Keith Thor Carlson, Kristina Fagan, and Natalia Khanenko-Friesen, eds. ***Orality and Literacy: Reflections Across Disciplines*****.** Toronto: Toronto University Press, 2011. iv, 336 pp. Map of Place Names. Contributors' List. Bibliographical and Other Notes. Index. $65.00, cloth.

This volume joins an impressive list of works on the theme "orality and literacy." But both the incentive for writing such a book and the scope of covered domains differ from previous works. The present work is the result of a three-day multi-disciplinary symposium in October 2004, co-hosted by the Prairie Centre for the Study of Ukrainian Heritage, St Thomas More College, the Humanities Research Unit, the Department of History, and the Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan. The symposium brought together twelve scholars from different disciplines—anthropology, folklore, history, literature, and sociology—engaged in discussing theoretical issues in the orality-literacy relation in a wide range of geographical areas. It may suffice here to cite some of the selected place names provided in the world map that is located at the beginning of the volume (ii): Kitimat, Okanagan, Stó:lō Territory, Chipman, Ft. McLeod, Batoche, Winnipeg, Tyendinaga Mohawk Reserve, Frobisher Bay (all Canada); Jamaica; Madrid; London (England); Nebyliv, Lviv, Kharkiv (Ukraine); Athens; Kat River Valley (South Africa); Israel; Guodian, Hubei Province (China); and Bulacan and Manila (Philippines). One of these places, Batoche, the destination of an excursion by the group, provided a practical example for the central theoretical issue discussed by protagonists and antagonists, that is, the assumption that "oral cultures and written cultures were essentially, inherently, and universally different, both psychologically and culturally" (6).

The group first visited the Batoche Cemetery after enjoying a traditional Métis feast at the home of Maria Campbell, best known as the author of *Halfbreed* (1973). There they were treated to an account of the story of the Battle of Batoche as related by a Métis scholar who combined what she had learnt both orally from her family and from archival records. They then proceeded to the Batoche National Historic Site where they were treated to the "government version" of the story, a version very different from what they had heard at Maria's house. This account serves the editors as a convenient transition to a discussion of the basic schools of viewing orality and literacy, a discussion that is most helpful to the non-specialized reader of this volume. This introductory chapter entitled "Reading and Listening at Batoche" (3–17) ends with a brief outline of every one of the ensuing ten chapters by the three editors of the volume: Keith Thor Carlson, a professor in the Department of History and the director of the Interdisciplinary Centre for Culture and Creativity at the University of

Saskatchewan; Kristina Fagan, an associate professor in the Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan; and Natalia Khanenko-Friesen, an associate professor of anthropology in the Department of Religion and Culture at St Thomas More College, University of Saskatchewan. These three editors also figure as chapter authors, covering diverse topics from "Canadian Aboriginal Communities and authors to Soviet women, ancient Chinese autocrats, medieval magic, Plato, Ukrainian immigrants, Filipino peasant romantic verse, and South African Khoikhoi tribesmen" (10).

The ten chapters are grouped thematically into "Questioning Truths" (Part One); "Writing It Down" (Part Two); "Going Public" (Part Three); "Subverting Authority" (Part Four); and "Uncovering Voices" (Part Five). Each part consists of two chapters. Chapter 7 with its 17 pages, is the shortest in the volume, while chapter 4 is the longest at 40 pages. The other eight chapters range from 19 to 36 pages in length.

All of the authors, in one way or another, address the question of the alleged supremacy of literacy over orality in human communication and deny such an assertion by pointing out that the relationship between the two is much more complex than has been hitherto assumed.

Thus, in Part One, J. Edward Chamberlain, University Professor of English and Comparative Literature at the University of Toronto, concentrates on the forms of expression in, among others, Khoikhoi (Hottentot) stories "that give us a sense of being right there with the speaker, and with his or her subject... even though we are not" (39). In a direct denial of the implied temporal progression from orality to literacy, Carlson describes how the Salish people believe that literacy antedated orality in their culture and was later stolen from them.

