Oral

Tradition

Oral Tradition

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Oral Tradition (http://journal.oraltradition.org) is an open-access journal devoted to the study of the world's oral traditions, past and present. The journal welcomes contributions that explore the creation, transmission, and interpretation of all forms of oral traditional expression, as well as investigations of relations between oral and written traditions, brief accounts of important fieldwork, and editions of oral texts. Submissions should be formatted according to the journal's style sheet (available on the journal's website, under "About"), and may be sent via e-mail (journal@oraltradition.org). Contributions must be in English; all quotations of primary materials must be made in the original language(s) with following English translations. If appropriate, please describe any supporting materials that could be used to illustrate the article, such as photographs, audio recordings, or video recordings. *Oral Tradition* publishes such materials online. Submissions accepted by the editor for review will be refereed by at least two readers.

Oral Tradition appears once or twice yearly. The current issue and all back issues from 1986 onward are available open-access and free-of-charge at http://journal.oraltradition.org.

EDITORIAL BOARD

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Editors' Column

Volume 33 marks a major transition for *Oral Tradition*. After thirty-two fruitful years at the University of Missouri, the journal has now found a new home at Harvard University. In the "Editor's Column" that prefaced the first issue of *Oral Tradition* in 1986, John Miles Foley justified the creation of the new journal by speaking of the need for a periodical "devoted exclusively to the study of oral tradition in its many forms," one which would "inform specialists of parallel developments in their own and different areas" and "build and maintain bridges among disciplines in order to promote the healthy growth of the field as a whole." Thirty-three years after its inception, one can say not only that the journal created by John Foley has lived up to the goals of its founder, having done much to promote the growth of the field, but also that the need for such a clearing-house and meeting-place remains as keenly felt as ever. We and our colleagues who have helped find a new home for *Oral Tradition* are proud to have secured what we hope will be an equally fruitful future for the journal at Harvard.

A transition of this scale presents many challenges. The biggest challenge we have faced has been the building of a new online platform for the delivery of the journal. The new website has a substantially different design from the one with which long-time readers are familiar, but it retains most of the essential features of the former website. Most importantly, all of the journal's back issues, including their eCompanions, remain freely available. There have been other challenges as well: practices that had become routine for the journal's former stewards had to be re-learned or re-imagined, a new cover was designed, and a new editor had to find his footing. As a consequence of the effort required to meet these challenges, there has been an unavoidable delay in the publication of this latest issue, which we have designated as Issue 1 of Volume 33, even though the next issue, in 2020, will belong to Volume 34. Going forward, we anticipate publishing only one regular issue each year, reserving the second issue for special, guest-edited issues (for which we are happy to entertain proposals).

The present issue contains five essays that illustrate individually the vitality of the study of oral tradition, and collectively its scope. The issue opens with an essay on the Dead Sea Scrolls by Shem Miller, who demonstrates the power of John Miles Foley's methodology to recover traces of oral performance even from texts of the distant past. Timothy Thurston, applying related methodologies to contemporary Tibetan wedding speeches, explores ways in which auspiciousness can be created in performance by forms of traditional referentiality. There follows a sequence of three essays, each of which engages with the legacy of Milman Parry, the Harvard scholar whose work on Homeric poetry and South Slavic epic song laid the foundation for so much contemporary research on oral traditions. Texts collected by Parry in the former Yugoslavia provide the primary evidence for Milan Vidaković, who examines the quasi-magical power of questions—an otherwise unassuming class of utterances—to assert power over others. Richard Hughes Gibson assesses the effect of Parry's ideas about Homeric style on the translation of the Homeric poems into English. Finally, Steve Reece considers accounts of Parry's own life and tragic death as instances of a contemporary oral-and-written tradition, which he tests against documentary evidence.

It seems fitting that the first issue of *Oral Tradition* published from its new home at Harvard should include these explorations of aspects of Parry's legacy. The coming of *Oral*

Tradition to Harvard, which is also the home of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, has something of the feel of a family reunion. It is a reunion, however, that is not without a twinge of regret for the fact that the journal has had to leave an institution that for so long supported its growth and enabled it to flourish. It is our hope that the move to Harvard will enable the journal to continue to grow and flourish. With the support of you, our readers, we are certain that it will.

David F. Elmer
John Zemke
Editors, *Oral Tradition*

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It has been my honor and privilege to guide *Oral Tradition* since the death of John Miles Foley. I express my gratitude to the many colleagues, members of the editorial board and others, who shared their expertise and advice during these seven years. Similarly, I want to thank the authors who entrusted their essays to *Oral Tradition*. Finally, my thanks to all of the editorial staff who made publication possible, and especially to Mr. Mark Jarvis, who ensured everything went according to plan. Secure in the knowledge that David Elmer will continue building on this legacy, it is timely to announce my retirement as editor, and congratulate David on the occasion of his assuming the duty.

John Zemke

Oral Tradition and the Dead Sea Scrolls

Shem Miller

The Dead Sea Scrolls are a cache of ancient manuscripts written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek discovered in eleven caves from 1947-1956. Most scholars associate the Dead Sea Scrolls with an ancient Jewish community who lived in a complex of ruins on the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea known as Khirbet Qumran. Early on scholars identified this "Qumran Community" with the Essenes, a well-known Jewish group discussed by Philo, Josephus, and Pliny the Elder. As pointed out by Géza Vermes, the significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls is due to their great antiquity compared with our previously oldest copies of biblical books: "Before 1947, the oldest Hebrew text of the whole of Isaiah was the Ben Asher codex from Cairo dated to 895 CE, as against the complete Isaiah scroll from Cave 1, which is about a millennium older" (2004:15). Overall, as summarized by Vermes, the Dead Sea Scrolls have substantially altered our views concerning both the text and the canon of the Bible, as well as ancient Jewish scribal practices (15-16).

