices. Furthermore, the community culture reflected the ideology of the *kanakaridhes* by reproducing and legitimizing their traditional hegemony. In the 1920s, for the first time in Olymbian history, several emigrants without land but with plenty of money married *kanakaries* (plural for *kanakaria*). Orgis' marriage, however, is a different case, for Orgis was not a rich emigrant but an ordinary shepherd. Although a socially unequal arrangement, this marriage reflects the *rapprochement*, albeit occasional and selective, of the *kanakaridhes* with the shepherds (their long-standing socioeconomic adversaries and cultural partners in pre-Italian Olymbos) in a common front against the modernist innovators, the returned emigrants (Philippides 1973: 42–7; Halkias 1980: 82–91; Kavouras 1992).

In the period between the early 1920s and the 1940s, when Orgis' wedding occurred, several rich repatriated Olymbians, whose wealth arose from commerce or business but not land, became controversially prestigious figures. They acquired prestige by exploiting the coincidence of circumstances that emerged in connection with a series of new laws and policies implemented by the Italian administrators. In the years between 1924 and 1939 Olymbians suffered considerably when the Italians tightened their grip on the Dodecanese. In a concerted effort to Italianize the islanders, the Italian rulers used various strategies of cultural imperialism: they suppressed traditional authority by appointing local confidants as mayors; they attempted to control school teachers and Orthodox Christian priests through paying them

wages; they changed the teaching of language at school by substituting Italian for Greek; and they strictly censored all mail (Mihailidhis-Nouaros 1951: 9–18).

The fear of assimilation and the misery of a famine in the early 1940s caused the Karpathians much distress. To survive the famine the rich repatriated migrants sold their gold valuables for the barley and olive oil of the *kanakaridhes* on the local black market. The famine also had a significant side-effect. It enabled the *kanakaridhes* to declare that landownership was more valuable and, therefore, prestigious than the possession of any other commodity, including money and jewellery (Mihailidhis-Nouaros 1951: 15–18; Vernier 1977; Skiada 1991: 233–5). Hence, Orgis' marriage bridges temporally, and to a certain extent causally, the successive interrelations of power among the various social ranks in Olymbos in the period of the Italian Occupation. It is essential to note at this juncture that the body of folk knowledge pertaining to the sociocultural background of Orgis' marriage is available to everybody in the Olymbos community. It is this availability of community knowledge that Kalitsa exploits when she uses commonly known information for the purpose of contextualizing her social and narrative actions in readily intelligible terms. Allusion and irony based on community knowledge are Kalitsa's favourite rhetorical methods for manipulating the reflexivity of her audience.

THE SOCIAL PROCESS OF GENEALOGICAL STIGMATIZATION IN OLYMBOS: THE CASE OF MINAS

Minas is a literate Olymbian man aged 70 years. He is married and has several children. Although Olymbians praise Minas as an accomplished musician and exceptional poet–singer, they are usually ambivalent about him. To understand Minas as a controversial figure it is necessary to situate his social existence in a genealogical context of morality.

Minas carries a social stigma from his father, Annis, who was the first-born son of the prominent *kanakaris* Minatsis. In the 1910s, Minatsis disinherited Annis for marrying a girl of very low rank. Annis' wife, Ernia, was the offspring of a mixed marriage between an Olymbian man and a 'foreign' woman (*xeni*) from another Karpathian village. Ernia's parents were poor; both

her father and her maternal grandfather were fishermen. In the Olymbos of the *kanakaridhes*, fishing was considered as the socially lowest mode of making a living. Indeed, Annis' relatives strongly opposed this marriage because of Ernia's compounded low status as 'foreigner' and 'poor'. Minatsis' refusal to bless this wedding forced Annis to elope with his sweetheart and get married without his father's consent. Enraged by his son's disobedience, Minatsis disinherited him. Annis had no choice but to emigrate in order to ensure a living. In the period between the 1920s and the 1960s, he pursued a very successful career as a construction worker and foreman in various countries, including Morocco and Persia.[20] While Annis was abroad, Ernia raised her children alone in Olymbos with her husband's remittances. Minatsis did not retract from his decision to disinherit his son, and treated his daughter-in-law as both a cultural and a family stranger; he ignored her.