In Part Two, Twyla Gibson, an assistant professor of culture and technology at the Faculty of Information Studies and a senior fellow at the McLuhan Program at the University of Toronto, describes how Plato continued the Socratian tradition of preferring the spoken word to the written expression, in this case by using the "ring composition," that is, an oral device, and his works can thus be viewed as confirmation that orality and literacy need not be either mutually exclusive or qualitatively distinct. Susan Gingell, a professor in the Department of English at the University of Saskatchewan, presents an interesting and insightful literary/socio-cultural analysis of two short stories by an Inuit artist and a Mohawk author, respectively. Her chapter is perhaps the most convincing rebuttal of the assumed orality-to-literacy linearity. Like the ring-composition analysis in Plato in Gibson's chapter, there is ample use of the devices of oral tales, such as repetition, parallelisms, and additive syntax in the otherwise textualized stories of these two First Nations writers.

In a well-documented essay in Part Three, Fagan tackles the paradoxical problem of Aboriginal (First Nations) writers preferring, on the one hand, the written text for revealing private information to conveying such information aloud, such as Cherokee writer Thomas King in *The Truth About Stories: A Native Narrative* (2003); and obeying, on the other hand, "privacy protocols" (170) when it comes to conveying such information in written texts, such as Manitoban Cree writer Tomson Highway in *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998). The author concludes that the "move to the written word is not, of course, simply a switch to another form (as it can sometimes seem in binarized descriptions of the oral and literate)" (159). This non-binary relation between orality and literacy is also noted by Khanenko-Friesen in the development of oral histories by Ukrainian immigrants to Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In these stories many of the narrative features (traditional speech patterning and repetition) have been preserved in their print textualizations. In addition, similar to the private stories of Aboriginal literature, the Ukrainian-Canadian family history books, local histories, and the Ukrainian-Canadian museums obey certain protocols concerning family or substance abuse, racial prejudices, and denominational agreements "that were present in the earlier days of Ukrainian settlement in Canada" (192).

In Part Four, Gary Arbuckle, an independent scholar residing in Vancouver, BC, concludes that orality in the book of *Laozi* (with its putative author by that name in China in the sixth century BCE [*lao* = "old"; *zi* = "master"]), may have been a modality or "stage setting" deliberately used by an author who came "from a highly literate, text-centric background and was soaked in the literary civilization of his time" (211). The same notion of "modality" is pursued by Frank Klaassen, an associate professor of history and director of the Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance Studies program at the University of Saskatchewan. The author demonstrates that the intellectual culture engaged in the production of ritual magic texts favoured the ambiguous or unstable features of the written word thus running counter to the rationalizing or standardizing process assumed for literacy. Weighing in on the orality-literacy linearity debate, Klaassen concludes that "it may be useful to regard the varieties of approaches to texts, and in fact literacy and orality themselves, as a set of modalities..." (235).

Finally, in Part Five, Reynaldo Ileto, professor of history and coordinator of the Southeast Asian Studies Program, National University of Singapore, and Oksana Kis, a Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Ethnology, National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine (Lviv), and a Director of the Lviv Research Centre "Women and Society" (NGO), tackle problems in the applicability and challenges of conventional oral historical and contemporary methods in their respective domains, that is, the function of a

Tagalog *awit* (a Filipino oral romance) in the young nation's war (1899—1902) with the United States; and the post-Soviet Ukraine's first women's oral history project, especially with regard to "protocol," that is, what is to be told and not to be told (see also Part Three above).

Limits of space and scope will not allow us to expand the findings of this volume to the domain of linguistics represented only tangentially by the experts assembled (specifically, in the chapters on anthropology, literature, and folklore). Suffice it to say here that linguists like myself working in the domain of the maintenance and revitalization of minority languages can take consolation from the fact that their primarily oral history, for example, of the First Nations languages and of Doukhobor Russian in Canada, or of Lower Sorbian in Germany, is no reason to view such languages as not being worthy of being maintained and/or being brought back to life.

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