For a number of reasons beyond the purview of this article, scholarship over the last fifty years has made it difficult to succinctly describe the ancient Jewish communities associated with the so-called "sectarian" compositions in the Dead Sea Scrolls.[1] Robust challenges to the Essene hypothesis and, more recently, the "Qumran Community," make it increasingly difficult to speak of a single Jewish community.[2] Instead, compositions containing rules regulating daily life picture a dynamic movement consisting of multiple communities at both Khirbet Qumran and outlying settlements with divergent practices, membership, and leadership. Moreover, differences between Rule Texts (for example, the *Community Rule* and the *Damascus Document*) and between copies of the same Rule Text (for example, Cave 1 and Cave 4 copies of the *Community Rule*) bear witness to a historical development of laws and structures within these communities (Metso 2007:69-70).[3] With this in mind, throughout this article I use the ostensibly nebulous phrase "communities associated with the Scrolls" to describe the ancient Jewish groups reflected in "sectarian" texts from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

More importantly for the topic of this article, many of the most prominent methodologies within past scholarship have approached the Dead Sea Scrolls as writings frozen in print media.

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[1] The term "sectarian" is a heuristic category for certain texts that scholars believe belonged to the community that lived at Qumran. For a discussion of this term, see Newsom 1990.

[2] See, for example, Collins' (2010:66-67; 2006) criticism of the term "Qumran Community."

[3] Concerning the composite nature of the *Community Rule* and the *Damascus Document*, see Metso 1999.

In my opinion, this past emphasis on fixed (written) "texts" is unsurprising because, in addition to a paucity of sophisticated dialogue about the *textuality of scrolls*, a great deal of effort during the initial phases of Dead Sea Scroll scholarship needed to be spent on establishing the *texts of the Scrolls*. Countless hours were devoted to reconstructing written texts and producing critical editions of these texts. Printed texts themselves became the prime objects of some scholarly inquiry, the *sine qua non* of all subsequent scholarship. So, for some scholars, discussions about their content naturally entailed literary criticism of printed works. In addition, many past studies have tended to emphasize the literary and exegetical dimensions of the Dead Sea Scrolls, almost to the exclusion of questions concerning oral context.[4] As a result, a host of topics related to orality have not received sufficient consideration to date, including oral authority, oral performance, oral tradition, reading practices, and the impact of written texts as a form of oral discourse (i. e., performance criticism).[5] Moreover, a rigorous description of the role of memory and orality in scribal practices reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls remains, for the most part, a scholarly desideratum.[6]

Simply put, this article focuses on one of these overlooked topics related to orality—namely, oral tradition. More specifically, I borrow John Miles Foley's fourfold media taxonomy to examine oral tradition in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Although Foley's taxonomy pertains to the world's oral poetry, his categories nevertheless provide a useful heuristic model for those interested in the Scrolls. To my mind, Foley's media taxonomy—the way it encourages us to reimagine oral poetry—offers a sort of magnifying glass through which we can better view oral tradition and oral traditional texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls. In particular, as I will detail below, Foley's media taxonomy helps clarify two bodies of ancient Jewish oral tradition evidenced by the Dead Sea Scrolls, called (1) "mysteries" and (2) "hidden" and "revealed" laws.

Oral Traditional Texts

"Oral traditional" texts are texts that "either stem directly from or have roots in oral tradition" (Foley 1991:xi).[7] Two aspects of this definition merit further explanation. First, by the word "text" I do not intend to convey simply written texts. Whether spoken or written, a text is a unit of speech that is designed to be stored and transmitted (Ehlich 1983:24-27). This linguistic concept of textuality breaks the link between writing and text, and it allows us to imagine oral-written texts (and oral texts). Second, the term "tradition" denotes a multivalent body of established thought, meaning, or interpretation (Foley 1995:xii; Rodríguez 2014:30, 52). When

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[4] For a discussion of this shortcoming within biblical studies, see Horsley 2013:vii-xviii and Niditch 2010.

[5] There are, of course, many exceptions to this general tendency in past Scrolls scholarship. Almost twenty years ago, for example, Metso proposed an oral setting for some legal regulations (1998:314).

[6] Notable exceptions include the work of Teeter (2014) and Carr (2011:13-36; 2015), who both incorporate orality and memory into their views of scribal practices.

[7] Concerning "oral traditional texts," see Foley 2002:38-53.

this tradition is composed, performed, or received orally (in part or in whole), we call this "oral tradition."

Foley's (2002:39) media taxonomy divides oral poetry into four categories that are distinguished from one another based upon composition, performance, and reception:[8]

Type	Composition	Performance	Reception
1. Written Oral Poems	Written	Written	Written
2. Voiced Texts	Written	Oral	Aural
3. Voices from the Past	Oral/Written	Oral/Written	Aural/Written
4. Oral Performance	Oral	Oral	Aural

As Foley cautions, however, these categories can "combine and interact in interesting ways" (2002:40). In other words, Foley did not intend to construct a rigid barrier between these categories or imagine any "facile uniformity" within them (38). Foley's goal was to create a model of oral poetry that "realistically portrays both its unity and diversity," but which is still "flexible enough to accommodate the natural diversity of human expression" (38-39). Thus, the borders between these categories sometimes blur. For example, as Foley notes, some oral traditional texts "straddle" two categories or exist on the "cusp" of two categories (44-45). With this in mind, my discussion of oral traditional texts in the Dead Sea Scrolls will not treat Foley's media taxonomy as "four categorically distinct phenomena" (Rodríguez 2014:83).

