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Veda and Vedic Literature

Select Papers

Sanskrit Studies Centre, Silpakorn University, Bangkok, Thailand

16th WSC Volume - 4

Veda and Vedic Literature

Select Papers from the Panel
on
“Veda and Vedic Literature”
at
the 16th World Sanskrit Conference
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Sanskrit Studies Centre,
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Edited by
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Preface

The Veda Section was one of the most active of the 16th World Sanskrit Conference sections, with a total of 34 accepted contributions in the General Sessions, of which 29 were presented. In addition, the Veda Section for the first time hosted a special Panel on “Vrātya culture in Vedic sources”. Presenters came from Australia, Belgium, Canada, Croatia, France, Germany, India, Japan, Poland, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States, with the largest contingent (12) being from India, followed by Japan (7) and the United States (7).

The success of the Conference and of the Veda Section is attributable to the excellent work of the Organizing Committee, especially of Dr. Amarjiva Lochan who time and again sprang into action to smooth out any problems that would arise, as well as of my fellow Convenors of the Veda Section, Professor Shrikant Bahulkar and Dr. Bhagyalata Pataskar. The Panel on “Vrātya culture in Vedic sources”, specifically, would not have been possible without the outstanding work of Dr. Tiziana Pontillo and Dr. Moreno Dore, from the proposal stage to the final editing of the proceedings.

The present volume contains select papers by authors who presented their contributions at the Conference. Regretfully, several authors had committed to publishing their contributions elsewhere or were not able to meet the final submission deadline, and their papers had to be omitted. Even so, the resulting volume represents a broad cross-section of the issues and topics that were presented and discussed at the Conference.

Publication of this volume and of the companion volume on “Vrātya culture in Vedic sources” has been made possible by a grant from the Government of India, which is hereby gratefully acknowledged.

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Exploring “impossible authors”

Caley Charles Smith
Harvard University

Introduction

The Vedas are believed to be *apauruṣeya* 'authorless', having not been composed but revealed to the human ṛṣis and kavis of the late 2nd millennium BCE Panjab. Are these ṛṣis the historical authors of the poems of the Ṛgveda? The idea that the Vedas are *apauruṣeya* is attested from a much later period than the composition and redaction of the texts. In making no regional exceptions for anachronisms, however, it is also the case that the Western idea of the author post-dates the text, and that it is indebted to a particular history of its own. The hunt for the “Vedic authors” can only be meaningful in the proper context of a Veda-internal conception of authorship. Put another way, what do Vedic texts task to the ṛṣi? What does a ṛṣi actually do and why is he important? Without careful consideration of how Vedic poetic material conceives of the process of text creation, we are forced to import our own idea of what an author is along with an imported relationship to the text. I examine a hymn in which Indra is the ṛṣi, abnegating historical authorship. I argue that performance of such a hymn is geared towards producing the presence of Indra. In conclusion, I find that Indra, the ṛṣi, is primarily conceived of as the historical speaker of his verses, rather than as author.

Rhetorical representation of performance

We live very different lives from the composers of the Vedic period, in no small part because of our casual intimacy with the book, in which content can exist on a page through the formal apparatus of prose on paper. Modern ideas of authorship are shaped by how content is delivered, by the particularities of the technology of documentation. In Vedic poetics, the idea of the author is also contoured by how content is delivered. The *sūktas*, 'well spoken' hymns, were memorized, orally transmitted, and performed in agonistic public events. The ritual details of the performance contemporaneous to the composition of the *sūktas* of the Ṛgveda are unknown, but a close examination reveals a rhetorical representation of the present moment of utterance. Whatever mythological inner narrative a

given hymn contains, it also contains an outer narrative frame situated at the singing of the song. That much is clear from the numerous instances in which Vedic hymns are self-referential, for the hymn frequently wishes for the success of the poem itself.

To better understand that performative context, and thus what exactly a ṛṣi is, we can look to this narrative of present performance, not as reality but as a Vedic representation of reality. I examine two rhetorical operations which shape this representation of reality: mimesis and metalepsis. I demonstrate that the Vedic ṛṣi is not portrayed as a creator who exists outside of his creation, but is better conceived of as a “speaker identity” who, as narrator, anchors the embedded and embedding narratives of the poem. This “speaker identity” houses the speech act, it is inseparable from the speech act, and this identity is manifest in re-performance.

This is of course radically different from the Western conception of authorship, and therefore perhaps should be considered a different kind of study altogether. Even if “speakership” is very different from authorship, it is a worthy comparandum. While both are different species of attribution, the pervasiveness of “historical authorship” as a universal category in philology rather than a product of its own path-dependent history demands its occasional disruption.

