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Conference

Authors and Editors in the Literary Traditions of Asian Buddhism

Guest editors
Cathy Cantwell, Jowita Kramer, Robert Mayer,
and Stefano Zacchetti

In What Way is There a *Saṅghavacana*?

Finding the Narrator, Author and Editor in Pāli Texts

Sarah Shaw

Buddhist scholarship is not alone in being particularly preoccupied with the role, function and nature of authorship. In the case of Western compositions, even where a single author is accepted, multiple versions of their work may exist, as in the case of Wordsworth, who made eighteen radical revisions to his great poem *The Prelude*; a full variorum edition needs to include them all (Wordsworth 1979). Ezra Pound cut T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* by a third, so if not the author, he is certainly a midwife to the poem's particularly staccato, fragmented tone (Eliot 2011). Where performative texts are involved, such as Elizabethan drama, multiple performances of a single play, different versions, including 'foul papers,' scripts and reworkings, interpolations by dramatists, actors and managers, various collations by printers, compositors and often wayward apprentices, are all factors ensuring that any 'final' text, even where the author is clearly stated, can hardly be seen as 'pure' (Orgel 2002).[1] The idea that the author of a text may not be who the title, prologue, frontispiece or narrator claims it to be has long aroused keen scholarly interest, often of course with considerable justification, as regards the use of formulaic epithets in Homer for instance, or some of the minor and peripheral works of Shakespeare, one or two of which may have been collectively authored (Orgel 2002; Greetham 1994; Parry 1964). Complex issues pertaining to authorship can, however, be highly selective and obsessive; theory

[1] Orgel notes: "the text was a script, and it was only where the play started; the play, and its evolution into the texts that have come down to us, was a collaboration between author and actors, with the author by no means the controlling figure in the collaboration" (Orgel 2002: 7). For further comment, on Metaphysical poetry as a performative genre, see Pebworth 1989.

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can become procrustean and look not at the text, but at ideas about it, that may not always help our understanding. Despite this, historically there have been so many cases of pseudo-autobiography, pseudo-attributions and validation of a text through the mouthpiece of an accredited author that we cannot treat the subject lightly (Norman 1997: ix; Shaw 2010: 39–40; De Looze 1997). In early Buddhist texts the problem is compounded by the many types of authorship and editorial work, that involve identifying the various layers of oral transmission in the *sutta*s, in poetry, hypermetric tags and later insertions in the poetry, and in sifting through complex commentarial material, where the tradition, rather than a single 'author,' is paramount.

Indeed there are many subtle problems in placing an author and choosing to differentiate him, her or them from others in related genres, and comments by western critics are often pertinent to Buddhist texts. T. S. Eliot's famous essay on tradition and authorship summarises some connected problems:

> One of the facts that might come to light in this process is our tendency to insist, when we praise a poet, upon those aspects of his work in which he least resembles anyone else. In these aspects or parts of his work we pretend to find what is individual, what is the peculiar essence of the man. We dwell with satisfaction upon the poet's difference from his predecessors, especially his immediate predecessors; we endeavour to find something that can be isolated in order to be enjoyed. Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice we shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously… No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. (Eliot 1921)

Oral literature has an even more intense relationship with its past and its inherited pool of tags, formulae and epithets. Can we always find the nature and the role of the author? Adam Parry's comments on Homer's description of the Trojan watch fires at the end of the eighth book of the Iliad are apposite:

> These lines could be shown, by an examination of parallel passages, to be almost entirely made up of formulaic elements. That they are so amazingly beautiful is of course the consequence of Homer's art in arranging these formulae. (Parry 1964: 49)

In later Pāli Buddhist texts the author may not him or herself wish to be named and singled out: it is the tradition, not variation within it that is the primary aim.

The author

But a problem that is often overlooked in such discussion is the very meaning of the word 'author,' which has undergone considerable historical variation in the West over the last few hundred years and is still fluid in meaning. So to define our terms at the outset: what exactly is an author?

The OED (1: 571) gives several definitions.

1. Its primary definition of the word is "the person who originates or gives existence to anything." Often applied to a creator deity, this derives from the root *auctor*, an agent noun associated with the verb *augere*, to make to increase, to grow, originate, promote or increase. All other definitions are in some way derived from this root.
2. "The one who begets, a father or ancestor."
3. "One who sets forth written statements; the composer or writer of a treatise or a book."
4. "The person on whose authority a statement is made; an authority, an informant."
5. "One who has authority over others; a director, ruler, commander."

Here of course we find one important, and usually completely neglected, factor when considering problems of 'authorship.' Only the third meaning is explicitly associated with literary composition: In Buddhist texts this, along with the fourth meaning, is loosely what we mean by an 'author,' though of course early texts are not written statements, nor treatises, nor really books. It is however

worth noting that it is not really until the seventeenth century that the word is used widely in the sense that we often use it now, as composer of a text.

It seems that much of the modern preoccupation with the role and nature of the author has its root in historical critical theory that has affected popular and academic conceptions or even assumptions about the nature of authorship itself.

Nineteenth-century critical study, and the European Romantic notion of authorship, deliberately conflated a number of the roles defined by the OED, often seeing the author poet as in sympathy with the creative power underlying the moment-by-moment enactment of the divine plan. The author believed in the "self-sufficing power of absolute Genius" with the poetic imagination of the author as seer involving an "esemplastic power," the faculty by which the soul perceives the spiritual unity of the universe, as distinguished from the fancy or merely associative function (Coleridge 1998 [1847]). Coleridge's argument in the *Biographia Literaria*, and those of his contemporaries in Europe, saw the poet emulating the action of the creator god, for instance, a status perhaps suitable for romantic poetry's occasional fusion of many definitions, which is however problematic when other kinds of poetry and writing are explored. Such thinking, perhaps subliminally absorbed by academics and popular opinion alike, inevitably invited a considerable and enduring backlash. In his famous essay on the subject, Roland Barthes, by declaring the author dead (Barthes 1967), perhaps necessarily attacked what he regarded as a now prevalent notion of the author as creative emulator of the divine; we cannot, he insists, discern any authorial intention from early literature, but must create it ourselves. Foucault, acutely, notes the methodology of Christian exegesis animating our search for authorial authenticity, and also limits and sometimes downplays the role, in a different way, defining the author, or "author function" as a classifying principle within any particular "discursive formation" (Foucault 1980: 129). But such varied analyses, interesting and apt in prompting helpful theoretical understanding, do not always have the applicability needed for the rich diversity of early Buddhist texts, composed as oral literature over a period of some time, and having numerous

historical particularities of evolution and transmission that differ from other literatures. There are often resonances, however, and, as we shall see, however various *types* of Buddhist texts do sometimes accord with their interpretive tools.

The main literary and doctrinal points to note are that early Buddhist texts are characterized by highly differentiated *varieties* of authorship. Many and most of these are demonstrated by the *saṅgha*, the third element in the Triple Gem. The role of the *saṅgha* within the early tradition is manifold; it also involves a number of highly varied functions. The first elders agreed the canon at the first council, on the basis of what they heard from Ānanda; they or others, crafted it as *saṅgītikāra*s, the makers or performers of the chanting together (Pj II 193). Subsequent members also contributed to the *dhammabhāṇaka* traditions of sustaining through chants (Deegalle 2006). These and other teachers and commentators within the monastic orders, then contribute to a pool of adaptation and adaptive storytelling within the later tradition, cited by a formula found in much religious exegesis in other cultures, as the 'ancients' or 'men of old.' Finally a few, in the case of individual authors as writers, formulate that oral narrative legacy within a written text. Primarily and importantly however, and in a manner that underlies the whole doctrinal orientation of early Buddhism, the *saṅgha* also feature as individuals, characters who speak, with an original voice that is importantly *not* derived from the Buddha, either as members of the eight categories of individuals of those who have attained the stages of path, or even sometimes as ordinary individuals, as the authors of statements regarded as authoritative within the earliest texts. It is indeed a triple dynamic, of Buddha, *dhamma* and *saṅgha*, and it seems to me that it is vitally important to see the practical implications of the interplay between these elements in order to appreciate the varied types of authorship in Pāli texts, even from the earliest strata of the tradition.