Written Oral Poems

The first type of oral traditional text ("Written Oral Poems") is composed, experienced, and transmitted in writing—that is, such texts are intended to be experienced by an audience as literary works (Foley 2002:50-52). In the words of Rafael Rodríguez, these works are intended for readers not "familiar with either the enabling event of performance or the enabling referent of tradition" (2014:85). Such texts, as he notes, are comparable to modern, academic transcriptions of oral poetry, which are stylized to be silently read by an individual who is divorced from the author (85). Although the reader usually does not speak "Written Oral Poems," these oral traditional texts are "oral" because they inscribe linguistic features of orality, carefully "imitating" the oral like theatrical mime, suggesting speech without actually speaking words.

Reading practices in ancient Judaism practically eliminate this category from the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the majority of instances, the Scrolls were probably read out loud before an audience (for more on reading practices, see my discussion of the "Ruling" below). In limited (educational) contexts, as André Lemaire (2006:66) has argued, members may have privately studied or silently read some scrolls. That being said, the Dead Sea Scrolls were certainly not designed for silent reading *only*. In addition, this category is a poor fit for the Dead Sea Scrolls

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[8] I have rearranged the order of Foley's categories for the sake of my own argument. I take this liberty because, as Foley states (2002:40), there is no hierarchy among the four categories or natural ordering among them.

because, as any neophyte will quickly realize, the Scrolls were written for readers familiar with the performance arena of the text.[9] This is precisely why so many aspects of textual interpretation remain obscure today.

Voiced Texts

The second type of oral traditional text ("Voiced Texts") is composed in writing but intended for both oral delivery and aural reception (Foley 2002:43-45). By way of analogy, we could think of this type oral traditional text as a "script" because such texts are designed for and lead to oral performance, whether through memorization, reading, or dramatic reenactment (Rodríguez 2014:84). "Voiced Texts," according to Foley, "aim solely at performance and are by definition incomplete without that performance" (2002:43). In light of how little we know about the sociolinguistic setting of the vast majority of compositions in the Scrolls, the relevance of this category is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, several scrolls appear to straddle the categories of "Voices from the Past" (see below) and "Voiced Texts."

Although it is unlikely that any of the Dead Sea Scrolls were written solely for performance, (1) the oral-written textuality of certain scrolls and (2) the oral-written register of certain scribal practices indicate that some were designed with oral performance in mind. The spatialization provided by stichography and other spacing techniques, as I have extensively argued elsewhere, intentionally represents how a text should be performed, presenting a "visible song" of oral performance (S. Miller 2015).[10] In addition, a variety of other scribal practices reflected in the Scrolls were designed to facilitate oral performance. Some special layouts, scribal markings, cryptic scripts, and divine codenames, for example, graphically represent specific ways of reading texts (S. Miller 2017b). Overall, as David Carr (2005:4-8, 160-62, 230) has argued, scrolls functioned as reference points for reading, studying, and memorizing.[11] In this sense, some of the Dead Sea Scrolls can be rightly understood as existing on the cusp between "Voiced Texts" and "Voices from the Past."

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[9] Concerning the term "performance arena," see S. Miller 2017a:280-81. In other words, the Scrolls were written for people who were immersed in (1) the oral traditions of the communities associated with the Scrolls and in (2) what Norton (2011:52-53) calls the "sense contours" of texts, the exegetical ideas traditionally associated with specific passages of texts.

[10] See also Person's (1998:601-9) discussion of scribal performance. The phrase "visible song" refers to the pioneering work of O'Brien O'Keeffe (1990:1-22), who argued that graphical reading cues (for example, hierarchy of script, capitals, lineation, spacing, and punctuation) in the manuscripts of Old English poetic works expose the oral literacy of scribes. Just as a musical piece may be scored for ease of performance, these cues present a "visible song," a convenient reference point for recitation.

[11] See also Horsley 2007:101-4.

Voices from the Past

The third type of oral traditional text ("Voices from the Past") can be either orally or textually composed (Foley 2002:45-50). Although we can only read these works in a textual medium, they were performed and memorized at some point in the distant past.[12] As noted by Rodríguez, this is the most flexible of all of Foley's categories because such texts "may also have been accessed through oral performance, public reading, or private reading (or all three). Consequentially, they may have been received aurally or as written texts" (2014:84). In many cases, "Voices from the Past" could also be accurately labeled "remnants from the past," because only written records remain. And written records only preserve traces of the traditions that constituted such oral traditional texts.

In my opinion, the majority of oral traditional texts evidenced by the Dead Sea Scrolls, particularly those evidenced by the so-called "sectarian" compositions, fit best into this category. Given the pervasiveness of both oral communication and written media in the Greco-Roman world, as well as the widespread interplay between them in ancient Judaism, the vast majority of the Dead Sea Scrolls were probably experienced as both oral and written media.[13] In addition, a significant proportion of the Yaḥad—like the majority of Jews in Roman Palestine—was probably illiterate and experienced texts aurally.[14] Consequentially, we must imagine that the communities associated with the Scrolls, like most Jews in antiquity, probably experienced the Scrolls by hearing them read aloud or recited from memory.[15] Similar to how we experience audio books today, ancient Jews "read" the written text aurally through the oral performance of the reader.[16] Overall, the reading practices of the communities associated with the Scrolls indicate that many scrolls were likely received as both written texts and oral texts.

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[12] On account of this fact, "performance criticism" can be a valuable tool for understanding the social context of "Voices from the Past." That being said, I am interested here in describing the different types of oral traditional texts witnessed by the Dead Sea Scrolls rather than a performance criticism of these texts. For examples of performance criticism, see M. Miller 2015:221-66; S. Miller 2018:368-81.

[13] Concerning the widespread degree of textuality, as well as the spectrum of literacy in Christianity and Judaism in Roman Palestine, see Keith 2011:85-110.