Minas grew up as an independent person, making a sharp contrast to most of his social peers in Olymbos. His civil manners and elegant Western attire differentiated him immediately from his conservative and traditionally dressed co-villagers. In the 1940s Minas acquired notoriety for his liberal conduct. As a member of a group of six young men who were the first-borns of successful emigrants, Minas systematically challenged the conservative ethos of the Olymbos culture (Kavouras 1991: 387–9). The liberal individualism of the young modernists, however, was not limited to practices reflecting opposition to conventional opinions, views and policies. It also extended to showing or revealing a spirit of giving freely and without limit. The young modernists exhibited such generosity by conspicuously spending a lot of money at local festivities. Although both *kanakaridhes* and emigrants were generous at community festivals, they used generosity for opposite sociopolitical ends: while the former aimed at reproducing and legitimizing their hegemonic power, the latter challenged the social domination of the *kanakaridhes*.

WHERE THE COMMUNITY REVEALS ITSELF: THE SETTINGS OF THE *GLENDI* AND THE *PAROUSIA*

Kalitsa's clash with Minas happened at a community dance in the early 1950s. This form of conflict is not typical of gender confrontations in Olymbos, as it does not reflect the conventional public

relations between men and women (Caraveli 1986; Skiada 1991: 316–49; cf. Campbell 1964: 278–91; Dubisch 1986). Olymbos is a strictly sex-segregated society. While men spend time with other men, mainly in the coffee-houses and at community gatherings, women socialize with other women at various work sites such as the house, the village gardens and the fields. In these gender-specific places men and women discuss separately from each other personal and community matters, gossip about co-villagers or engage in verbal confrontations with persons of their own gender.

A notable exception to the norm of sex segregation is the Olymbos dance. The dance is the last phase of a community ritual known as the *glendi*, a complex ceremony of drinking, playing of music, singing and dancing (Caraveli 1985; Kavouras 1991: 200–85). The *glendi* is basically a male affair; women participate actively only in the phase of the dance. Olymbians view this ritual *rapprochement* of the sexes as a process which is conducive to the formation of a community body; and they call the symbolic space of the dance the *parousia*, literally the presence or appearance (of the community), that is the place where the community 'reveals itself' (Kavouras 1991 and 1992).

The *parousia* inspires Olymbians with profound awe and reverence. In this setting, participants behave with extreme caution because their reputation is threatened with serious damage if their words and deeds are misconstrued by the dancers and onlookers. A heightened aspect of the *parousia* is experienced during the *glendi* phase of the slow dance (*kato horos*) in which the male dancers sing praises, or sometimes censures, of the girl dancers (Kavouras 1992). Olymbians revere the *kato horos* as the most brilliant facet of the *parousia* and consider it to be the culmination of the *glendi* process. The ritual estimation and ranking of a girl's personality in the dance involves the assessment of her social worth on the basis of the evaluation of her conduct in the – familiar for the community – framework of the girl's genealogical history of morality. All statements and arguments concerning the girl dancers are expressed in the form of extempore fifteen-syllable rhyming couplets known as the *mandinadhes* (Caraveli 1985; Kavouras 1991: 244–72; Kavouras 1992; cf. Herzfeld 1985). Such poetic exchanges are conducive to creating a community dialogue in which every male participant is expected (in the sense of being both entitled and obliged) to contribute to the assessing and evaluating process. Olymbians view the *glendi* as a salient symbol

of their culture. They distinguish those excelling in singing, playing of music and dancing from the ordinary participants by honorifically dubbing the former *meraklidhes* (Caraveli 1985: 264; Kavouras 1991: 217–22). For example, a clever and ingenious poet–singer is addressed as *meraklis* (singular of *meraklidhes*), and if he transcends a certain level of mental quickness and resourcefulness in singing he is called a *protomeraklis*, a principal *meraklis*. By being the motive force of the *glendi*, *meraklidhes* have the indisputable authority to restrain any participants from transgressing its rules or the moral boundaries of the *parousia* in general.