Working at the meeting point of the oral and the written, as so many Buddhist commentators are too, Western Mediaeval writing seems particularly kin to later Buddhist commentarial writing: critics on this period note the networked arrangement of authors, whose prime intent is not the individualistic promulgation of a sin-

gle author that became so widespread and essential to authorship in the individualist ethos that finally emerged in the mercantile, protestant ethos of the seventeenth century (see, for instance, Hult 1989 and Ong 1982). Indeed Alastair Minnis in his authoritative study of mediaeval commentarial writing (Minnis 2011), makes the following important points that I think are helpful in understanding Buddhist texts: in defiance of Barthes' dismissal of our hopes of divining authorial intention, he argues we *should* always try and find what the author was actually trying to do, either through the way it is framed and patterned, by inference from comments or salient asides within the text, or through statements made by the author or authors involved. We should also, in oral literature, apply this intention to the nature of authorship itself. For mediaeval Western thinkers, Minnis notes, the author was not what we consider it now. The word is broken down, in a style that Buddhist scholars may see echoes Indian *nirukti*, in the following way: an author was considered someone that makes something grow, the association with *augere*, but also someone who acts or performs, in a supposed link to the verb *agere*, an emphasis of course derived from the many oral features of Mediaeval ballads, fabliaux, exempla, mystery plays and extended poems through which the culture was then sustained. It is also someone who ties, in a supposed link to the verb *auieo*, to tie together, because he or she ties together verses with feet and metres. But it is the last feature that Minnis defines as most important, in the paramount significance Mediaeval writers accorded to the word *auctoritas*, an abstract noun related to *auctor*: authority itself. As Minnis points out, in such networked, evolving compositions as the Mediaeval storytelling, reworkings of familiar themes and exegesis of the ancients, it is *auctoritas* that is the key factor promoted by writers and commentators as they quote from and find validation through ancient texts and narratives: all other considerations, even the literary and the compositional, are subservient (Minnis 2011).

Many of these notions of authorship have some applicability to various *types* of Buddhist texts. A lower status accorded by some deconstructionist views can be seen in hypermetric tags and brief formulaic additions to poems. At the other end of the spectrum are

compositions by individuals within the *saṅgha*, which Coleridge would recognize as inspired utterances (*udāna*), that delight in and emanate from a highly creative perception of the universe as it unfolds within the process of awakening itself, recollected, as perhaps Wordsworth suggested, in a tranquillity that arises from the fruit of the experience of path. Taking Minnis' warnings to heart, that we should be wary of modern interpretative tools and attempt to apply those used by the authors/composers themselves, I will attempt where possible to include these where they are made clear to the reader or listener, to help elucidate the kind of authorship involved in different texts.

So this is a brief historical survey, exploring briefly some of the different types of authorial composition within early texts, in which in addition, the role of the *saṅgha* as custodians not only of the authority of the Buddha can be seen but the varied ways in which their own authority, as the third aspect of the Triple Gem can be discerned. It is not attempting to be exhaustive or conclusive: rather it offers a brief study of these varied forms with the intention of pinpointing some key areas that need to be considered for the subject to be treated with the weight it deserves.

To do this, extracts from four types of text are examined, in a loosely chronological order: the early strata of the canon, the *Suttanipāta*, the canonical *nikāya*s, the awakening verses attributed to the male and female elders, and the *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*, including late prose and early verses. Clearly such an exercise can only involve a small sample, but it will however demonstrate the way that varied authorial and authoritative voices seem intentionally integrated into the canon and later commentarial material, with authority carefully distributed in a manner to create the dynamic, if variously articulated axis of different kinds of Pāli texts.

1 *Suttanipāta*

So let us explore some aspects of the 'authorial presence' in the earliest and most ancient strata of the texts, where we can see the role of the *saṅgha* occupying a number of roles, both as compilers and as participant 'author' or 'voice.' In the *Suttanipāta*, there is no

text solely composed by any one member of the *saṅgha*, but many of the short *sutta*s start, with a confident directness that characterizes that collection, with comments or statements from members of the *saṅgha* that then lead into a dialogue with the Buddha, whose words are also recorded. Sometimes there is no intervention on the part of the narrator, except for the hypermetric tag 'said so and so:' the poems are pure dialogue, *saṅgha* and Buddha.

Here is an example from the questions (*pucchā*) section of the collection:

> "Who is contented here in the world?" Asked the Venerable Tissa Metteyya. "For whom are there no commotions?
>
> What thinker, knowing both ends, does not cling to the middle?
>
> Whom do you call a great man? Who has gone beyond the seamstress here (*ko idha sibbanim accagā*)?"
>
> "The *bhikkhu* who lives the holy life amidst sensual pleasures." Said the Blessed One, "With craving gone, always mindful, quenched after consideration, for him there are no commotions. That thinker, knowing both ends, does not cling to the middle. Him I call a great man. He has gone beyond the seamstress here." (Sn 1040–1042; Norman 1995: 116–117)

We have three key participants in this poem: the querent, a member of the *saṅgha*, the Buddha, and the recorder or probably the poet, presumably another member of the *saṅgha*, who has transformed the interchange, so characteristic of oral literature, into poetic dialogue; or who has simply given us the hypermetric tags. This unknown author or authors or editors must be regarded as the collator, Foucault's 'classifying principle,' for the poem as a whole. But who creates the dynamic that impels the movement of the poem? It is the querent, the venerable Tissa Metteyya, who creates the images, and articulates the question in such a way that the Buddha's authority can be validated: the use of the delightfully creative image of the seamstress is his. So we have a poem that is ascribed to two characters, the Buddha, and his querent. The Buddha is the author in the first OED sense as the progenitor of a tradition; his querent, the 'author' and original thinker who produces the central image.

Whether or not the interchange actually took place in the form it is presented to us, and the dialoguists actually spoke in verse, we cannot know. Western scholars perhaps assume not, and that a later collator, or 'composer', transformed their exchange into verse. But this assumption would not be shared by those from South and Southeast Asia, who would see it as a genuine interchange. We cannot know, and as we are not an oral society in the manner of Ancient India, we do not know whether such verse interchanges are likely: where the culture is steeped in recited texts, it could perhaps be the case that the Buddha and his querent are actually 'authors' of the verses in an oral approximation to this third OED sense, and that, living in a world where so much discourse is in metric verse, that it would be natural for them to debate and pose questions to one another in this manner. I am not aware of scholarship on this great unknown amongst Pāli and Sanskrit scholars. Ethnographic and literary study of societies where most discourse is oral might perhaps aid such enquiry. At any rate, the text itself imputes authorship to the Buddha and the querent. It might seem pedantic to break down terms in this way, but it helps here to demonstrate just how complex the issue of assigning 'authorship' becomes, even at this stage of the texts' evolution. In other cases in this collection we feel such interchanges go further than this active participation by two parties in the composition of the text, by placing the querent even more at the centre of the poem, as if his contribution is authored, or attributed to his authorship by a later collator, as key to the authority and weight of the text involved. A particularly striking example of this is in the last text in the collection (Sn 1124–1149). First there is a later prose third-person narrative describing the setting, in the more usual *suttanta* method: the Exalted One, staying amongst the Magadhana at the Pasanaka shrine, is questioned in turn by sixteen attendant brahmins, and responds. After a preamble that identifies the teaching as concerning going to the farther shore, and describes various Brahmins questioning the Buddha, the very old man Piṅgiya decides to make his contribution:

> "I shall recite the going to the farther shore," said the Venerable Piṅgiya, "As he saw it, so the stainless one of great intelligence taught it. For what reason would the *nāga*, without sensual pleasures and without desire, speak falsely?