[14] The term "Yaḥad" is the self-designation of the communities associated with the Scrolls (Charlesworth 2000:134). As studies on literacy rates in Roman Palestine have estimated, probably less than ten percent of the total population could read (Harris 1989:272; Hezser 2001:34-36). Concerning literacy in the communities associated with the Scrolls, see Hempel 2017. As Hempel has correctly argued, "a significant proportion of the membership" in "the 'textual community' responsible for the literary riches unearthed at and near Qumran" were probably "illiterate or semi-literate" (81-82).

[15] In the words of Person and Keith, "Even within those ancient societies in which reading and writing (two separate skills) existed, written texts must be understood in relationship to the orality of the masses" (2017:2). Concerning reading practices in ancient Roman culture, see Johnson 2010:22. Concerning reading practices in the ancient Jewish communities associated with the Scrolls, see Popović 2017. As Popović's study emphasizes, although reading alone or reading silently may have occurred in some cases, the social setting of the Scrolls primarily points towards reading aloud in "deeply social contexts" (448).

[16] Except, of course, their performance was live (not recorded). This fact is of crucial importance, because it inevitably leads to "multiformity." No two performances of a single text are exactly alike, even if the text itself has not changed. With a voice recording, however, the performance—like printed media—remains frozen and infinitely repeatable. Concerning this difference between live and recorded performance, see Foley 2012:18.

The "Ruling"

In order to illustrate the crucial role of oral tradition in the communities associated with the Scrolls, as well as the interplay between orality and texts in their reading practices, below I discuss one example of an oral-written text evidenced by the Scrolls. The "Ruling" (משפט) is a technical term mentioned in the *Community Rule*, a composition outlining statutes governing community life in addition to other topics. According to the description of nightly study sessions in the *Community Rule* (1QS 6:7b-8a), three components figured prominently in the proceedings of this particular general membership meeting: reading, interpreting, and blessing (1QS 6:7b-8a):

> But the general membership will be diligent together (והרבים ישקודו ביחד) for the first third of every
> night of the year, reading aloud from the Book (לקרוא בספר), interpreting the Ruling (ולדרוש משפט),
> and blessing together (ולברך ביחד).[17] (1QS 6:7b-8a)

First, members "read" the Book. The "Book" (ספר), as Lawrence Schiffman and others have argued, most likely designates the Law and other authoritative texts.[18] "Reading," however, is more difficult to define. In Judaism in antiquity, written texts were intrinsically connected with speech because, in the majority of circumstances, reading was speaking. According to Shemaryahu Talmon's fitting characterization, "In the milieu which engulfed all varieties of Judaism at the turn of the era, a text was by definition an aural text, a *spoken* writing, a performed story" (1991:150; emphasis original). The verb "read" (קרא) therefore probably denotes oral performance, either reading aloud or recitation from memory, rather than silent reading.[19] Overall, the Law and other written texts were actively engaged through oral performance during the nightly study session.

Second, members "interpret" the Ruling. Past scholarship has primarily understood the "Ruling" as either "community regulations" or "Scripture," and the verb "interpret" as "studying" or "expounding" texts.[20] But this studying should not be thought of as silent, private contemplation. As correctly emphasized by Martin Jaffee, "given the context of rules for collective gatherings in which this passage appears, it seems clear that this interpretive

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[17] All transcriptions of the *Community Rule* and the *Damascus Document* are from Parry and Tov 2004. The translations are mine.

[18] Most likely, the "Book" designates (1) the Law and (2) other authoritative texts such as "the Book of Hagi (Hagu)" and *Jubilees* (Schiffman 2010:140-41). For the viewpoint of the "Book" as Law, see Leaney 1966:185.

[19] As Brooke argues, "reading" in this passage "seems to be more than recitation from text or memory; it seems to involve comprehension and even some kind of active engagement with the text as it was performed" (2015:145).

[20] For the view that the "Ruling" represents community laws, see Schiffman 1975:42-45. For the view that the "Ruling" designates Scripture rather than community laws, see Hempel 2003:66 n.32 and Knibb 1987:117. But note Metso's (2007:66) counterargument. Concerning the definition of the verb "interpret," see Schiffman 1983:14-16 and Brooke 2013:111-13.

explication is an act of instruction rather than a private activity of the expounder" (2001:33).[21] Moreover, because "reading the Book" is preliminary, "interpreting the Ruling" appears to stem from exegesis of the Torah and other texts.[22] "Reading the Book" and "interpreting the Ruling," in the words of Steven Fraade, were independent activities with two types of learning, Torah and sectarian rules, but they were also intrinsically connected: "the latter derive by inspired exegesis from the former" (1993:57).

For now, I wish to underscore two important consequences of the aforementioned interpretation. Because "interpreting" is coupled with "reading," an intrinsically oral activity, exegesis during the nightly study sessions was both an oral and a textual activity.[23] More importantly, the oral-written nature of these reading practices suggests that the content of the "Ruling"—the "interpretation" of the "Ruling"—was not limited to written texts. Instead, the "Ruling" was most likely an oral-written text: written, because it contained sectarian regulations generated from exegesis of Torah and other authoritative texts; oral, because it contained traditional interpretation generated from the oral performance of Torah and other authoritative texts. I will return to this question further along.

Third, members "blessed together." The portrayal of communal "blessings" bespeaks the liturgical nature of these study meetings and indicates that speech acts involving prayer were also an important component of each member's oral performance. More broadly, however, the phrase "blessing together" denotes the recitation and interpretation of a wide range of thanksgivings and prayers (Brooke 2015:153). These "blessings," according to George Brooke, performed two functions in this context: (1) interpretation of scriptural materials and (2) endorsement of the sectarian interpretation realized in the earlier "reading" and "interpreting" (153).