Let me return to Kalitsa and Minas. As a principal *meraklis* Minas has a normative jurisdiction to cast judgment openly on anybody's conduct in the *parousia*. On the other hand, Kalitsa is in a disadvantageous position as her reaction to Minas' offence is bounded not only by Minas' supreme authority but also by her gender, which constrains her to remain silent.

Now I come to the final phase of the analysis of Kalitsa's narrative text. With the help of the preceding information about the *trimistiro* and the clarifications concerning Kalitsa's allusions to aspects of the changing culture of Olymbos, I shall interpret Kalitsa's own account of her clash with Minas by examining step by step the various interrelationships between the intentional, the social and the historical contexts of her narration.[21]

INTERPRETING KALITSA'S NARRATIVE

By introducing herself as a *trimistiro* Kalitsa contradicts the prevailing view that this expression is insulting. However narrow the definition of herself as a *trimistiro* may be, it nonetheless contains ambiguous connotations – the characterization *arathimi* (irritable and irascible) does not suggest an ideal personality. Kalitsa aims at depicting herself as a paradoxical person in the particular sense of being impatient and of having an extremely excitable temperament. To avoid, however, the slur of irrationality she hastens to transcend the nuances of capriciousness in the expression *arathimi* by suggesting that her impatience and anger are not manifested without due or sufficient cause. In a very comprehensive statement about her intentionality as a *trimistiro* she portrays herself as a righteous person acting as an unofficial yet impartial 'justice' in Olymbos.

Kalitsa employs kinship to create a dramatic context of nar-

ration. She establishes a practically rational framework of action pertaining to her relations with her father Filipis and brother Orgis. This framework enables Kalitsa not only to defend her righteousness but also to account for herself as an honourable person. She saves her own morality by annihilating the surmise of social stigmatization, attributing her unmarried status to the death of her brother. Furthermore, she alludes to her honourable status by referring to the presence of her father and brother as principal *meraklidhes* at the *parousia*, implying that any maiden from Olymbos would be proud to be represented in the community dances by such esteemed poet–singers as Filipis and Orgis.

As indicated, Kalitsa uses her relationship to her brother to rationalize her paradoxical conduct. Yet seven years of mourning is too long a period of seclusion even for a conservative Olymbian woman like herself lamenting the death of her beloved brother. Thus, the excessive period of mourning reflects Kalitsa's tendency as a *trimistiro* to exaggerate, as well as to transcend, the local limits of social normality.

Kalitsa also uses the figure of her father. Filipis, as both an excuse and a catalyst for her own actions by depicting him as urging her to attend a community dance. Her purpose is evident; she aims at morally justifying her decision to go to the dance as a rational and socially appropriate choice, in spite of its apparently offensive character, as she was still in mourning. To transcend the social boundaries of mourning she strategically juxtaposes her position to that of her father, whose grief for the loss of his son, an esteemed poet–singer like himself, was considered to be the greatest possible in the community. Thus, she transfers the burden of responsibility for going to the dance from herself to her father, implicitly admitting Filipis' superior authority as her parent.

This is an allegorical tactic. Kalitsa's explicit deference to her father's authority alludes to her conformity with the customs and morals of her community. She therefore employs this stratagem to lead her audience to accept her contention that since she demonstrated her reverence for the Olymbos culture by showing deference to her father she should be viewed as an irreproachable figure.