> Well then, I shall expound the beautiful utterance of the one who has left stain and delusion behind, who has given up pride and hypocrisy.
>
> The Buddha, the thruster away of darkness, the one of all-round vision, gone to the end of the world, gone beyond all existences, without corruptions, with all misery eliminated, named in accordance with truth, is served by me, Brahmin.
>
> As a bird leaving a small wood might inhabit a forest with much fruit, so I too, leaving those of little vision have arrived, like a goose arriving at a great lake.
>
> If any persons explained to me previously, before Gotama's teaching, saying 'thus it was, thus it will be,' all that was hearsay, all that increased my speculation.
>
> The darkness thruster is seated, alone, brilliant, that light maker Gotama of great understanding, of great intelligence,
>
> Who taught me the doctrine which is visible, not concerned with time, the destruction of craving, without distress, the likeness of which does not exist anywhere." (Sn 1131–1137; Norman 1995: 127–128)

At the end of this statement, the Buddha, described in the third person, provides his comments: "As Vakkali has declared his faith, and Bhadravudha and Alavi Gotama, in the same way you too, declare your faith. You, Piṅgiya will go the farther shore." The poem ends with Piṅgiya's assertion of his confidence in this coming to pass.

The "said the Venerable Piṅgiya" of the first line of this quote is hypermetric, and presumably a later inclusion. The emotional weight and power of the poem derives from the authority Piṅgiya's deeply devotional poetic statement of his visualization of the presence of the Buddha: he has apparently devised his practice, which is not described elsewhere in the canon in those terms. He is not yet an *arahat*, and the poem's conclusion in the words of the Buddha that he will be is an essential climax the momentum of the verses, but his moving account of his own participation in the Buddha's teaching provides the turning point and substance of the poem as a whole: elsewhere, in the Buddha *Apadāna* the Buddha notes his own recollection of past Buddhas, but of course does not visualize himself. So, as Gombrich has noted, Piṅgiya has in effect created his own means of translating the *Buddhānussati*, which sub-

sequently becomes the twenty-first of Buddhaghosa's subjects for *samatha* meditation (Vism 197–213; VII 1–67). It is now a creative visualization, which the Buddha himself could not of course have provided (Gombrich 1997). As we see here, from the earliest level of the text, authored verses by followers of the Buddha are included into poems that offer us not just the Buddha's teaching, but statements of faith, autobiographical comment and teachings from those of the *saṅgha* who follow his teaching and permit the Buddha, often as seen here in a mildly passive role to answer and respond with the authority that in Buddhist texts of course is not a creator god, but the teacher as 'author' in the OED primary sense, as one who has recreated and refound the tradition.

This particular format, of dialogue authored by participant speakers interleaved with comment by an external third-person narrator, such a common characteristic of oral literature, suggests that from the outset of the tradition authorship is deliberately distributed, not to undermine the presence of the Buddha, but rather to ensure that it remains as intended, with a Buddha and a *saṅgha*, that both participates in the discourse in a creative and singular manner, records it, and possibly, includes those responsible for disseminating it in metrical verse.

Where is the author? Clearly there will be a composer, or a poet, unknown to us, who created these interchanges as poems, but in so doing he is attempting to communicate the creative authorship and authority of those giving teaching or asking questions within the poem. There is perhaps a later editor, too, who ensures we know who is saying what. At any rate this template provides a flexible means of introducing a number of 'authors' and 'voices' in the words that are said and the poetic form in which they are framed. Even at this early stage multiple authorship and authority is essential for the dynamic of this composition.

2 The *Sutta*s

If we move on to the *sutta*s, this format has developed and matured into the classic *suttanta* method of the prefatory *evaṃ me sutaṃ* preceding a prose third-person narrative, framing words, usually

in prose but sometimes in verse, attributed to the Buddha and to his querents: poetic expression plays a lesser part in a dynamic that lies within the questions, rhetorical questions and repetitive listings that characterize the *suttanta* format. These literary features confer a great freedom in creating an authorial space not only for the communication of doctrine, but also for the presence of a number of characters, with various authoritative voices. Usually the role of the querent is as a foil or a prompter of a discourse where authority resides with the Buddha. But now sometimes members of the *saṅgha* play a far more developed role in this, as initiators and deliverers of creative discourses themselves. Many *sutta*s describe monks and nuns giving teachings to others, in ways that are either explicitly sanctioned by the Buddha, in his stock words of approval that the speaker has spoken in a way he would have done so himself, or with a simile that is described as never made before. This new role can be seen particularly in the penultimate *sutta* of the *Dīghanikāya*, the *Saṅgītisutta* (DN III 207–271), which provides a self-reflexively described context for the *saṅgha* to act as custodians of the Buddha's teaching. It starts with the Buddha complaining of backache, saying he will rest, and asking his disciple Sāriputta to deliver a discourse to the assembled monks, a frequent eventuality that itself, the commentaries indicate, suggests some skill in means in the teacher's assumption of a receptive rather than initiatory role. The Jains are apparently coming to blows at the death of their teacher; authority is heavily contested and argued. Sāriputta is asked what the Buddhist *saṅgha* will do in the eventuality of the Buddha's death and how such conflict might be avoided. He then delivers his teaching in the Ṛgvedic numerical categorization of ones and twos, and so on, which he says, is how the *saṅgha* will continue in the absence of the teacher. At the end of his radically innovatory and inspiring discourse, in which of course we see the kind of arrangement found in the *Aṅguttaranikāya*, he is warmly congratulated by the recumbent Buddha:

And when the Lord had stood up, he said to the Venerable Sāriputta:

> Good, good Sāriputta! Well indeed have you proclaimed the way of chanting together for the monks. These things were said by the

> Venerable Sāriputta, and the teacher confirmed them (*samanuññho satthā ahosi*). The monks were delighted and rejoiced at the Venerable Sāriputta's words. (DN III 271; Walshe 1995: 510)

This is subtle and carefully crafted composition, involving the authority of Sāriputta as author, and originator, creatively exercised in his delineation of the Buddha's teaching. The arrangement, linking together of material in this way is not found elsewhere in the canon; not all of the particular lists are found elsewhere. The authority of the Buddha is not in any way challenged: rather the *saṅgha* is exploring the means whereby authority can be found through the teaching, and after the death of the tradition's founder.

This *sutta* involves the Buddha, but in some, validation is implicit, through the inclusion in the *Suttapiṭaka* of many texts that do not feature the Buddha at all, but rather involve a dialogue or teaching where it is one of his followers who provides the authoritative voice. There are many examples of such discourses in which the teaching is not in any formulaic or derivative, but posits a creative reformulation or 'take' on the teaching that is not found elsewhere in the canon. Sāriputta is perhaps our prime example of this, in the *sutta*s. I shall explore here the *Aṭṭhakanāgarasutta* (MN I 349–353), which communicates a teaching from Ānanda, not yet an *arahat*, that provides an important and idiosyncratic teaching on the relationship between the four *jhāna*s, the divine abidings and the first three formless spheres. The *sutta* starts carefully by not apparently assigning excessive authority to Ānanda. He is asked by a querent rather what single thing (*eka dhamma*) the Buddha says is conducive to enlightenment. The 'single things' are of course a famous element in the introductory 'ones' within the *Aṅguttaranikāya* (AN I 27–31). But what Ānanda says, is in fact not a formulation that is found elsewhere in our canonical record of the Buddha's teaching. Each attainment he says is a means of finding insight and liberation.