Mimesis and metalepsis

Mimesis and metalepsis can tell us a lot about how important speaker identity is to the Vedic hymn. Mimesis is when the narrator speaks in 1st person as the character in a narration, it is a kind of dramatic and vivid impersonation.¹ In Vedic poetics, mimesis is not uncommon. While the “narrative frame” of 4.26.1 for example is quite minimal, it showcases the assumption of multiple identities, multiple voices, manifest in recitation:

¹ Genette (1980: 162): ‘As we know, Plato contrasts two narrative modes, according to whether the poet “himself is the speaker and does not even attempt to suggest to us that anyone but himself is speaking” (this is what Plato calls pure narrative), or whether, on the other hand, the poet “delivers a speech as if he were someone else” (as if he were such-and-such a character), if we are dealing with spoken words (this is what Plato properly calls imitation, or mimesis).’

*ahám mánur abhavaṃ sūriyaś ca / ahám kakṣīvāñ ṛṣir asmi vípraḥ /
 ahám kútsam ārjuneyám ní ṛñje / ahám kavír usánā páśyatā mā // (RV 4.26.1)²*
 I became Manu and Sūrya; I am Kakṣīvāns the inspired ṛṣi; I direct
 myself down to Kutsa Ārjuneya; I am the poet Uśánā: look at me!³

Metalepsis, on the other hand, is a change in the level of narration, a kind of breaking of the narrative frame.⁴ This frame breaking is sometimes extremely subtle.⁵ Notice that pāda d of RV 4.26.1 closes with *páśyatā mā* 'look at me!' This imperative does not belong in the narrative frame of pāda a, b, or even c which gives us the most action: Indra sending himself down to Kutsa. What I am suggesting is two discreet diegetic frames are being rhetorically constructed in this verse. One frame is set in the past and is occupied by characters like Manu, Kakṣīvāns, Indra, and Kutsa. This frame is embedded in a second frame which is set in the present at a public performance, at the latest recitation. It is this frame which is being broken open, brought to the fore, and made visible when the speaker of the embedded frame says *páśyatā mā* 'look at me!'

This is metalepsis, and subtly it traces a momentary shift from an embedded level of narration to an outer narrative frame. What is accomplished by this breach? In *ahám kavír usánā páśyatā mā* we have a moment where Kavi Uśánā, a figure from the primordial past, is suddenly present and commands anyone currently listening to this pāda to see him, to see that this present speaker is indeed the legendary Kavi Uśánā who has stepped out of the past into the present.

Patton examines the reception in Sanskrit literature of the figure of Śaunaka to whom Śaḍguruśiṣya in his Vedārthadīpika attributes the Bṛhaddevatā, the Ṛgvidhāna, a pratiśākhya of the Ṛgveda, and six Anukramaṇīs. What she demonstrates is a constellation of features associated with the figure of Śaunaka, which are persistently redeployed throughout the texts of this

² Text of the Ṛgveda is taken from van Nooten and Holland 1994.

³ All translations are mine except where otherwise noted.

⁴ Genette (1980: 234): 'The transition from one narrative level to another can in principle be achieved only by the narrating, the act that consists precisely of introducing into one situation, by means of discourse, the knowledge of another situation.'

⁵ I particularly like the example from Balzac used in Genette 1980: 235: "While the venerable churchman climbs the ramps of Angoulême, it is not useless to explain..." as if the narrating were contemporaneous with the story and had to fill up the latter's dead spaces.'

period. Patton (2010: 114) asks 'How might we think through Śaunaka about the larger question of the nature of "authorship" more broadly in Indian traditions?' She notes that for Nana Kale, a devotee of teachings attributed to Śaunaka, 'Śaunaka had a particular character, an orientation, a set of intellectual and aesthetic commitments.' She situates her examination of character and authorship alongside that of Sara McClintock and Steven Lindquist who examine, respectively, the Buddha and Yājñavalkya as literary characters to whom authorship is attributed.

Examining authors as literary characters and attribution as a rhetorical device has proven to be an insightful way of examining texts of the late Vedic period. The situation in the Ṛgveda, however, is somewhat different from the later period. Attribution in the Ṛgveda is explicit in the anukramaṇīs, but the Ṛgveda itself depends greatly on its informed audience. The Anukramaṇīs are late Vedic paratexts which index information about much earlier Vedic texts. The Ārṣānukramaṇī attributes ṛc (verses) to ṛṣis. The other Anukramaṇīs index deity, chapter location, and meter. In other words, they detail formal features of the texts. The question here is what is being attributed? Is the attribution the Ārṣānukramaṇī provides for the Ṛgveda the same phenomenon as when Ṣaḍguruśiṣya attributes the Ārṣānukramaṇī to Śaunaka? It may seem unproblematic for Śaunaka to be the composer of the Ārṣānukramaṇī, but consider the relationship of Yājñavalkya to the Śuklayajurveda. The text portrays him as explaining that he was taught these mantras by the Sun. The veracity of Yājñavalkya's claim is irrelevant. For even were we to be skeptical, Yājñavalkya appears as a character in the Śuklayajurveda mediating our experience of the text. Perhaps this is helpful in contextualizing what the Ārṣānukramaṇī is attributing to Dīrghatamas or Vasiṣṭha, but what about a hymn whose ṛṣi is Indra? Instances of text attribution to non-human figures serve as limit cases, in which attribution can be more easily examined from the perspective of rhetoric and aesthetics and divorced from notions of historical reality.