Let me now examine the dance event and its significance for Kalitsa's rhetorical strategizing. In her narrative she mentions in passing that the community dance she attended was held on Carnival Sunday. She knows, of course, that this particular dance

is not an ordinary feast. In pre-World War II Olymbos the end of Carnival also marked the end of the wedding season, and the Carnival Sunday dance was the last opportunity Olymbians had before Lent to celebrate a marriage or announce a wedding arrangement. Kalitsa elaborates the dramatic framework of her social and narrative action by juxtaposing two apparently incompatible situations: the death of her brother and the Carnival Sunday dance. While Orgis' death symbolizes Kalitsa's social death as a mature unmarried woman, the Carnival Sunday dance is a glorification of marriage. Once again, she resorts to hyperbole to transform ordinary interactions into archetypal contradictions.

To avoid any slurs on her social reputation Kalitsa went to the dance dressed all in black. Her clothing conveyed a non-verbal message: 'I'm here only as an onlooker, not as an active participant.' Yet, as any observer might contend, her appearance was so extremely absurd – an apparition – especially in the context of the dance, that it made her look ridiculous and pitiable. In her narrative, however, she handles this unfavourable situation strategically. While she admits to being criticized in the dance, she hastens to annihilate the slurring implications of the criticism by accounting for it as a socially isolated, individual reaction. She refers to the male dancers by dividing them into a large majority honouring her through singing praises for her niece and only one person, Minas, who ridicules her. In portraying Minas, Kalitsa reveals how a *trimistiro* uses language to transform social experience into critical knowledge. She begins by introducing him not only as a principal poet–singer but also as her relative. By this strategic move she alludes to Minas as a normatively ideal guardian to herself in the *parousia*, substituting in this role her absent father and brother. In depicting her adversary in socially ideal terms she intends not to praise him, but instead to lead her audience to detach themselves from Minas' actual conduct in the dance by situating his behaviour and personality in an archetypal context of morality. By means of this perspectival shift, Kalitsa aims at deflecting the audience's attention from Minas' own interpretation of the situation, which reflects not only his own views but, to some extent, also the opinion of the community of participants in the Carnival Sunday dance.[22] Therefore she individualizes the incident by pre-empting any interpretations based on Minas' actual context of action, by re-contextualizing him as an ideal character. This conceptual transformation enables Kalitsa not only to avoid

stigmatization, but also to act as a community critic casting judgment on the impending moral crime in an exemplary manner.

Kalitsa accounts for Minas' paradoxical behaviour by resorting to his genealogical history. This method of action is not a rhetorical device contrived by Kalitsa, but a customary tactic employed by any adult Olympian confronting an unexpected social situation. It is generally believed that a person's morality depends on the morality of his/her family, and that a person's moral traits are not culturally acquired but hereditary. This framework enables Olymbians to rationalize a person's behaviour in terms of his/her genealogical history. In any event, the thrust of this kind of hereditary determinism is not sociobiological but symbolic. In the kin-based society of Olymbos those persons who attain the ideal personality of a character are singled out not as socially isolated individuals but as paradigmatic figures of their lineages (cf. Campbell 1964: 274–97; MacIntyre 1984: 27–9).

Let me now return to the conflict between Kalitsa and Minas. Kalitsa begins her account of this event by portraying herself as equal in ruthlessness to Minas, juxtaposing her verbal severity to his physical ferocity: she dishonours him for drenching her at the *parousia*. Kalitsa, however, does not handle the incident as a personal confrontation between herself and Minas. She contends that Minas' behaviour is allegorical and that his target is not simply herself or her family but something far more significant. Her judgment of Minas is neither emotivist nor criterionless, but rests on a practical rationality shared by everybody in the audience. Minas is known to the community not only as a celebrated poet–singer, but also as a notorious allegorist who has ridiculed the families of certain girls through mocking the latter in the dance.