> Here, householder, quite secluded from sense pleasures, secluded from unskilful states, a monk enters and abides in the first *jhāna*, accompanied by initial and sustained thought filled with the joy and happiness born from seclusion. He reflects on it in this way: "This first *jhāna* is conditioned, and produced by volition. But whatever is

> conditioned and produced by volitions is impermanent, subject to cessation (*nirodha*)." And he understands this. And if he stays firm in that he attains the exhaustion of the corruptions. And if he does not attain exhaustion of the corruptions, because of that passion for the teaching and that delight in the teaching, then with the destruction of the five lower fetters (*saṃyojana*) he becomes one who will appear spontaneously in the Pure Abodes, and there attain final *nibbāna*, without ever returning from that world. This is one thing that has been declared by the Exalted One, who knows and sees, the *arahat*, the fully awakened one, through which if a monk abides diligent, ardent and resolute, his unfree mind becomes free, his unexhausted corruptions come to be exhausted, and he attains the supreme safety from bondage, that he had not attained before. (M I 350; Shaw trans.)

At the end, the householder says:

> Venerable Ānanda, just as if a man looking for one opening to a hidden treasure, came upon eleven openings to a hidden treasure, so too, while I was looking for one gate to the deathless, I found eleven gates to the deathless. Just as if a man had a house with eleven gates and when that house caught on fire, he could flee to safety by any one of these eleven gates, so I can escape to safety by any one of these eleven gates to the Deathless. (M I 352–353; Shaw trans.)

The various pericopes and epithets throughout the first passage are stock: but I am not aware of this particular arrangement and formulation elsewhere in the canon: the *Haliddavasanasutta* (SN V 115–121) certainly links *jhāna*s, the divine abidings (*brahmavihāra*s) and formless spheres. In the second passage, the taking of each state of *samādhi*, as a means whereby insight can be directly attained, accompanied by the notion that each of the eleven states thus constitutes a gate (*dvāra*), an image provided by Dasama the householder on the basis of Ānanda's talk, is not explained elsewhere in the *sutta*s. Importantly, a rediscovered text by An Shigao from China uses this striking image, extending it to twelve 'gates:' again the list of the four *jhāna*s, the four divine abidings and the four formless spheres (Zacchetti 2003), making the 'gates' twelve rather than eleven. So this categorization of access points to liberation can trace its existence to one layman, the 'author' in the fourth OED sense, commenting on a novel arrangement created by Ānanda, a follower of the Buddha, and 'author' here in the third

and the fourth OED sense. The Buddha, the 'author' in the first and the fifth OED sense, does not feature in this *sutta*: Ānanda is extolled at the end with generous gifts to the *saṅgha* by his querent. But that this text is validated, demonstrates as just one of many examples the prominent role in practice accorded to the *saṅgha* not only as custodians, but as original thinkers within the parameters of the Buddha's dispensation, and in the case of the householder Dasama, even as creative formulators of the doctrines he has so recently heard. We are clearly challenging the OED notions of authorship!

There are many such examples in the *sutta*s, but it should also be noted that nuns also feature in what seems a carefully engineered distribution of pedagogic authority: I do not want to enter into historical discussion on the subject of nuns, but even if as has been argued recently that the female *saṅgha* is later than the time of the Buddha, such passages must represent a very early insertion, and indeed a very early validation from the *saṅgha* of women as teachers. Dhammadinnā, an *arahat*, for instance on one occasion gives a teaching that includes the state *nirodha samāpatti* to the man who had been her husband in her pre-nun life (MN I 299–305).

We can see then that from the earliest period, in texts 'authored' by, presumably, Ānanda and the subsequent editors and redactors, that the structure of the *suttanta* format itself, and the doctrinal underpinning involved whereby the *saṅgha* are such active participants in the Buddha *sāsana*, have been constructed to provide a space and an overall narrative that permits the participation of several authoritative voices, and varied authors in the third and fourth OED sense, within the earliest strata of the public face of Buddhist discourse.

3 *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā*

Where we come to single works specifically composed by individual authors is in the slightly later, but still ancient verses of the monks and nuns. These are included in the *Khuddakanikāya*, the fifth collection of the third basket of the *sutta*s, and are also said to have been recited at the first Council. Here, in ancient verses that

are perhaps in some cases rather later than the level of the *sutta*s, the *saṅgha* plays a crucial and necessarily creatively proactive role. Norman notes, in an excellent introduction to the *Theragāthā*, that in these verses, composed probably over a period of two hundred years, as they include some that were composed by elders who took the robes after the Buddha's death, there are clearly some problems with authorship and dating (Norman 1997: xvi–xviii). The genre is probably pre-existing, and some verses could predate the Buddha, as Norman notes, and were redeployed within a Buddhist context. Many verses are duplicated and assigned to two *arahat*s, although the verses could simply be statements at some time associated with a particular *arahat*, and, in an orally minded culture where, as Norman points out, "there was no concept of copyright" (Norman 1997: ix) it is not surprising to find some tags, epithets and even whole verses uttered by more than two people on different occasions. These verses are highly idiosyncratic, delight in the unfolding pattern of the samsaric world around them, and demonstrate highly individualized personal voices. So Norman notes,

> several verses which in themselves show the circumstances of their utterance and give an unmistakeable reference to the reputed author, either by naming him or making a pun on his name, or by quoting a nickname or giving the reason for the adoption of one. (Norman 1997: ix–x)

Other literary points could be added to his overall support of an attribution of personal authorship to many if not most of the varied poems. Many are clearly creatively geared around the preoccupations and life experience of the putative composer: the elephant trainer Vijitasena for instance, who compares the training of his mind to training an elephant (Th 355–359).

The nun's verses are also organized in the Ṛgvedic pattern of 'ones' and 'twos' etc. It is clear from looking at the first few poems that the author is unlikely to be the named person above the single verse; the commentary assigns it to the Buddha (Pruitt 1998: 10; Thī-a 6). Most in the first section are in the second person, in that the nun is addressed, rather than herself providing the narrative voice, though the commentarial tradition maintains that in each case the nun involved does recite the verse the author, the Buddha,

has addressed to her. This might seem to deny individual authorship to the nuns, but the method seems considered, offering as it does a powerful validation of the status and authority of each nun involved, with teachings addressed specifically to certain individuals, using puns on their names, such as the second, to Muttā, who is described as finding freedom:

> Muttā, be freed from ties, as the moon, when grasped by Rāhu, is freed; with mind completely freed, without debt, enjoy your alms-food. (Thī 2; Norman and Rhys Davids 1989: 165)

But let us look at the first verse of the collection, delivered to an anonymous nun.