The yield of non-human dialogue as a limit case is twofold. Firstly, such cases disrupt the notion of an historical poet. For, if Indra the ṛṣi can not be the "historical author", then why should historical authorship be conferred on a human ṛṣi? Secondly, these cases make it clear what the value of ṛṣi and devatā are from the perspective of the Ārṣānukramaṇī and

Bṛhaddevatā respectively; they identify the speaker and listener in a particular exchange.

Indra as an impossible author

Patton (2010) notes that Ṛgvidhāna 1.143 'argues that one can recite RV hymn 1.165 not only in the case of the recitation of one's teachers, kings, and brahmins, but also when one has heard a deep secret from them or about them.' The Sarvānukramaṇī names Indra as the ṛṣi of verses 1, 2, 4, 6, 8, 10-12, and the Maruts as ṛṣi of verses 3, 5, 7, and 9. The Bṛhaddevatā names the Maruts as devatā of the verses for which Indra is the ṛṣi, and Indra as the devatā for which the Maruts are listed as ṛṣi. ṚV 1.165 is a dialogue between non-humans and thus constitutes an ideal limit case, one in which what the Sarvānukramaṇī and Bṛhaddevatā detail cannot be an historical author and his object of worship, but rather who is speaking and who is listening at any given time. The rhetorical dynamics of this hymn necessarily disrupt conventional notions of the author as a creator who exists outside of the narrative frame of the text, which is his creation. For whatever the status of Indra and the Maruts as “authors”, they are certainly literary characters within the poem as well. What then, is being attributed to Indra? I will attempt to demonstrate that what is being attributed is the event of speech situated in two narratives, and upon each narrative a distinct setting is conferred. I will then argue why this attribution is not a frivolous detail, but of central importance to the redactors of the Ṛgveda and that this importance was not lost on the composers of the Anukramaṇīs.

The Embedded Narrative of 1.165

I will proceed with a brief study of the inner narrative of 1.165 before examining its outer narrative and the mimetic dimensions connecting the two. The Bṛhaddevatā 4.46-49 summarizes the plot of Ṛgveda 1.165 as a dialogue in which Indra and the Maruts dispute over the possession of the offerings of a sacrifice, and this dispute is resolved through compromise. The encounter is revealed to the physically absent Agastya through his powers of poetic vision. Even so, the Anukramaṇīs do not name Agastya as the ṛṣi of the whole sūkta, only of the final two verses that constitute its closing wish. Stanley Insler has suggested that this hymn and those after it constitute an Aindramaruta epic whose purpose is to justify the inclusion of the Maruts at the midday pressing, which was formerly dedicated to Indra

alone.⁶ The crux of the exchange is the proper recipient of the sacrificial offerings. Indra claims all the best offerings of sacrifice: song and soma.

*bráhmāṇi me matáyaḥ sáṃ sutāsaḥ / śúṣma iyarti prábhr̥to me ádriḥ /
á sāsate práti haryanti ukthá / imá hári vahatas tá no ácha //* (RV1.165.4)

The compositions, the ideas, the pressings are MY welfare. (My) whoop rises as the stone is presented to me. (Me) do recitations herald and hope for. These two golden steeds carry us here to them.

The Maruts cannot deny that the offerings in the first three pādas are indeed directed to Indra, and so instead demonstrate their martial prowess.

*áto vayám antamébh̥ir yujānāḥ / svákṣatrebhis tanúvaḥ śúmbhamānāḥ /
máhobhir étāñ úpa yujmahe nú / índra svadhām ánu hí no babhūtha //*
(RV 1.165.5)

We, being yoked with our closest (horses), (our) bodies being beautified by (horses) of our own command, we now yoke antelopes up by our great (powers). Indra! So now you have experienced our self-determination.

Indra's status as dedicand of the sacrifice cannot be disputed, yet he arrives conveyed by merely two horses and no retinue. The Maruts on the other hand have arrived with many horses and, on top of that, they have added a second row of antelopes for extra power. Pādas a and c are stylistically paired by \surd *yuj*. In pāda a, the yoking of horses is invoked and in pāda c the yoking of antelopes. In parallel, pāda b and d form a pair on the basis of *svakṣatra* and *svadhā*. While Indra may be the rightful owner of the sacrifice, the Maruts have the martial power to wrest it from him. That the Maruts are ambivalent about Indra's claim may be suggested in pādas b and d.