Kalitsa's sole purpose is to shame Minas.[23] She is, of course, aware of the extreme difficulty of her task, because Minas as a principal *meraklis* has absolute authority at the *parousia* of the *glendi*. Therefore, her strategy is to show that Minas is ultimately a vicious man who uses his poetic talents in a self-serving way. To prove this contention she shows that Minas, instead of leading the *glendi* participants to experience a sense of their community as he ought to be doing were he an authentic *meraklis*, deceives them by misleading everybody into forming wrong opinions about herself and her family as being strange people. Since she cannot confront Minas in his own context of action, she fights him in the archetypal context of genealogical traditions. In contrast to Minas' non-verbal

strategy of ridicule, Kalitsa uses explicitly offensive language to punish her adversary in an exemplary manner. In essence, Kalitsa reverses Minas' rhetorical strategy and turns it against him: while Minas mocks Kalitsa with the intention of ridiculing her family, Kalitsa shames Minas by disgracing his.

By juxtaposing Minas' contradictory personae as ideal social character and as base offender Kalitsa implicitly poses a rhetorical question to her audience: how could such a normatively esteemed person as Minas commit such an unethical act? However, she does not let her audience form an independent opinion about the event, but leads them instead to admit that Minas is a deceitful character, justifying her judgment on the common knowledge that Minas' family was socially stigmatized. She expresses this association powerfully by addressing Minas twice as 'Kostara', (the vocative case of 'Kostaras'), a derogatory augmentative of Minas' maternal grandfather's Christian name, Kostis. By this tactical move she reminds everybody in the audience that Minas is not an authentic Olymbian but the offspring of a mixed marriage. This reminder aims at suggesting that, despite his admittedly great talents in singing, Minas should not be allowed to pass judgment on the personal or family matters of other Olymbians as he is not, properly speaking, a member of the Olymbian community.

This is a well-calculated move. In associating Minas with his maternal grandfather, Kalitsa has a twofold purpose. The explicit first aim has been accounted for already: she wants to shame Minas by showing that he is not an authentic Olymbian. To understand the implicit second target one should begin by noting that Kalitsa omits to mention in her narrative the conflict between Minas' father, Annis, and his father, Minatsis, over Annis' marriage. That Kalitsa refrains from mentioning Annis' family conflict does not mean that her audience will not make this association. In fact, this is precisely what she expects them to do; and in order to facilitate this line of reasoning she ends her offensive characterizations of Minas with the statement: 'Like your *yenia* (lineage), you're all worthless.'

At this juncture Kalitsa reveals herself as an ingenious mythopoeist. She re-contextualizes the figures of Minas and herself by portraying them as archetypal embodiments of two antagonistic sociocultural modalities. She suggests that her confrontation with Minas reflects the juxtaposition of the traditional conservatism of the *kanakaridhes* with the liberal individualism of the emigrants.

To support this view she explicitly focuses on Minas' genealogical image: In leading her audience to focus on Minas' family in her own specific context of examination, she knows that two figures will be singled out for consideration: the prominent *kanakaris* Minatsis and his son, the successful emigrant Annis. At this phase of her narration, Kalitsa rhetorically manipulates the coincidence of circumstances concerning Minas' family tensions by reducing all contexts into one: the conflict between the landowners and the emigrants. The father–first son relationship between Minatsis and Annis qualifies it as the strongest possible bond in the kin-based society of Olymbos, alluding also to the hegemony of the *kanakaridhes*. However, it is also generally known that Annis' marriage destroyed this relationship, turning it into a life-long separation. What Kalitsa implies therefore is that the separation of Minas' family should be considered as a symptom of the fragmentation of the Olymbos community resulting from the prevalence of the emigrants over the *kanakaridhes*.

In the early 1950s (when Kalitsa's clash with Minas happened) Olymbians knew that the hegemony of the *kanakaridhes* was irrevocably over. However, since the socioeconomic infrastructure of Karpathos did not change significantly until the early 1970s, any liberties taken by the repatriated emigrants and their descendants were censured by the community (Vernier 1977; Karagheorghi-Halkia 1981; Kavouras 1992). While Olymbians supported the new rationality, which was categorically against the oligarchic authority of the *kanakaridhes*, they strongly opposed any attempt at substituting the modernist idea of progress for their traditional way of life. In the 1950s Olymbians were already concerned about losing their cultural identity; and they expressed their anxieties by attributing the loss of their customs to the alienating influence of the adoption of foreign practices.