The "Hidden" and "Revealed" Laws

Above I argued that the description of nightly study sessions (1QS 6:7b-8a) in the *Community Rule* portrays the "Ruling" as an oral-written text because it contained traditional interpretation transmitted by oral performance. In this section, I define the nature of this traditional interpretation and extend my argument towards Foley's taxonomy of oral traditional texts. Although past scholarship has primarily understood the "Ruling" as either community regulations or Scripture, the "Ruling" is best understood as an oral traditional text containing

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[21] Similarly, according to Brooke, "To my mind there can be little doubt that the second term of the trilogy in 1QS VI, 7-8 [i. e., "interpret"] implies some kind of instruction in the form of exegetical activity and has such investigative activity as its referent" (2015:150).

[22] As Brooke concludes, "Thus if what is read forms the object of investigative deliberation and study, then predominantly the object of such study might well have been the Law in some form, or some other authoritative texts, such as the Psalms and the Prophets" (2015:150). He observes, however, that the object of study could also include "the legal decisions of the community's council derived from the Law or other authoritative texts" (2015:150 n.39). See also Schiffman 1975:19-21, 75-76. I disagree with Schiffman, however, that exegesis was the only source of sectarian regulations.

[23] "At a minimum," according to Fraade, "their combination in nightly communal study suggests some consideration of their interconnection" (1998:67). See also Brooke 2015:145 and Popović 2017:456-66.

both oral performance and textual exegesis. More precisely, the "Ruling" is a "Voice from the Past" constituted by a body of oral tradition conveying "hidden" and "revealed" laws.

According to the cultural memory of the Yaḥad, the generations of old abandoned God's covenant (CD 3:2-11).[24] As a punishment, God hid himself from ancient Israel (הסתיר פניו מישראל), and the correct interpretation of the Torah was subsequently concealed from Israel (וכול דבר הנסתר מישראל).[25] But these bygone interpretations, although neglected, were not irreclaimable. Members of the Yaḥad could recover these formerly "hidden laws" through reading and interpreting authoritative texts—activities that primarily occurred during community meetings. Consequentially, all laws could be classified into one of two categories: "the revealed" (הנגלות) and "the hidden" (הנסתרות).

The "revealed" laws, according to Schiffman, "were known to all Israel, for they were manifest in Scripture, but the hidden laws were known only to the sect and were revealed solely through sectarian exegesis" (1994:247). Indeed, the earliest admission requirements in the *Community Rule* differentiate scriptural laws (revealed) from sectarian laws (hidden). Regulations proscribe associating with those who neither study "hidden" things (הנסתרות) nor follow "revealed" things (והנגלות). New members should keep separate from wicked outsiders who knowingly transgress revealed laws and refuse to discover hidden laws by studying God's statutes (1QS 5:10-12).[26]

Before proceeding to an explanation of the Ruling as a "Voice from the Past," I should stress two essential aspects of hidden and revealed laws. First, as Schiffman himself points out, the distinction between hidden and revealed is not entirely consistent because God *reveals* hidden laws (cf. CD 3:13-14).[27] According to the initiation oath (1QS 5:8-9), for example, members swear to follow the law "as understood and interpreted by the community"—that is, all

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[24] CD (=*Cairo Damascus Document*) designates two copies of the *Damascus Document* discovered in the *genizah* (storeroom) of a Cairo synagogue in 1896. Over fifty years later (in 1952), extensive fragments of eight more copies were found in Qumran Cave 4. The designations for these copies are 4QDa-h (4Q266-73).

[25] Cf. CD 1:3; 1QS 8:11. Cf. also CD 2:8.

[26] Concerning the doctrine of predestination within the communities associated with the Scrolls, see Schiffman 1994:145-57. According to the strictly deterministic view of the Yaḥad, transgressors could not discover the true meaning of hidden laws even if they sought to do so; nevertheless, insiders should not reveal hidden laws to outsiders. On the one hand, for those who are predestined to repent, members should not reveal the hidden laws until they have done so and joined the community. On the other hand, for those who are predestined to suffer God's wrath, members should not reveal the hidden laws because they will never repent and join the community. In addition, according to the ethical dualism of the Yaḥad, outsiders are still culpable for disobeying laws that they have never discovered. Despite the fact that all humans are predestined by God to be a part of either the "sons of light" or the "sons of darkness," all people are responsible for their own sin.

[27] In Schiffman's words, "that which is *nistar*, hidden or secret, to the outside community may be described as *nigleh*, revealed, to the sect" (1975:24). According to CD 3:13-14, God "reveals hidden things to them" (לגלות להם נסתרות). For other examples, see 1QHa 19:20 and 1QHa 26:15, where God reveals his hidden things to the speaker (ולגלות נסתרות) or reveals hidden things (ונס[תרותיכה גליתה לי]), respectively.

the laws "revealed" to the priests and to the majority through Torah study.[28] In this instance, as noted by Jacob Licht (1965:131), the "revealed" laws are synonymous with the "hidden" laws derived from sectarian exegesis.[29] Overall, a large part of the Yaḥad's identity revolved around a body of authoritative laws consisting of *both* "the revealed" (הנגלות) laws and "the hidden" (הנסתרות) laws that were "derived through inspired exegesis at the sectarian study sessions" (Schiffman 1983:213).