The communis opinio is that *svákṣatrebhis* in pāda b refers to the horses of the Maruts.⁷ In two of its three other attestations in the R̥gveda, however, the

⁶ Jamison and Brereton 2014:361

⁷ Oldenberg (1909: 161) '*antamébh̥ir* und *svákṣatrebhis* auf Rosse bezüglich'; Geldner (1951: 238): 'selbstherrlichen (Rossen)'; Jamison and Brereton (2014: 361): '(horses) that guide themselves'. The only major deviation is Grassmann (1872-1875: 1621), who adds to the dictionary entry *marúdbhis*, indicating that the Maruts are *svákṣatra*. Grassmann (1872-1875: 520) lists the *tanúvaḥ* which appears in 1.165.5 as an accusative plural. It seems that in Grassman's reading, pāda b was the object of the verb in pāda c 'we now yoke up antelopes ... (their) bodies being beautified by (our) *svákṣatra*'.

adjective *svákṣatra* modifies the noun *mánas*,⁸ in both cases that *mánas* is *dhṛṣát* 'daring'. As both horses and intentions convey the Maruts to the sacrifice, the sequence *svákṣatrebhis tanúvaḥ súmbhamānāḥ* may be a metaphor of horsepower and willpower.⁹ In the previous verse Indra claims that the *ukthá* 'recitations' address him, that he is the INTENDED recipient of the sacrifice. The Maruts do not care for the intentions of others, they are governed by their OWN intentions. In pāda d the Maruts conclude by telling Indra that he has just experienced their *svadhā* or 'self-determination', which seems to support the interpretation of *svákṣatra* not as 'self-guided' horses but rather as guided by the will of the Maruts who follow their 'own command'. The horse is closely associated with military power, consider ṚV 1.162.22d: *kṣatráṃ no áśvo vanatāṃ haviṣmān* 'may the oblation-bearing horse win us rule.'

Indra, surmising that he has just been threatened, explains how he came to be lord of the sacrifice:

*kúva syá vo marutaḥ svadhā āsīd / yán mām ékaṃ samádhattāhíhátye /
ahám hí ūgrás taviśás túviṣmān / víśvasya śátror ánamaṃ vadhasnaīḥ //*
(ṚV 1.165.6)

Where was this self-determination of yours, Maruts, when you together set me alone to serpent-slaying? For I — fierce, terrible, terrific — I bent every rival with weapons.

Indra explains his champion's portion is not arbitrary, but was agreed to by the Maruts themselves. They laid aside their *svadhā*, their own autonomy, when Indra was chosen as supreme champion against the constrictor Vṛtra. Notice that the verb *samádhatta* 2nd pl. present active imperfect 'you established me together', with $\sqrt{dhā}$ 'to place' and preverb *sam* 'together', plays on an iconic opposition of *sva* and *sam*. Indra adds that his supremacy was not passively bestowed upon him, but a prize won from laying low all

⁸ *svákṣatraṃ yásya dhṛṣató dhṛṣán mánah* (ṚV 1.54.3b) 'Daring is he whose daring mind has its own command. *'svákṣatraṃ te dhṛṣán mánah* (ṚV 5.35.4c) 'Your daring mind has its own command.' The third attestation is interesting because of the proximity of a finite verb of \sqrt{man} , but otherwise not a parallel construction: *kád u priyáya dhāmane manāmahe svákṣatrāya sváyaśase mahé vayám* (ṚV5.48.1ab) 'what shall we conceive for the dear abode for the great one which has its own command, its own glory?'

⁹ P. Oktor Skjærvø (p.c.) points out that in Y 46.3 of the Zoroastrian Yasna the *xratauuō* 'guiding thoughts' are called *uxšānō asnaṃ* 'the oxen of days' — a striking parallel, in that intentions are likened to draft animals.

his competitors. The Maruts then submit that Indra is indeed supreme and their future exploits will be many; they will do many manly deeds together.

How does Indra reverse his fortunes? Indra explains a contemporaneous social relationship, his status as recipient of the sacrificial offerings, as based on an ancient decision by the Maruts themselves to elevate him to champion. The Maruts had somehow forgotten this until Indra, traveling alone, reminds them that they are his vassals and renews their contract as his social inferiors. Indra creates a primordial memory which the Maruts are beholden to, and uses that memory of the past to reform the present, stripping the Maruts of their agency and their status as dangerous outsiders. Indra uses speech to transform the Maruts from would-be bandits into his entourage. By summoning memory, Indra drastically alters the relationship between himself and his potential antagonists. For all their saber-rattling, the conflict between Indra and the Maruts is resolved without violence. The inner narrative, then, is some moment in the past in which Indra encounters a threat to his supremacy and pacifies that threat by giving the Maruts a subservient place in his world order.

The frame narrative of 1.165

Keeping in mind the details of this inner narrative, let us examine the hymn at a moment of performance in which a human poet is reciting words that are attributed to either Indra or the Maruts. That this performance scenario is one assumed by the composition itself is clear from its self-reflexive final verses:

ó śú vartta maruto vípram ácha / imā bráhmāṇi jaritā vo arcāt //
(ṚV 1.165.14cd)

O Maruts, turn here to the inspired (poet), your singer sings THESE compositions.

eśá va stómo maruta iyám gír / (ṚV 1.165.15a)

THIS is your praise, O Maruts, THIS is your song.