Kalitsa's strategy now becomes clear. She intends to represent the incident in the dance as a timely expression of the cultural crisis in Olymbos. By portraying Minas' genealogical history as representing the conflict between authentic and non-authentic existence in Olymbos, Kalitsa portrays Minas as an archetypal figure embodying the emotivist ethos of liberal individualism. One should not forget, however, that the time in which the incident occurred and the time of the narration are only two moments in Kalitsa's life separated by a temporal interval of about forty years. They are, however, significant instances because it is the weaving-

together of these two fragments of Kalitsa's personal history that defines the main thrust of her social and narrative action.

Kalitsa sends to her community audience an allusive yet clear message: Minas embodies the alienating force threatening contemporary Olymbos with destruction. Once this connection is established Kalitsa's own rationalization of the incident evolves unimpeded. Her view is that in soaking her at the *parousia* Minas intended not simply to mock herself and her family, but rather to ridicule the traditional culture of Olymbos. By defining Minas' offence to herself as an inconceivable hubris against the community Kalitsa closes the hermeneutic circle by explaining to her audience that this shameless act is the rightful product of the offender's inauthentic existence.

The connotations of Kalitsa's allusions to Minas' genealogical history in the context of the cultural crisis in Olymbos were readily understood by everybody in the audience; and they could not be refuted. Minas had no choice but to leave the *parousia* utterly dishonoured.

REFLEXIVITY AND MORAL JUDGMENT AS VEHICLES FOR SOCIAL CRITICISM

The *trimistira* are special characters. Although they do not embody any particular values and ideas of morality, they express social criticism through judging the moral conduct of their peers. The *trimistira* evaluate and assess publicly any significant actions and ideas of other community members by demonstrating how specific persons inhabit particular moral characters. This tactic enables them to situate the behaviour and personalities of the adjudged figures in a community context in which the perception of one's genealogical background is critical. To be able to act as arbiters of justice in the community the *trimistira* must persuade their audiences that they are morally irreproachable.

The *trimistira* may not be characters *in themselves*, but their projected righteousness gives them the community pretext for using the symbolic space of moral characters to launch their social criticism. They are not, however, entirely free to act as they like, as they must respect not only the community standards of morality but also be consistent in – to use Barbara Myerhoff's phrase (Bruner 1986: 12) – 'authoring themselves' as critical social characters through their punitive narratives. Hence, the moral–

characterological restraints that the *trimistira* enforce upon their own behaviour and personalities may appear to come from the outside social world but are actually socially legitimized projections of their own conscience. Therefore the *trimistira* do not simply inhabit but create their moral universes. In the resulting cosmological formations the community symbolizes the conscience of the *trimistiro*. This arrangement explains why the *trimistira* define the moral boundaries of their social and narrative action in terms of certain community standards of morality, which they specifically and concretely articulate before their audiences. The symbolic relationship between community and conscience implies that the *trimistira* are both character-constituted and character-constitutive social actors.

As characters of social criticism the *trimistira* employ a threefold framework of action. First, they defend their proclaimed righteousness by affirming their morally consistent behaviour and personality. Second, they transcend the moral boundaries of personal or family dispute by rendering an account of their conflict with their adversaries in socially archetypal terms. And, third, they publicly censure those who dispute their integrity by manifesting the latter's injustice as a cultural symptom of lower social existence.

The *trimistira* are strategists. They manipulate their audiences by rhetorically persuading them to believe in their own interpretation of a social situation. They construct their critical narratives with a rhetorical coherence that enables them, under the pretext of logical consistency, to define the community context of interpretation. Their rhetoric of morality is based on their ability to de-contextualize and then re-contextualize community inferences concerning individual activity. By critically contextualizing referential evidence the rhetorical strategists manipulate the reflexivity of their audiences through broadening the latter's perceptual horizons. This is exemplified by any social situation involving negotiations between families, as for instance a wedding arrangement. Although Olymbians feel ambivalence as to whether they should let any *trimistira* interfere in the wedding negotiations, they attribute any rapid and irrevocable influence of the outcome to the catalytic interpretation of the genealogical histories of the prospective bride and groom provided by any concerned *trimistira*.