Second, these laws were revealed both orally and textually. On the one hand, hidden/revealed laws were received and transmitted via a written medium. According to Schiffman and others, the hidden laws were at some point "formulated in the sectarian codes" eventually finding "their way into the texts before us" (1983:213).[30] In other words, some hidden/revealed laws were the basis for regulations recorded in both the *Community Rule* and the *Damascus Document*. On the other hand, hidden/revealed laws were received and transmitted orally. Regulations surrounding admission, for example, portray "revealed" laws as oral exegesis of written texts. According to the *Damascus Document* (CD 15:10-14), members should not "tell" the initiate (ואל יודיעהו) about the Yaḥad's laws before the Mebaqqer ("Overseer") "examines him" (בדרשו אתו), "informs him" (יודיעהו), and "prescribes" (וצוה) a particular study curriculum addressing "everything that is revealed from the Law" (כל אשר נגלה מן התורה).[31] Unless we envision members passing written notes to prospective members or the Mebaqqer ("Overseer") prescribing a written study guide, this description of the admission process suggests revealed laws are taught and transmitted orally.

Likewise, "hidden" laws are orally revealed. The verb "reveal" (גלה) often connotes speech that reveals to the ears and uncovers the eyes—that is, speech that is both heard (spoken) and seen (read). According to the opening paragraphs of the *Damascus Document*, for example,

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[28] More specifically, according to the *Community Rule* (1QS 5:7c-9a), each initiate swears to wholeheartedly return to the "law of Moses according to all that he commanded" (תורת מושה ככול אשר צוה). But, as pointed out by Knibb (1987:109), this oath also obligates members to follow the law "as understood and interpreted by the community"—that is, all the laws "revealed" through Torah study (לכול הנגלה ממנה). In the *Community Rule*, these laws are revealed to "the majority of the men of their Covenant" (ולרוב אנשי בריתם). In addition, compared with the Cave 4 copies (4QSᵇ [4Q256] and 4QSᵈ [4Q258]), the Cave 1 copy of the *Community Rule* stipulates that one must also follow the laws revealed to Zadokite priests (cf. 1QS 5:7c-9a). For a discussion of this "addition," see Hempel 2003:74-76. According to admission requirements in the *Damascus Document* too (CD 15:13-14), the initiate swears to follow "everything that is revealed from the Law" (וכל אשר נגלה מן התורה). In the *Damascus Document*, however, these laws are revealed to the "multitude of the camp" (לרוב המחנה).

[29] For a detailed explanation, see Jassen 2007:335-37.

[30] For this view, see also Metso 2007:69-70 and Jassen 2008:307-37. According to Jassen, "The Qumran rule books represent the record of the legislative activity of these inspired individuals [i. e., leadership] during nightly study sessions" (308).

[31] The Mebaqqer ("Overseer") commands a study curriculum addressing each initiate's deficiency in "everything revealed from the Law to the multitude of the camp" (CD 15:13b-14). According to the various admission processes outlined in the *Community Rule* too, a prospective member's knowledge of sectarian regulations is tested through oral interlocution not written examination. According to the later, more developed admission process, the head priest examines (ידורשהו) the initiate's "understanding and works" (לשכלו ולמעשיו), and the general membership interrogates (ונשאלו) the initiate about particulars of "all the precepts of the Yaḥad" (בכול משפטי היחד) (1QS 6:13c-16a). Although this passage does not explicitly designate sectarian laws as revealed/hidden laws, the relatively earlier description of admission indicates that these "precepts" include not only the laws in the Torah but also "all the revealed laws from it [the Torah]" (לכול הנגלה ממנה) (1QS 5:8-9).

God uncovered (ויגל) their eyes to understand hidden things (בנסתרות) and opened their ears to hear deep things (4QD^c [4Q268] 1 7). The leader elsewhere declares: "listen to me, all who have entered the covenant, so I can reveal to your ears (ואגלה אזנכם) the ways of the wicked" (CD 2:2); "listen to me so that I may uncover your eyes to see (ואגלה עיניכם לראות) and to understand the deeds of God" (CD 2:14). As these examples suggest, revealing to the ears and uncovering the eyes also denotes mental comprehension, perceiving hidden knowledge with the eyes and ears of one's mind.[32] But even in this symbolic connotation, a speaker reveals knowledge through verbal utterance and a hearer perceives understanding through audible speech. Intellectual discernment is tantamount to listening.[33]

This oral-written background of hidden/revealed laws sheds light on the meaning of "interpret the Ruling." As Jaffee has already insightfully argued, the "Ruling" represents a "preserved record of the periodic disclosure of things 'hidden' from all Israel and 'disclosed' to the Yaḥad in their collective textual studies" (2001:36).[34] More precisely, to put a finer point on Jaffee's interpretation, hidden/revealed things designate a body of oral-written tradition, whereas the Ruling is an oral traditional text stemming directly from this body of revealed/hidden tradition. Hidden/revealed things are written because some of these traditions eventually found their way into Rule Texts such as the *Community Rule*; they are oral because some were also revealed and transmitted orally during general membership meetings such as the nightly study session. Returning to Foley's typology of oral traditional texts, we could therefore quite accurately label the Ruling as a "Voice from the Past," as it was transmitted in both oral and textual media, but written records only preserved a trace of the larger body of tradition that constituted this oral traditional text. As perceptively suggested by Sarianna Metso, the purpose of the *Community Rule* "was not to serve as a law-book, but rather as a record of judicial decisions and *an accurate report of oral traditions*" (1998:314; emphasis added).

Oral Performance

The last type of oral traditional text ("Oral Performance") is composed, performed, and passed on by word of mouth in front of a listening audience (Foley 2002:40). As summarized by Rodríguez, "the written text plays no role whatsoever (unless a recording or transcription is made after the fact)" (2014:83). Moreover, according to Foley, "the processes of composition and performance are usually simultaneous," and the reception is "customarily live and immediate" (Foley 2002:40). Foley and others capitalize "Oral Performance" to distinguish this

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[32] Other examples of *galah* (גלה) also exhibit this nuance. The speaker in the *Hodayot*, for example, asks, "h[o]w can I dis[cern] un[l]ess I see this [or understand these things unless you give me insight; and ho]w can I see unless you have opened (גליתה) my eyes, or hear [unless…] (1QH^a 21:4-6). Unless otherwise stated, all transcriptions and translations of the *Hodayot* are from Schuller and Newsom 2012. Similarly, "uncovering the ears" denotes hearing and understanding God's revelation in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Isa 22:14; Job 33:16).