Many sūktas of the Ṛgveda close by dedicating the current performance to a god, wishing that the current performance has gone well, and wishing that performance errors be expiated. These are the most obvious cases of metalepsis, when the narrative shifts level out of its past setting to an eternally present moment of the performance. A more dramatic form of metalepsis is not merely a shifting from an embedded level to an outer

frame, but instances when a character interacts with both frames simultaneously. The performer of this hymn declares himself to be Indra when he says:

*ékasya cin me vibhú astu ójo / yā nú dadhṛṣvān kṛṇāvai manīṣā /
aháṃ hí ūgró maruto vídāno / yāni cyávam índra íd īsa eṣām // (RV 1.165.10)*
Even (if) alone, let my power be pervasive. Through which thought I
become daring, I will act. For I, Maruts, am known as the fierce one.
Which (deeds) I enact, as Indra, I possess them.

Twice the speaker claims that whatever actions he performs has Indra as their agent. In the first instance in pāda b, the speaker declares he will now act having become daring through the hymn. From the perspective of the outer frame, which is set at the site of a re-performance of the sūkta, the performer, *dadhṛṣvān*, has become daring through the performance of this very hymn. So while derring-do may be typical behavior for Indra, in this case those qualities have been conferred on the current speaker via poetic thought (*manīṣā*). In the second instance, the speaker tells the audience that whatever actions he takes, Indra is the possessor of those actions. Here, the augment-less 1st person singular *cyavam* does not limit these deeds to a narrative about Indra and the Maruts in the past. It is temporally unspecified, and creates the possibility that it is Indra right now who is reciting this verse; Indra is the agent of deeds past, present, and future. That the verb can operate in two narrative theatres makes the speaking character present in both.

The verse that follows has been the subject of scrutiny by Proferes (2007), and he translates it thusly:

*ámandan mā maruta stómo átra / yān me naraḥ śrútiyam bráhma cakrá /
índrāya vṛṣṇe súmakhāya máhyam / sákhye sákhyas tanúve tanúbhiḥ //*
(RV 1.165.11)

Your song energized me here, O Maruts, that formulation, deserving to be heard, which you, O men, made for me—for me, Indra the generous bull; (that formulation) which, as partners (*sakhi*), you made with your bodies on behalf of your partner for the sake of a body.

This verse features in Proferes' discussion of the Tānūnaptra rite.¹⁰ In the associated myths, the pact-members deposit their bodies into the body of Indra or the house of Varuṇa. For Proferes, this verse is suggestive of an early Tānūnaptra because of *tanúve tanúbhiḥ*, the union of multiple bodies for the sake of one body politic.¹¹ Proferes argues that the Vedic poets conceived of sovereign power as the union of the power of the clans. The clan fires combined create a larger conflagration, *agni vaiśvānara*, the fire of tribal alliance. The Tānūnaptra, by combining individual bodies into a great body, Indra, is conceptually parallel to the collection of fire. Proferes points out that in the Kaṭha account of the Tānūnaptra, Indra is identified with the Sun,¹² the zenith of fire.

Proferes believes this verse may be thematically linked to an early form of the Tānūnaptra. The fact that the text is devoid of specific ritual details is not problematic; in fact, it is to be expected. Ritual action is already present during the performance; it does not need to be generated through rhetoric. Rather, rhetoric generates the significance of ritual action, by arguing that there is a mysterious connection between the sacrifice and the world in which the audience lives. The world of the poem, then, is the world that a ritual is trying to bring about. The ritual details themselves are less significant than the kind of relationships the text presents as natural and ideal. In my analysis of this verse, I want to invoke speaker mimesis as well as audience mimesis to examine how the world of embedded narrative is being overlaid onto a frame narrative set at the site of performance. The effect of the embedded narrative on the frame narrative may tell us far more

¹⁰ Proferes (2007: 51-52): 'Through various versions of the Tānūnaptra myth, the outline of the narrative is straightforward. Various separate groups of gods (*deva*), each with its own chief—the social organization of the gods in this context has been described as a federation of clans—refuse to submit to the superiority of another among them, and fall out among themselves. As a result of their lack of solidarity, their enemies, the Asuras, threaten to overcome them. In order to defend themselves effectively against the Asuras' assault, the gods unite. They institute a formal pact among themselves, accomplished by depositing together what are referred to as their 'own proper bodies' (*priyās tanvāḥ*).'

¹¹ Proferes (2007: 57): 'Understanding the use of *tanū* here as an articulation of the idea of a collective body politic composed of the individual bodies would make just as good if not better sense of the expression than reading it as a reflexive pronoun. Even if the prosaic interpretation is adopted, however, it can still be argued that the juxtaposition of *sakhi* and *tanū* could not but have recalled to the listener's mind the thematics of the Tānūnaptra, provided of course that this rite or something similar did in fact exist in the R̥gvedic period.'

¹² Kaṭhasaṃhitā 24.9: 100.10.

about what a given performance was attempting to do than the ritual details themselves.