As characters of social criticism the *trimistira* transcend the

cultural boundaries of gender distinction. In the strongly sex-segregated society of Olymbos the female *trimistira* are just as powerful as the male ones. This aspect of structural transcendence of institutionalized gender distinctions reflects the tradition-bound nature of Olymbos culture. Moreover, that the female *trimistiro* Kalitsa must 'lower herself' by using vituperation to confront the poet–singer Minas should be interpreted not as a sign of her inability as a woman to compete with a man in poetry, but rather as a characteristic idiom of any *trimistiro*. Criticalness, like harshness, defines the whole process of judging by a *trimistiro*, involving not only the judgment but also the methods used in casting it.

In a recent volume on the 'anthropology of experience', the editor, Edward Bruner (1986: 5–6), epitomized the contributors' views by arguing that human beings transcend the limitations of individual experience through interpreting expressions. He defines this transcendence as constituting a hermeneutic circle, a process whereby 'experience structures expressions and expressions structure experience'. Although, as Bruner contends, every human being is engaged in this hermeneutic process, such categories of persons as the *trimistira* of Olymbos manipulate this faculty by transforming social experience into critical knowledge through everyday language; and they employ the emergent context of knowledge as a reflexive vehicle for their social criticism. The practice of rhetorical strategizing should not lead one to consider the *trimistira* in dramaturgical terms, as being socially isolated, individual performers of identity roles. By manipulating the hermeneutic circle the *trimistira* are actually engaged in a self-reflexive process of informing and thereby defining a tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive mode of being in the world. Far from being mere performers of criterionless judgment, the *trimistira* stand out as self-reflexive critics, being the socially concrete, embodied manifestations of cultural resistance to alienation.

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NOTES

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1 Karpathos is the second largest island of the Dodecanese, with a population of about 5,000 permanent residents and a great diaspora. It is estimated that there are about 3,500 Olymbians of whom only 600 live in Karpathos and the rest are in Baltimore, Rhodes and Piraeus. In the mid 1930s the population of Olymbos reached the peak of 2,200, the largest ever in Karpathos since 1890 (Philippides 1973: 30–3; Aghapitidis 1987: 165–70; National Greek Census).

2 In the mid 1930s the constables of Karpathos were Italian nationals, as the Dodecanese were under Italian rule from 1912 until 1943.

3 I conducted fieldwork in Karpathos between 1986 and 1989. The results of that research appear in my doctoral dissertation (1991) and in an article on the Olymbos dance (1992).

4 There are no references to the concept of *trimistiro* in ethnographic writings about Greece or in folklore studies about Karpathos (Kamilakis 1979). However, the anthropological literature on honour and shame offers a conceptual, although analytically problematic, framework for considering morality (which is the *trimistiro*'s arena of criticism) from a sociocultural perspective (Campbell 1964; Herzfeld 1980; Gilmore 1987).

5 By traditional I mean customary and conventional, referring to certain aspects of the Olymbos culture which acquired hegemonic significance in the period between the early 1880s and late 1940s (Kavouras 1991: 375–412). For a critical discussion of the usages of 'tradition' and 'traditional' in Olymbos see Kavouras (1992).

6 Goffman's work is the forerunner of 'practice' approaches in sociology (Rossi 1983: 309–24) and anthropology (Ortner 1984). Goffman explores the constitutive and situational aspects of social interaction and meaning by drawing on symbolic interactionism, sociological phenomenology and ethnomethodology (1959; 1969; 1971; 1974).

7 I use the word metaphor from a poetic and rhetorical perspective. My purpose in using metaphor in that sense is not to argue that reflexivity

is embedded in language but to emphasize the *trimistiro*'s manipulation of social experience through discourse. For cognitive and symbolic approaches to metaphor as a cultural trope see Fernandez (1991).