[33] For more on the oral nature of "mysteries" and "hidden/revealed" laws, see Mysteries, below.

[34] As correctly argued by Jaffee, "the session for the many seems to have been understood as a setting for occasional disclosures or revelations that were transmitted as part of the community's fund of separatist knowledge" (2001:34). Cf. also Metso 2007:64.

type of oral traditional text from "oral performance," the reading, recitation or enactment of a tradition (oral or written) before an audience (Rodríguez 2014:135 n.51).

Concerning the Dead Sea Scrolls, we simply don't know enough about the sociolinguistic setting of the vast majority of these texts, so this type of oral traditional text is nearly impossible to evaluate with certainty. "The point is," as Mladen Popović correctly asserts, "we do not know the historical reality, the lived reality, behind the manuscripts in relation to each other and in relation to their ancient handlers" (2017:453). Even more obvious, we possess not one spoken syllable, not one iota of one spoken syllable, of any composition from the Dead Sea Scrolls. Written texts are all that remains. Despite these difficulties, some oral traditional texts evidenced by the Dead Sea Scrolls appear to blur the line between "Voices from the Past" and "Oral Performance."

In addition to revealed/hidden laws, the identity of the communities associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls centered on two dynamic bodies of tradition called the "mystery of existence" (רז נהיה) and the "wonderful mysteries" (רזי פלא).[35] Most broadly speaking, the "wonderful mysteries" pertain to God's acts of judgment and redemption over both his creation and his elect, whereas the "mystery of existence" covers eschatology, history, and creation. We find mystery language primarily in sapiential literature such as *Instruction* (1Q26, 4Q415-418) and *Mysteries* (1Q27, 4Q299-300), a composition so-named by the editors of the *editio princeps* because of its repeated references to "mysteries" (רזים). In addition, mysteries are described in various other genres such as poetic and liturgical works, legal texts, and apocalyptic texts (Thomas 2009:127-50).

To my mind, both the "mystery of existence" and the "wonderful mysteries" should be considered examples, albeit non-paradigmatic, of "Oral Performance." They are not quintessential "Oral Performance" because they were partly inscribed in written texts. And we cannot know for certain whether these written descriptions of both the "mystery of existence" and the "wonderful mysteries" were either (1) transcriptions of oral performance or (2) written texts that were orally performed (or some combination of both). That being said, four clues suggest that the written descriptions of both the "mystery of existence" and the "wonderful mysteries" are primarily a record after the fact, a report of oral performance. Therefore, despite being partly inscribed, the "mystery of existence" and "wonderful mysteries" represent a type of oral traditional text that is much closer to "Oral Performance" than "Voices from the Past."

First, as John Kampen (2011:49) notes, both the "mystery of existence" and the "wonderful mysteries" were probably not viewed as written texts by the communities associated with the Scrolls because their content was far too broad for any single written text. "It seems doubtful," according to Kampen, "that the authors of any of these texts believed that the entire mystery was contained within any one [written] text" (2011:49). Indeed, mystery language in the Scrolls—like oral tradition—elicits an "untextualizable network of traditional semantic associations" (Foley 1995:54). Second, as Kampen (2011:49) also points out, these mysteries are not directly connected with any specific literary text and attempts to do so have failed. In Kampen's words, written "texts only provided hints and clues, leaving the reader and/or adherent

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[35] Because it is nuanced by various genres, compositions, and constructions, mystery language covers a host of connotations in the Dead Sea Scrolls. For a complete survey of "mysteries," see Thomas 2009:127-86.

free to delve further into the revelation of the mystery" (50). Third, the descriptions of "mysteries" in written texts clearly imply that both the "mystery of existence" and the "wonderful mysteries" were performed in front of a listening audience and passed on by word of mouth (see below). Last, and most important, neither the "mystery of existence" nor the "wonderful mysteries" are ever described (either explicitly or implicitly) as written texts. They are never designated as (or compared with) nouns for written texts, such as "scroll" (מגלה), "book" (ספר), "rule" (סרך), or "text" (כתב).[36] And they are never "read" (קרא) or "written" (כתב). Instead, they are often described as being "revealed to one's ear."[37] Overall, as I explain below, it appears that the "mystery of existence" and "wonderful mysteries" were *principally* revealed through oral pedagogy and oral performance apart from written texts.

Mysteries

Two threads running through mysteries' various constructions and connotations weave pedagogy and performance into the tapestry of mystery language. According to the first trope, mysteries describe *experiential* knowledge. Mysteries convey a performative quality or, as Thomas suggests, perhaps even verb-like characteristics of action and process: "whenever 'mystery' shows up in the Scrolls it must *do* something, or someone must do something with it" (2009:128). More specifically, verbal associations often portray mysteries as a body of knowledge that is learned (4Q417 1 i 24-25; 4Q418 177 7a), studied (4Q416 2 iii 9, 14-15; 4Q417 1 i 6-7), and taught (1QS 9:16-20).[38] According to the *Community Rule*, for example, the Maskil ("Instructor") should teach God's wonderful mysteries to the sect's members but conceal them from the sect's opponents (1QS 9:18-20).

According to the second trope, mysteries designate *revelatory* knowledge. Mysteries denote special, esoteric knowledge that is acquired through both inspired revelation and inspired interpretation (Goff 2013:14-16; Thomas 2009:196-97).[39] According to the *Hodayot*, for example, God makes all his children wise in the way of mysteries (1QH^a 19:13). Elsewhere in the *Hodayot*, the speaker praises God because "[you have given me insight] into [wonderful] myster[ies]" and "your [hid]den things you have revealed to me" (1QH^a 19:19-20 of *Hodayah*

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[36] Concerning the use of these words for written texts, see Schiffman 2010:137-43.