In the first diptych, the speaker tells the Maruts a praise song has *ámandan mā* 'exhilarated me'. While we do not know the performer's state, he is declaring himself to be exhilarated. That is, whoever is speaking to the Maruts is portrayed as having both the voice of Indra and the body. As we have already seen, when the speaker acts (*kṛṇávai, cyávam*), Indra is the agent of those actions. With *ámandan mā*, the speaker is depicted as FEELING euphoria from a praise-song, just as Indra should. So when the speaker speaks as Indra, the content of those speech acts constructs more than a performed voice, but a performed body in toto. The speaker's exhilaration occurred *átra* 'here'. In the Brāhmaṇas, the proximal deictic pronouns and adverbs have been shown to refer to the sacrificial grounds, while the distal deictic set refers to the heavens. If we entertain a similar notion of speaker-centered space,¹³ then *atra* may be drawing the speaker and listener out of the embedded narrative to the site of performance.

Pāda b provides additional information about the *stoma* from pāda a. The *naraḥ* 'men' have made a *brāhman* 'composition' which is *śrútiya* 'worthy to hear', thus fulfilling Indra's earlier claim to the *brāhmans*.¹⁴ The *brāhman* is worthy to hear, implying the men have sung it aloud. This *śrútiya brāhman* is the *stoma* which is pleasing the speaker *átra* 'here' at the performance going on right now. This *stoma* is Ṛgveda 1.165 itself, and its worthiness to be heard is a product of the *naraḥ* 'men' who are performing it in the outer frame of narration, set at a recitation of this hymn. This isn't any historical recitation, but a rhetorical representation of performance. In the same way, this is not the body of some historical performer, but a rhetorical representation of the body of Indra. By mimesis, the performer embodies Indra, replacing his own voice with that of Indra's. Through metalepsis, it is Indra who breaks

¹³The translation of 10.159.1ab by Jamison and Brereton (2014:1641) is a particularly good one for the purpose of illustrating the difference between distal and proximal deixis: *úd asaú sūriyo agād / úd ayám māmakó bhágaḥ* 'Up has gone yonder Sun, up this good fortune of lil ole me.' The heavenly Sun, as far removed from the speaker as possible, is qualified with distal deixis. The speaker's good fortune is depicted as intimate and personal with both the proximal pronoun *ayám* and the 1st person demonstrative adjective *māmakó*. It seems reasonable to infer that the diminutive sense of *māmakó* indirectly suggests the greatness of the Sun.

¹⁴*brāhmāṇi me matáyaḥ śám sutásaḥ* (RV 1.165.4a) 'the compositions, the thoughts, and the pressings are my welfare'.

out of the embedded frame, stands before the human participants at a current performance, and addresses them. However, in pāda a, the addressed audience is the Marut troop. Just as the identity of the poem's reciter is subsumed within the speaking character of Indra, these nameless *naraḥ* listeners are subsumed within the listening characters of the Maruts.¹⁵ The presence of Indra is emphasized when the speaker says *indrāya ... máhyam* 'for Indra, for me' so there can be no doubt that the datives *sákhya* and *tanúve* refer to the speaker. While *tanū* may signify a 'body politic' or 'corps', it is also a performer's body. The bodies of speaker and audience at this present performance may be visible representations of larger social entities or cosmological entities, but *sákhya sákhāyas* 'comrades for (our) comrade' maps the personal relationship between Indra and the Maruts onto the speaker and listeners. When the performance enacts new social relationships between political bodies, it must do so with personal intermediaries.¹⁶

In the next verse, Indra bestows upon the Maruts a place at the sacrifice:

*evéd eté práti mā rócāmānā / ánediyaḥ śráva éṣo dádhānāḥ /
saṃcákṣiyā marutaś candrávarṇā / áchānta me chadáyāthā ca nūnám //*
(RV 1.165.12)

¹⁵ A possible mimetic relationship between the Maruts and the men of the clans in RV 7.56.5 is suggested by Whitaker (2011: 16) who translates: *sā vīṭ suvīrā marúdbhir astu / sanāt sáhanti púṣyantī nṛmṇám* 'let this clan be well manned through the Maruts; [this clan] dominating from of old, fostering manhood', adding '... in the above stanza, the Maruts are the instruments through which the clan obtains men who are manly and warlike, and perhaps such warriors are even identified with their divine masculine counterparts.'

¹⁶ I find this mimetic mapping reminiscent of the triple correspondence theory found in the exegetical Brāhmaṇas. These texts depict macro-, meso-, and microcosmic theatres as linked, referred to as *adhidevata*, *adhiyajña*, and *adhyātman* respectively. Ritual actions have equivalents in the heavenly sphere and the inner self of the sacrificer. The mesocosmic sphere is of course the visible world, while macro- and microcosmic worlds are invisible by virtue of being too large or too small. The hidden *bandhus* 'connections' between them must be explained by the ritual specialist. It seems reasonable to me that participants on the ritual grounds acted as representatives of larger communities. It is well know, for example, that the R̥gveda frequently pluralizes a proper noun rather than substantivizes a *vṛddhi* derivative. So, for example, the descendants of Atri are *atris* not *ātreyas*. Is this because of a community which believed itself to have a progenitor named Atri? Or is 'Atri' a performative representation of a group, a way of conceiving of a community as a singular visible body which can be performed on the ritual ground?