> Sleep happily, little therī, clad in the garment that you have made for yourself; for your desire is stilled, like dried up vegetables in a pot. (Thī 1; Norman and Rhys Davids 1989: 165)

This is an extraordinary poem. The first words, sleep happily, accord an almost Upaniṣadic pre-eminence not to waking up, a metaphor we might expect in a Buddhist context, but to sleep itself being a state near awakening: the poem is economic and expressive.[2] The nun has burnt up her defilements, and the later commentarial story explains she has taken the going forth after a moment of insight when burning the vegetables at home, and she is wearing a robe that she has made for herself, a precisely beautiful evocation of the path that is found and crafted each for him or herself. Preliminary verses, stories and *sutta*s are highly significant in all early Buddhist collections, as I have argued elsewhere, in setting the tone and the theme of the corpus of texts they introduce (Shaw 2004). With this poem and the short second person ones that follow it, the editors, or the Buddha, clearly wanted and succeed in rendering the beginning verse of the collection as a profound validation of the nuns' orders from the outside. It is of course possible that despite commentarial attribution, the nun did indeed address herself: there are many verses in the Thī and Th that are in the second person. Could the nun and others be saying something like, "Well done, x, you've done it!" Many normal people say this sort of thing out loud in the

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[2] See for instance BU 4.3.7–15; Senart 1934: 72–74; Olivelle 1996: 59–63.

course of a normal day![3] I suppose one could not rule this out for third-person verses either, though this seems to me less likely. I am not aware, however, of counterparts in early Indian literature to second-person and third-person verses attributed to the speaker. So if we take the usual attribution, it is addressed to her: a touching second-person validation at the outset of this collection.

As we move on, we find more utterances, this time linked as Norman notes of the *Theragāthā*, to the nuns themselves. Historically they range through the same period and type of writing as the *Theragāthā* (Norman and Rhys Davids 1989: viii). Many are in the third person, and also attributed to the Buddha. K.R. Norman's contention for the monks' verses, however, stands: that there is no reason to suppose the verses were not, by and large, composed by those to whom they are attributed. Again, their autobiographical comment and delight at the process of awakening comprise an essential part of communicating not just the authority of the Buddha, but the highly varied and richly personalized authority of a spectacularly diverse and eloquent members of the *saṅgha* who, by following his teaching, have found the Buddhist path for themselves. Indeed the presence of an authorial poet is so strong, even Romantic poets such as Keats, Wordsworth and Coleridge, composing poems at a time when the craft of poetry was seen as that of the inspired seer as well as a painstakingly planned product, would have respected the results.

> Uttamā
>
> Four or five times I went out from my cell, not having obtained peace of mind, being without self-mastery over the mind.
>
> I went to a *bhikkhunī* who was fit to be trusted by me. She taught me the *dhamma*, the elements of existence, the sense-bases, and the elements.
>
> I heard the *dhamma* from her as she instructed me. For seven days I sat in one and the same cross-legged position, consigned to joy and happiness.
>
> On the eighth day I stretched forth my feet, having torn asunder the mass of ignorance. (Thī 42–44; Norman and Rhys Davids 1989: 173)

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[3] I am grateful to Richard Gombrich for pointing this out to me.

Some, particularly it seems the ex-Jaina nuns, are vividly neat autobiographies, miniature distillations of the impulse to the monastic life:

> With hair cut off, wearing dust, formerly I wandered, having only one robe, thinking there was a fault, and seeing no fault where there was a fault.
>
> Going from my daytime resting place on Mt Gijjhakūṭa, I saw the stainless Buddha, attended by the order of *bhikkhu*s.
>
> Having bent the knee, having paid homage to him, I stood with cupped hands face to face with him. "Come Bhaddā" he said to me. That was my ordination.
>
> I have wandered over Aṅga, and Magadha, Vajjī, Kāsi and Kosala. For 50 years without debt I have enjoyed the alms of the kingdoms.
>
> Truly he produced much merit; truly wise was that lay-follower who gave a robe to Bhaddā, who is now freed from all bonds. (Thī 107–111; Norman and Rhys Davids 1989: 182)

Worked within a probably pre-existent tradition, and often perhaps pseudo-autobiographic or employing tags and formulae found elsewhere, these compositions exploit heavily what Brough terms "the treasure house of versified tags" (quoted Norman 1997: ix). Indeed I think we have to assign many nuns' verses, if not most, to their supposed authors, whose creativity in deploying variously careful and appreciative observation of the natural world, personal meditative autobiography, apt imagery on the basis of life experience and pithy summaries of Buddhist doctrine render their authoritative and varied voices a vital part of the canonical literature. They are sometimes repetitive, using formulae used in other poems, or duplicating other verses. We should also remember Parry's comments about Homer: the beauty lies in the arrangement, and here it seems to me that Norman perhaps errs in saying that the monks and nuns "were not trying to be poets, but were merely aiming to give an account of their religious experiences in the way in which they felt was appropriate for the situation, i.e. in verse" (Norman 1997: xi). As he indeed notes of the *Theragāthā*, the poems of the nuns are indeed beautiful, a condition not unsupported by the fact that they are appear to be some of the earliest autobiographical and

biographical verses on female meditation and spiritual development found in the world.

Norman seems to me to be judicious in leaving the authorship, both in the composition sense and in the sense of initiating the statement where it lies in many cases. Hult notes:

> Authorial naming is not biographical as we use the term; as a literary act it performs a function within the broader context of literary transmission. By naming himself, the author identifies, justifies and distinguishes his work from that of others. (Hult 1989: 80–81)

Even if the verses of such nuns as Bhaddā are not their own creations, but that of a later gifted monk, or members of the *saṅgha*, male or female, trying to backdate the admission of nuns into the Buddhist *saṅgha* by retrospective pseudo-auto/biography, clearly it was considered important at that time that someone indeed did do this.[4] The early *saṅgha*, whether it included the order of nuns in the Buddha's lifetime or not, evidently wished the authority of female *arahat*s to be confirmed by their own awakening verses, even if they had not composed them themselves. Certainly some will not in the first instance have been composed by early nuns or monks in cases where verses employ a narrative voice implying another author. There is the problem of duplication, and that some nuns speak the same verses on attaining their goal. How can they be authentic? I thought this problem insuperable, until I heard Professor Jon Stallworthy give a talk in which he said he had unconsciously replicated the sentiments and some words of a Ben Jonson poem he had not even remembered reading, when his own child was born, and found this often occurred when writing poetry.[5] Is it impossible that the nun or monk concerned simply spoke a verse he had heard before at this crucial moment? Even if this was not the case, in the absence of convincing evidence to the contrary, it seems to me that Norman's attribution is a sensible one for the nuns' verses

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[4] For some contrasting views on this issue, see Shih 2000, a study of the nuns' rules, and von Hinüber 2007, an article that has raised some important problems with regard to the dating of the female nuns' line.

[5] Professor Jon Stallworthy, in "Memory, Mother of the Muses," 28th October, 2013, President's Seminar, Wolfson College, Oxford.

too, and that we may take the 'name' at the outset of the verses as often denoting authorship too. And of course, as Williams points out, a scholar could prove that the Buddha did not exist at all: his teaching, however, patently does. For Buddhists, it is the *sāsana*, the dispensation of the Buddha, and the words that communicate that, that is the important factor (Williams and Tribe 2000: 21–23).

It is possible, as is sometimes suggested, that women were not composers of formal verses at this time. Men only were trained in Vedas and verse-making. But lower-caste men, who would not have received this training, are not questioned as composers of verses. Upāli, the Buddha's barber, was low caste: verses composed by him, the *Upāligāthā*, are not challenged on these grounds (MN I 386). So it seems reasonable that Buddhist nuns, in constant contact with recited verses of Pāli, should also devise their own. Children in all cultures, recipients of still oral rhymes and learned texts, are, historically, passionate versifiers; it is a human tendency, as those who remember the silly teasing rhymes and verses they made themselves as children will remember (see Opie and Opie 2000 [1959]). Copious ethnographic evidence demonstrates the powerful and extant orality of female culture in India. Why should women, in constant contact with Buddhist teachings in verse, not compose their own? Speculation can only remain that: but in the absence of other evidence, it seems to me that although it is an oddly moving notion that early monks may have assigned their own, later compositions to nuns, it as unscientific to insist on its being the case, as it is to concur with the tradition.