8 I use discourse as a cover term meaning any kind of active and framed verbal communication. In dealing with the discursive activities of the *trimistiro* as 'communicative events' (Hymes 1974: 4), I explore the performative strategies employed by the *trimistiro* in his or her attempt to render any such event in socially meaningful terms. Despite their discursive character, such strategies are processes of social interaction cutting across communciative (verbal or not), political and cultural boundaries (Finnegan 1992: 42–4).

9 By narrative I mean any temporally framed linguistic expression, especially the practice of relating stories whether they are anecdotal in nature or more meticulous in their attention to consecutive details. It follows that, thus defined, narrative is a special form of discourse. Also, to emphasize the individual artistry and experience of a narrator I refer to his or her narratives as personal ones.

10 The 'ethnography of speaking' and its specific developments such as discourse analysis, performance theory and ethnopoetics offer valuable insights into the status of narrative in relation to social experience and reflexivity (Finnegan 1992: 42–5).

11 By personal history MacIntyre means the narratives people construct of their intentions, ideas and actions from an evaluative perspective as successes and failures in their lifetime (1984: 3).

12 The vocative case of Kostaras.

13 A makeshift fishing rod made of cane.

14 By critical knowledge I mean any process of understanding which is based on the exercise of social-through-moral judgment upon matters of crucial significance to the persons involved.

15 By folk knowledge I mean any sum of information that is handed down from generation to generation in a particular society; especially, any 'orally transmitted tradition' (Finnegan 1992: 11–13). Therefore, I examine critical knowledge (which by definition is based on social experience) as a special form of folk knowledge encountered in tradition-bound cultures. Hence, in my anthropological analysis of the *trimistiro*, I explore the processes and situations mediated by this figure whereby folk knowledge becomes the critical one and vice versa.

16 I use Gramsci's (1971: 12–14) concept of hegemony to account for culture as a homogenizing process, legitimizing and reproducing socio-political inequality.

17 The contextual discernment between the textual realities of personal history and autobiography helps to examine any particular narrative at a referential, reflexive and self-reflexive level of analysis.

18 Women are the main agents of death rituals in Olymbos. The cultural space of death enables women to use poetry and rhetoric in the form of lamentations to express social criticism (Caraveli 1986; Kavouras 1991: 100–37; see also Seremetakis 1991).

19 Although Annis' father's Christian name was Minas, I shall refer to

him as Minatsis, using this dialectical derivative so as to distinguish old Minas from his grandson Minas, the main figure in Kalitsa's narrative.

20 The history of migration in Olymbos is divided into three phases, seasonal, long-term and permanent, each involving a distinct pattern of expatriation with respect to the migrants' duration of stay abroad (Philippides 1973: 34–6; Kavouras 1991: 52–66).

21 It would be quite illuminating to juxtapose Kalitsa's narrative with the accounts given of the same event by other Olymbians. I shall not attempt such a comparison, however, since my main focus in this chapter is the constructive strategies used by a *trimistiro* in expressing social criticism.

22 My analysis of Kalitsa's narrative tactics raises conceptual as well as epistemological issues regarding the degree of subjective or objective understanding of Olymbians and non-native anthropologists have of the methods of procedure used by the *trimistira* in situations of social criticism. To avoid falling into an analytical double-bind I have taken a practice-based approach (Ortner 1984) instead of a purely interpretive one. Following this view I have reached the conclusion that Kalitsa's strategies are, despite their seemingly impulsive character, deliberate practices.

23 Ridicule was the customary form of paradigmatic punishment in pre-war Olymbos. Although the Italian authorities endeavored to substitute judicial law for customary punishment, they did not succeed in abolishing the shaming practice of ridicule (Konsolas 1963: 264; Kavouras 1991: 339–74).

24 A consistent theme in the folk poetry of Olymbians is the experience of *xenitia* (exile, expatriation), the estrangement not only from one's geographical home but one's very being (Kavouras 1991).

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