These ones are pleasing to me ONLY (as) blameless (entourage),¹⁷ receiving fame and drinks. O Maruts, all-visible, whose colors shine, you pleased me and now you shall please me.

Most of the content in this verse belongs in the embedded narrative of Indra and his altercation with the Maruts. After Indra explains they set him (*asámdhatta*) alone (*ékaṃ*) to the task of slaying Vṛtra, the Maruts submit to his supremacy in the following verse. While Indra retains his status as dedicand of the sacrificial offerings, in this verse he bestows upon the Maruts their drinks (*iṣ*) and fame (*śrávas*). Rather than an augmentless *cyavam* which blurs the two narrative frames, the aorist *áchānta* and present subjunctive *chadáyāthā* operate within the past and present narrative frames discretely. The Maruts have pleased Indra in the embedded narrative, and they will please Indra again in the frame narrative. At the present recitation the ritual participants referred to as Maruts will please Indra again, become blameless, and receive drinks and fame. The pairing of *áchānta* and *chadáyāthā* clearly establishes the scene as setting a precedent, constituting a model upon which future relationships with Indra are to be based.

In the beginning verses of 1.165, the *sūkta* employs a series of rhetorical interrogatives to introduce the scene of the Maruts descending upon the sacrifice. In verse thirteen, the interrogative is resumed. This is a challenging verse to interpret, and I think it best to start at the end and move backwards, so that the significance of *kó* can be appreciated.

*kó nú átra maruto māmahe vaḥ / prá yātana sákhūñr áchā sakhāyaḥ /
mánmāni citrā apivātáyanta / eṣām bhūta návedā ma ṛtānām //* (RV 1.165.13)
'Who rewards you Maruts? Drive here to your comrades, comrades,
As inspirers of thoughts, remarkable ones, become of these (as he is):
aware of my truths.

The cadence of pāda b exists elsewhere in the Ṛgveda: *devó bhuvan návedā ma ṛtānām* (4.24.4c) 'the god will become aware of my truths.' Here the predicate

¹⁷ Oldenberg (1909: 162) takes *ánediyah* as modifying a gapped gana 'troop'. Regardless of what singular noun this word modifies, the point is their singularity. Only as a united rather than a divided entity can the Maruts receive their drinks and glory. I suggest that *ánediyah* here has the sense 'beyond reproach' as well as 'not blaming'. They must be a harmonious whole with Indra as their master.

is a nom.sg.m. *s*-stem *návedas*.¹⁸ It seems that the phrase seen in 1.165.13d is a redeployment of the one in 4.24.4c. Every other instance of *návedas*- in the Ṛgveda is accompanied with $\sqrt{bhū}$ ¹⁹ save 1.79.1,²⁰ which contains no finite verb and is understood as having a gapped copula. So *návedā ma ṛtānām* in isolation would probably be understood with a gapped copula: 'he becomes aware of my truths.' In 1.165.13d *návedā* is still a nom.sg.m. which should be understood as a kind of zeugma: *eṣām bhūta (návedaso), (devo bhuvan) návedā ma ṛtānām*. That is the Maruts should become *návedas*- of these *ṛtās* just as the god is. Who is this implicit subject? For 4.24.4c, the *deva* is Indra. In 1.165.13d, the subject of *návedā* resumes the *kó* from pāda a; within the ambiguity of that interrogative the identity of Indra and the performer merge.

The logic of the verse is that since they are inspirers (*apivātayant*-) of thoughts (*manman*-), the Maruts should understand these truths. What are these truths? Let us compare another case where *ṛtā* is in the plural.

Yama as an impossible author

ná yát purā cakṛmā kád dha nūnám / ṛtā vādanto ánṛtaṃ rapema /
(RV 10.10.4ab)

"What we have never before done, what now? Speaking *ṛtas*, we would mutter *ánṛtaṃ*?"

This verse is from another limit case: a dialogue hymn of impossible authorship attributed to the legendary humans Yama and Yamī, the first sibling pair. While its direct relevance to 1.165.13 is that it too attests to a plural *ṛtā*, it also features mimesis and metalepsis. ṚV 10.10 features Yamī

¹⁸ Grassmann (1872-1875: 716) believed the rare prefix *ná* to be cognate with Greek *aná* 'up, over', but Mayrhofer (1996: 26) promotes the hypothesis that *návedas* is the product of a word-boundary error by which *bhūtaná#vedasaḥ* became *bhūta#návedasaḥ*. I find the latter hypothesis very problematic. First of all, it requires more errors than misanalyzing a word boundary on the part of the redactors of the text: *bhūtaná* would only bear the accent in a dependent clause. This dependent clause would need *vedasaḥ* to be an unaccented vocative. With the reanalysis of the accent on the noun, the redactors of the text are asked to not only falsely parse two words, but to misidentify the clause as independent and the vocative as a nominative. Secondly, we do not have attested a *bhūtaná vedasaḥ* that could actually be read ambiguously, as 1.165.13 attests *bhūta návedā*, which would have to be built from an *a*-stem *náveda*** while every other attestation in the Ṛgveda is an *s*-stem.