The *Theragāthā* and *Therīgāthā* have a particular resonance in a twenty-first century, as a rather post-modernist collection, of multiple and varied poems and verses, felt to provide an utterly essential validation, celebration and evidence of continuation of the effectiveness of the Buddhist path, explicitly described as various in the texts' plentiful enjoinders, accredited routes to awakening, and different expressions of that awakening after that process has occurred. In *sutta*s such as the *Mahāsakuludāyisutta* (MN II 1–22), and in the section on meditation and its numerous objects (AN I 38–45), and in descriptions of varied modes of progress, doors to awakening and means of achieving these, in the doctrine of suit-

ability to temperament manifest in for instance the *Mahāniddesa* recommendations for types of people and suitable practices for them (Nidd 359–360), and in the singling out of various *arahat*s and followers for their individual excellences (AN I 23–26), the Buddha's teaching self-consciously encompasses many different modes of approach to awakening and approbation of the skills that flower on the basis of that. In the *Theragātha and Therīgāthā* verses we see the manifold authority and single, distributed authorship such teachings confer.

4 *Jātakaṭṭhakathā*

The last text we shall consider is from the commentarial tradition, or rather the tradition of mixed commentary and verse that constitutes the Pāli *jātaka* hypertext (Ja). The *Ummaggajātaka* (Ja VI 329–278) is compiled with many early verses, in the ancient 11/12 metre; some later, in 16 *vatta* form; some prose 'story,' the product of centuries of orality but which must nonetheless date in part from early times, and later commentarial advice and instructions to the 'reader' or 'listener,' presumably the monastic line entrusted with communicating the text for the tradition, in what is apparently a working manual for those telling the tales to the laity and monks.[6] This extraordinary, capacious and mongrel genre, both commentary and original text, is seen at its most wonderfully chaotic and prolific in the Pāli *jātaka* collection. And none is a more organically diverse 'work in progress' than the *Ummaggajātaka*.[7] This tale of the many test and trials of the Bodhisatta as Mahosadha, the king's advisor, in accordance with its association with the perfection of wisdom, is full of added extras, queries, and comment, from all the various tales that have been included within it, and asks questions about the very nature of *jātaka*s, and indeed commentarial literature, within the words and phrasings it uses both to tell and explain the stories concerned. The Pāli *jātaka* 'commentary' (Ja) offers,

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[6] On this genre see von Hinüber 1998; Gombrich and Cone 2011: xiii–xxxviii; and Appleton and Shaw 2015.

[7] For a translation of the immensely popular Medieval Sinhala version, see Karunaratne 1962.

in its tips to narrators, mixed with 'philological' analysis, intriguing hints as to how this form may have developed from the Vedic commentaries as a distinct literary tradition, at the intersection of the oral and the written, which for its very performative nature, is ongoing, evolutionary in style and highly dependent upon the personal initiative and tastes of the story-teller, responding to his audience, and sensing their needs (see Gombrich and Cone 2011: xx–xv). 'Authors' of all kinds abound, and so do editors, and isolating their distinctive roles is a perhaps impossible, but very intriguing exercise. The story's own role in delivering, reinterpreting and questioning events through a Buddhist understanding is frequently explored and examined throughout this tale.

This can be seen in its structure, characterized by elements unlike others of the *Mahānipāta*. Many of the *Mahānipāta* include lines or verses found in other *jātaka*s. This story has a full twelve tales that are found elsewhere in the collection (von Hinüber 1998: 110–111).[8] These stories are cited in Fausbøll's edition, with a simple reference to the *Ummaggajātaka* and no other description. We can infer there were originally a number of stories associated with Mahosadha that occurred throughout the collection.[9] This understanding then makes sense of the splitting into episodes in this story. Most of the very long tales in the *Mahānipāta* are divided into parts, termed section (*khaṇḍa*), sometimes termed episode (*pabba*) or description (*vaṇṇanā* or *kathā*). We can reasonably infer these were defined on the basis of performative considerations: they usually take about forty-five minutes to chant, with natural divides for

[8] The older sections, if they are to be ascertained by the presence of the archaic 11/12 metre, are mostly in the 'imported' tales in the early part of the story, suggesting an early sequence of Mahosadha stories later integrated under the one tale, as well as existing independently. These are verses *3*, *8–41*, *48–52*, *55–56*, *62–78*, *83*; 12, 13 (mixed?), 14–16, 20, 45? (mixed?), 46–48, 67–70, 90. Italics are used for all the early verses of the story before the 'first' verse, denoted by the preliminary tag.

[9] This kind of duplication of hero occurs throughout the collection: there is a sequence of stories, for instance, all loosely related, about Mittavinda, all of the same type, which do not make literal sense as a sequence and show simple variations on a theme, with the same named hero (*Jātaka*s 82, 104, 369 and 439).

the person chanting, reciting or recounting, to take a break, have a glass of water. Certainly in modern practice, in the case of the *Vessantarajātaka*, different monks and novices recite different sections in some regions, so there is a need to swap the monk involved so that another recites, sings or chants the next section. Sri Lankan *Mahāparit* ceremonies today usually involve a few monks sitting in the central canopy, taking over from one another and taking shorts breaks after about forty-five minutes of chanting, usually the time it takes to recite one of the several *Dīghanikāya sutta*s, such as the *Āṭānāṭiyasutta* and the *Mahāsamayasutta*, that often occupy the central portion of these night-time chanting sessions. I am not aware of any academic study of this subject, but the fact that the splits in the longer *jātaka*s occur after several pages of Pāli, making their chanted length much the same as these *Mahāparit sutta*s, that also occupy several pages of text, is suggestive that such a natural 'pacing' was there in early times too. It seems reasonable to infer that the apportioning of sections, episodes, and descriptions in *jātaka*s, perhaps four or five pages of PTS transliterated text for each, was from the outset loosely designed to accord with a natural need for chanters and story tellers to change around or for single chanter/storytellers to stretch their legs, have a drink, and take a short break. This story, however, has no structural indicators within the text that seem to fit in with a notion of sensibly spaced breaks, suggesting a lack of an overall authorial design in its final form. Splits occur after quite short stories, as in the nineteen questions, or after very long ones. The numerous sections are sometimes very long, and sometimes very short. It certainly seems likely that at some point all the stories, by many 'authors,' were brought together under the umbrella of the *Ummaggajātaka*, and placed to form a sequence.[10] That some are very early is clear, in the ancient verses in some of the 'imported sections;' but that some are very late is also obvious: for instance in this story many prose plot lines hinge around written testimonials, by laymen and laywomen, indicating both a much later date of composition, and of course an interesting range of

[10] This does introduce some awkwardness in narrative flow: Queen Udumbarā, central in several of the 'imported' stories as the Mithilan king's chief wife, disappears in the others and is never mentioned again.

literacy skills in early South and Southeast Asia (see Appleton and Shaw 2015: Chapter 9).[11]