¹⁹ *trís cin no adyā bhavataṃ navedasā* (ṚV 1.34.1a), *bhūvo návedā ucáthasya návyah* (ṚV 5.12.3b), *vísvasya tásya bhavathā návedasaḥ* (ṚV 5.55.8c) *návedaso amṛtānām abhūma* (ṚV 10.31.3d)

²⁰ *súcibhrājā uṣāso návedā* (ṚV 1.79.1c)

and Yama debating whether they should commit incest. Yama argues sexual relations between siblings is anathema to the ordinances of the gods, while Yamī suggests the gods themselves placed a desire for Yama in her and wish them to produce offspring, lest the race of mankind end.

Before looking closer at *ṛtā*, I would point out that *cakṛmā*, *vádanto*, and *rapema* are all in the plural, not in the dual as we would expect if Yama and Yamī are the only beings present. Who else is there? In pāda d of 10.10.6 Yama says to Yamī *kád u brava āhano vīciyā nṛṇ* 'what (else), O floozy, will you perversely tell the men?' If Yama and Yamī are the first and only humans in the cosmos, then who are these *nṛṇ* 'men'? Are they the same *naraḥ* whose *stoma* has exhilarated Indra? Are they the same addressees of Kavi Uśanā when he commands his audience to *pásyatā mā* "look at me!"? I would argue, yes, all these are a rhetorically constructed, present-moment audience built into the *sūktas*.

In the singular, *ṛta* is typically taken to mean 'cosmic order' or 'truth', but when Yama says *ṛtāvádanto ánṛtaṃ rapema* 'speaking *ṛtas*, we would mutter something *ánṛtaṃ?*' he sets up *ánṛtaṃ* as the antithesis of a plural *ṛtā*. In 10.10.4, *ánṛtaṃ* is the object of *rapema*, a verb of speech, but *ánṛtaṃ* may be the referent of *yát* in pāda a. If so, then *ánṛtaṃ* is something which *ná purā cakṛmā* 'we have never done'. If the *ṛtas* are the antitheses of something which did not occur, one might deduce they DID occur. The *ṛtas* are assigned a kind of historicity, a kind of precedence. The *ṛtas* are more than sentential truths, but rather enacted truths as well. In a world where the reality of the past is stored in memory and song, it may be anachronistic to distinguish the two. Enacting Yama, the performer of 10.10, asks how precedents can justify something unprecedented. Enacting Indra, the performer of 1.165, asks his audience which person present here rewards the Maruts. He tells them to become aware of these *ṛtas*, these real deeds, just as he is. Without being explicit, the performer reaffirms his identity as Indra by declaring he is aware that these speech events, his *ṛtas*, really happened long ago. We have seen the speaker perform the voice of Indra, claim Indra's agency and exhilaration, and now he is *návedas* of Indra's *ṛtas*. The performer testifies as witness, transmitting the presence of Indra into the present. The performer recreates more than a legendary speech, but a legendary speaker, bringing Indra's immortal self to the present recitation.

Speakership and performed presence

We have wandered rather far afield from the problem of historical authorship, but if we return to the Sarvānukramaṇī and the Bṛhaddevatā, the importance of ṛṣi and devatā becomes clear. A sūkta like 1.165 rhetorically constructs a relationship between primordial speakers and listeners and maps those relationships on to the present performer and audience. As such, the identity which is being enacted is of utmost importance in the normalization of these relationships: They are precedents, and they require their original institutors to be present. In particular, 1.165 uses an Indra-and-Maruts dialogue to legitimate the champion's portion awarded to the sovereign of a tribal alliance. That is not to say the ṛṣis of the Sarvānukramaṇī may not be historical authors, but that fact is coincidental. The anxiety of the text is the identity of the enacted speaker of the sūkta.

The bulk of the hymns of the Ṛgveda are not dialogue hymns and do not resemble 1.165. So how does Vedic mimesis fit in with all the poems that do not fit this mold? It seems to me that the Anukramaṇī's conception of the sūkta is one in which the speech actor and speech act were inseparable. Perhaps our notion of the text, which is an object and not a person, a dead echo and not a living voice, would be something quite alien to such a society. The rhetoric of 1.165 seems to value the presence of the speaker as much as what is being spoken. It must have been important to the redactors of the Ṛgveda that historical poets, their fathers, their grandfathers, and their great-grandfathers, could return to the present and speak in the same immortal *sabhā* 'assembly' as the gods and ancient seers.

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