Fausbøll has two sets of numbering in his edition, one for obviously later imports at the outset, perhaps by other authors (though they include ancient verses), and then a new one for verses after the 'tag' verse. But all of the nineteen questions and much of the extensive prose at the outset of the story, are late. Fausbøll placed most of the 'nineteen questions' as commentarial back-story in over ten pages of his text of tiny, unbroken prose, without even a paragraph change. In his introduction to *Vessantarajātaka* Gombrich makes a loose distinction between what is true *jātaka* story, if a later evolution, and commentary, with its analysis of terms and the occasional 'back-story,' a mix of forms found in Indian prose as early as the first commentaries on the *Ṛgveda*. As he notes, this stratification may be unjustified in terms of authorship anyway (Gombrich and Cone 2011: xxiv). In *Ummaggajātaka* however, we seem to have a major problem even with this useful differentiation. Clearly monks who 'read' the story, presumably written down, for retelling, are aware that few of their listeners are going to be interested in the philological breakdown of words and their explanations, material included in such prose writing in the Ṛgvedic commentaries, for instance. This presents the problem then of the status of all the copious 'back-stories,' which accompany each stage of the tale. Sometimes they are entirely necessary, as in the wonderfully funny verse courtship between the parrot and the mynah bird, as explanations of verses involving characters many will have known in the story's early days in India, but who would have become strange as the stories moved to a new geographical location (see Appleton 2007 and Appleton and Shaw 2015: Chapter 9, Ja VI 419–424, including verses 22–43). Sometimes they are not, as in the extensive stories at the end, during the water-spirit questions, which are clearly disjuncts, albeit interesting ones (Ja VI 469–473, including verses 196–226). If we take the 'back-story' element out of this

[11] Another problem is solved if the stories are seen as new additions. The first verse tag at the outset of the tale refers to a line of verse 1 which occurs only after page 396. All the 83 verses before this occur in the sections are derived from other *jātaka*s (von Hinüber 1998: 110–111).

latter section, the prose, story and verses flow much better together and the narrative does not meander quite as discursively as it does if they are included. It seems as if these tales occupy a territory between the prose 'story,' which would be told to the audience each time the story was related, and philological commentary, which would not be. They offer a storehouse of narratives, presumably to be told at the discretion of the story-teller or reciter; many of them are ancient, and many probably later: all can be drawn on as and how the teller, his own 'author' of the story, wishes.

So the OED definitions of 'author' do not quite fit the bill here: the 'real' text, and boundaries between authorship and editorship, are permeable. The mode encourages inventiveness and adaptation on the part of those reciting. This *jātaka* seems to know it is a *jātaka*, and is as full of narrative interventions, questions and anticipated complaints as a novel such as Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (serialized 1847–1848), composed also at a time when much 'reading' would actually be listening to someone reading it aloud. In that novel, and indeed in many of the period, the author steps out of the role of narrator and addresses the reader/listener like a person (Varcoe 1972). The writer/editor here also seems to be doing something like this, in comments addressed, one assumes, to the monastic reader who will be reciting it. Sometimes standard commentarial advice to the storyteller is given:

> All of this is to be told according to the method described before.
>
> *taṃ purimanayen' eva vitthāretabbaṃ* (Ja VI 336)

Sometimes this sort of instruction is given to the reader/listener:

> And the question "How did she get out in the night?" is not to be wondered at.[12] For this boon had been given to the queen earlier by the king.
>
> "*rattiṃ kathaṃ nikkhantā*" *ti na cintetabbaṃ*, *raññā paṭhamaṃ eva deviyā varo dinno.* (Ja VI 385)

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[12] This narrator's address to the listener, or reader, is unusual but consistent with the literary style of this story, where an active narrative presence is so pervasive: such instructions are usually reserved for relating how the story should be told.

Many of the *Mahānipāta* have distinguishing features which affect the tone of the whole story: the constant greetings and courtesies of the *Vessantarajātaka* for instance (see Appleton and Shaw: 2015, Chapter 10); or the repeated speech affinities between characters in the *Sāmajātaka*, that seem to embody that story's association with the perfection of loving kindness (see Shaw 2006: 274–279). This story is marked by the narrator/author/editor engaging in active dialogue with the listener, or more precisely the reader by the time it is set in writing, and assuming that he or she is asking questions. We are being made conscious by the authors/editors that this is actually a *jātaka*, which we are hearing or reading, and invited to think about it. Here are just a couple of such comments. Of a type found very occasionally in other *jātaka* prose, they punctuate the story-telling of this tale throughout.

Where a new element on an old variation is introduced, its points of similarity is stressed:

> This is to be understood for all the cases, and we'll give each in the sequence that it occurs in on the list.[13]
>
> *itoparaṃ pana uddānamattam eva vibhajitvā dassessāma* (Ja VI 335)

Perhaps most tellingly, the following self-reflexive comment is made by the narrator/author after the Bodhisatta has demonstrated the superiority of wisdom over wealth and good fortune and routed his opponent in debate, Senaka, who:

> Even if he could bring another argument, even with a thousand verses, it would not have finished this *jātaka* story.[14]
>
> *sace pi so aññaṃ kāraṇaṃ āhareyya gāthāsahassena pi imaṃ jātakaṃ* [*na*] *niṭṭhapeyya* (Ja VI 363)

What is going on here? It seems we are being rhetorically invited by a 'teller,' who does not really see himself as an 'author,' it seems,

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[13] The 'list' (*uddāna*) refers to the short rhyme summarizing the cases (*aṭṭā*) that has prefaced this section (Ja VI 334).

[14] I have made this a negative by supplying *na*, as does Cowell (Ja VI 182). Otherwise it could just be translated, perhaps, as "it would have brought this *jātaka* to a standstill;" this seems odd, though not impossible, but the negative is preferred.

to remember and think about the fact that this is indeed a story; the central players in the story seem to be being presented almost as active participants in the telling of the tale too. The tale is full of interrogatives on the part of the narrator/author/editor: the word *kiṃkāraṇā*, usually translated as, "And why is this?" often follows explanations of an odd development in the plot. It appears thirteen times in the story as the narrator/author explains what is going on, but not at all in, for instance, the *Vessantarajātaka*, so authoritative in its momentum and action. Even the simple interrogative *kiṃ*, again often on the part of the narrator, is copious compared to its incidence in other tales.[15] The finale does indeed again remind us, that the tale needs, at some point, to come to an end:

> In this way this *jātaka* has moved along to its conclusion.
>
> *iti imaṃ jātakaṃ yathānusandhippattaṃ* (Ja VI 477)

It is as if, in this story about the perfection of wisdom, for these early 'authors' and editors, individual *jātaka*s have a life of their own. It seems to know it is a story, created afresh on each telling, and the stories are felt almost to create, and finish themselves: the editors/authors/commentators appear to feel that as 'authors' they are simply intermediaries in this ongoing process of bringing the story to life another time.

The prose in this story seems really a vast and capacious hold-all of stories, anecdotes, and pieces of advice to both the teller/reader and to his audience. The tales within tales are usually linked together by the theme of wisdom, but with their constant references to the story as a story, to be told and thought about, they seem to blur the lines between what is 'real' story and what is not. Where is the 'author' and where is the 'editor'? To this day, *jātaka*s are retold, embellished, and adapted by the monks involved (Deegalle 2006; Gombrich and Cone 2011: Introduction; Lefferts and Cate 2012: 1). The *jātaka* commentary (Ja) suggests a historical collusion between modern performers, the narrator/authors/editors of centuries of hypertext, the composer/s of the initial verse content, and various other parties who have added bits, and who now some-

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[15] For both of these see Yamazaki and Ousaka 2003: 188–189.

times retell and add their own comments on any one occasion. It is in many ways kin to the kind of Mediaeval writing described by Minnis, and discussed at the beginning of this article, where authority, from perhaps a number of sources, rather than specific authorship, is pre-eminent (Minnis 2011). This is quite a departure from the poems we considered at the outset of this paper: from the early dialogue form, where members of the *saṅgha* interact with the Buddha in formal poetic interchange, to the *sutta*, with a format that permits *saṅgha* to be both participant and 'author,' to the individual 'authors' who composed the verses of the elders, we have reached a very different kind of text. In the *Ummaggajātaka*, authors and editors seem in historical collusion, over a long period of time, as a long temporal '*saṅgha*' that helps a complex and multi-layered tale to become an almost living and organic entity, recreated, and perhaps sometimes reshaped, at each performance.

Conclusion

So where does this leave us with regard to the critical comments cited at the beginning?

The first strand that has been pursued in this paper is the idea of the 'author.' It has not been the intention of this article to prove anything about notions of authorship, rather to indicate that these few examples show that it is a complex issue. One thing that has become clear, however, is that the use of the term needs to be treated with care for all the types of genres discussed here. Five types of authorship are indicated: all, if we take the 'written' out of the third definition, apply at various times to different Buddhist texts: the Buddha is, perhaps, the first kind of author; the second kind, the 'father' or 'ancestor' is also the Buddha, with perhaps the addition of some members of the early *saṅgha* too. The third kind, the 'composer,' could be applied to the members of the early *saṅgha* described as composing their own teachings, the Buddha and perhaps unknown compilers or poets who may have crafted the texts in ways we do not now know. The fourth kind, the person on whose authority a statement is made, could apply to the Buddha again, whose implied presence validates so many *sutta*s and discourses.

The fifth kind, 'one who has authority over others,' is less obvious, but again the Buddha is implied, and those *saṅgha* members who teach others. But none of these definitions quite fit the way authorship works in the canon and commentaries, and the exercise is primarily significant simply to indicate this. We speak of author and authors in many, but at each juncture this statement needs to be defined carefully, for the kind of text involved. As indicated throughout, authority is a central issue in these texts: the poems of the *Suttanipāta* and the *sutta*s validate from the outset a distributed authority, whereby the *saṅgha*, and even sometimes a layman like Dasama, provide key points that are central to the momentum and argument of the text as a whole. The poems of the elders carefully accord authority to a number of voices, of composers who have all attained enlightenment themselves. The Pāli *jātaka* commentary offers a kind of collective authority that seems to inhere in the narrative as a whole, and invites adaptation on the part of the reciter using the text at any given time.

The second strand in this paper has been to examine a little the way literary criticism can help us explore Buddhist texts, and explore these issues of authority, tradition and individual creativity within these parameters. Literary criticism is responsive, descriptive and occasionally prescriptive, a field of study that has developed to define, understand and suggest interpretations and areas of analysis in literary works. Inevitably, however, literary critics shape their writing on the basis of the works they have to hand. None of the critics discussed at the outset of this article, from Parry, to the Romantics, to the Leavisite tradition holders, to the modern French deconstructionists or even those concerned with the Mediaeval commentaries, have dealt with the varied genres that we are discussing in this article, as they are found in their own setting. In all cases, from the poems of the *Suttanipāta*, with their 'reconstructions' of dialogues, involving specific named individuals, to the *sutta*s, a genre without a real counterpart in Western literature, where a space is created, by unknown compilers, for a number of named participants to 'author' their own comment and statements, to the poems of the elders, supposedly individually composed or sometimes individually addresses, in response to the

experience of enlightenment, to the Pāli *jātaka* commentarial literature, based as it is and evolving from ancient Ṛgvedic prose, we are dealing with types of works that fall outside the parameters of any genres of Western literature. As has been suggested, however, many have close and surprising affinities in some regards. Work on Homeric epic has of course shaped our understanding of oral literature, and has been essential to our appreciation of how this works in Buddhist texts, in all the categories discussed above (Cousins 1983). Formulae are reused or recycled with skill and care, new arrangements of traditional descriptions are found in different *sutta*s, for instance, used for different effect, and perhaps indicating some fluidity of composition right from the outset of the tradition. So the *sutta*s provide a space for the *saṅgha* to support and complement the Buddha's teaching with those of individuals within it, an assignment of accredited authority essential for the perpetuation of the teaching. Romantic criticism, as we have seen, is oddly apt when exploring the individual compositions of the elders, and their responses to awakening in verse. They really do seem to be strong emotion 'recollected in tranquillity,' in verses allowing the fusion of traditional forms with individual creative expression. This ensures that the authority of individuals who have successfully followed the path is celebrated and affirmed, as well as placing them within a now established literary and religious tradition. Modern French criticism has allowed us to break down boundaries with regard to texts, and to explore disconnects and discontinuities in the authorial role, as well as the stability of traditional forms: these methods can be applied usefully to texts in all categories. Critical work on European Mediaeval commentaries, where, as Minnis notes, the authority of the teaching is given pre-eminence over a single 'author,' and where a network of writers over a long period add to comment on early texts, is particularly helpful for the last category of the Pāli *jātaka* commentary. In addition, comparison with English nineteenth-century fiction, a form so often read aloud and highly interactive in its composition, gives us surprising insights into the way the 'authors' of commentaries step out of their narrative role from time to time, with instruction and comment to their readers, subsequent monastics who will then, in turn, be relaying and perhaps adapting the tale to a listening audience.

Perhaps the main function of literary criticism and the measure of its methodological success is whether it helps in asking the right questions of a text, and thereby finding out more about it. Who may be hearing or reading it? What effects are intended? How and why was the text composed, perhaps over a long period? How does it work in practice? The traditions of Western literary criticism, as has only been hinted here, seem to offer us a number of rich ways of doing this. Much more work is needed on the implications of their various theories, linked to close reading of the texts involved, than can be attempted in a short article. Pāli commentaries, newly authored Pāli works from much later periods, as well as discourses on the texts and literary comment in local vernaculars from South and Southeast Asia on the texts, are areas still largely unexplored by modern scholarship, which also offer further fields of further study.

Authorship is not dead, or non-existent, in Pāli texts: it is just a complex, and, over a period of time, an unusually communal exercise, rooted in its composition, context and applicability in basic principles of early Buddhist theory. Its manifestation varies greatly from one group of texts to another; modern literary criticism helps us to see this, but in the end it is the text itself that governs how we use the theory. The title has suggested the term *saṅghavacana*, an adaptation of the ancient distinction between the texts that were definitely *Buddhavacana*, and canonical, and those that came later. In what ways is there a *saṅghavacana*? If there is such an entity, it is clearly highly varied in its application and expression, and the term perhaps helps to describe some of the ways the issue of authorship can be addressed in early texts. But for the *saṅgha*, who over a long period of time has been variously early participants, dialoguists, speakers, custodians, editors, transmitters and 'authors' in many senses, communicating the teaching and bringing it to life for each generation would have been considered the primary aim. The *saṅgha* would see elucidating the third element of the Triple Gem, the *dhamma*, as one of its pre-eminent roles. This threefold dynamic of Buddha, *saṅgha* and *dhamma* radically informs the structure, shape, style and content all of the texts discussed in this article. Finding out more about the *saṅgha*'s

varied ways of achieving their aims, and trying to hear their many 'voices,' past and present, are ongoing challenges for us.

General Abbreviations

AN	*Aṅguttaranikāya*
BU	*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*
DN	*Dīghanikāya*
Ja	*Jātakaṭṭhakathā*
MN	*Majjhimanikāya*
Nidd	*Mahāniddesa*
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*, see Bibliography
Pj II	*Paramatthajotikā*
SN	*Saṃyuttanikāya*
Sn	*Suttanipāta*
Th	*Theragāthā*
Thī	*Therīgāthā*
Thī-a	*Therīgāthaṭṭhakathā*
Vism	*Visuddhimagga*

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