[37] As I will demonstrate below, both "mystery of existence" and the "wonderful mysteries" have many other verbal associations. For a detailed list of the verbs used with these mysteries, see Thomas 2009:184-86.

[38] For passages that portray mysteries as knowledge that is comprehended or learned through instruction, see 1Q27 1 i 3; 4Q415 6 4; 4Q416 2 i 5; 4Q417 1 i 2-6; 4Q417 1 i 12-13; 4Q417 1 i 24-25; 4Q418 43-45 i 4; 4Q418 77 4; 4Q418 177 7; 4Q405 3 ii; 4Q511 2 ii 6; 1QH^a 10:13, 15:27, 17:23, 19:10, 20:20; 1QM 16:16; 1QS 9:18, 11:3, 11:19.

[39] For examples of mysteries portrayed as supernatural revelation, see 1QS 4:18; 1QH^a 12:28, 17:23, 19:19; 1QpHab 7:4-5; 4Q300 1a ii-b 2; 4Q417 1 i 8-9. For examples of mysteries being "revealed," see 1QH^a 9:21; 1Q26 1 4; 4Q270 (4QD^e) 2 ii 13; 4Q416 2 iii 18; 4Q418 123 ii 4.

19:6-20:6).[40] Likewise, according to a hymn of the Maskil in the *Hodayot*, the Maskil ("Instructor") blesses God for his divine instruction in wonderful mysteries; God literally "makes [them] known to me" (הודעתני) (1QH^a 5:19-20 of *Hodayah* 5:12-6:33; cf. also 1QH^a 15:30). As a result of this divine instruction, the speaker at one point declares that God has made him an "expert interpreter of wonderful mysteries" (ומליץ דעת ברזי פלא) (1QH^a 10:15).

The question remains, however, *how* are both the "mystery of existence" and the "wonderful mysteries" revealed through divinely inspired instruction: by studying written texts, by listening to oral performance, or by some combination of both? The "mystery of existence," which is primarily discussed in *Instruction*, covers a wide spectrum of esoteric knowledge including eschatology, history, creation, and ethics (Goff 2013:14-17; Kampen 2011:46-50). By means of the "mystery of existence," God creates, maintains, and governs the cosmos (4Q417 1 i 8-9).[41] But throughout all these connotations, as Matthew Goff observes in his commentary on *Instruction*, the mystery of existence "signifies something that should be studied" and is normally "accompanied by an imperative that encourages contemplation" (Goff 2013:14; see, for example, 4Q417 1 i 6-7).[42] Even more importantly, as pointed out by Kampen, the verb "to uncover" or "to reveal" (גלה) is found six times in the phrase "revealed to your ear(s) the mystery of existence" (גלה אוזנכה ברז נהיה) (Kampen 2011:206).[43] On account of this, according to Kampen, the "mystery of existence" was most likely an "unwritten body of knowledge" that relies "on a continuing oral tradition passed on by teachers" (59).[44] At the very least, this verbal association indicates that the mystery of existence was something that was studied and revealed in an oral context.

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[40] Cf. also 1QH^a 26:14-15 of *Hodayah* 25:34-27:3, a hymn of the Maskil ("Instructor"), where the liturgical master leads public worship by blessing God for "sealing up mysteries and revealing hidden things." According to this trope, mysteries are analogous to "hidden/revealed" laws (see above). As a result, mysteries are sometimes equated with both the community's regulations (1QH^a 20:23) and the community's council (1QH^a 12:29, 19:12-13, 20:15-16).

[41] The "mystery of existence" pertains to the entire chronological order, the whole course of history from beginning to end. It covers the natural order of things, the workings of good and evil, and the divine role in the past, present, and future (Goff 2013:16; Kampen 2011:47; Thomas 2009:153-56).

[42] According to Goff, the "mystery of existence" is presented as "knowledge that can be ascertained through the study of supernatural knowledge" (2013:15).

[43] Cf. 1Q26 1 4; 4Q416 2 iii 18//4Q418 10a+10b 1; 4Q418 123 ii 4; 4Q418 184 2; 4Q418 190 2; 4Q423 5 1. According to 4Q416 2 iii 18, for example, God has "uncovered your ear to the mystery of existence (גלה אוזנכה ברז נהיה)." Some minor variation exists among these occurrences, however. According to 4Q418 123 ii 4, "God uncovered the ear of those who understand through the mystery of existence" (גלה אל אוזן מבינים ברז נהיה) (4Q418 123 ii 4). In 4Q418 190 2, the noun "ear" is plural: "uncover your [ea]rs to the mystery of [existence]." The above translations of *Instruction* are from Kampen 2011:73, 146, 161. Last, as Kampen also argues, the reference to "he uncovered our ear" in 4Q299 8 6 probably evokes this same notion (206).

[44] Kampen's full quote is worth repeating: "Since the center of this group's [i. e., the addressees of *Instruction*] existence is around an unwritten body of knowledge known as the 'mystery of existence,' elements of which are explained within *Instruction* but which rely on a continuing oral tradition passed on by "teachers" within the group, this is not public knowledge available to anyone. It is rather an exclusive body of knowledge available only to those who make the commitment to join this group, the first step in appropriating the knowledge of the mystery of existence" (2011:59).

Similarly, according to the authors of the *Hodayot*, "wonderful mysteries" cover a wide spectrum of esoteric knowledge. They pertain to God's acts of judgment and redemption over both his creation and his elect (Thomas 2009:136-44). "Wonderful mysteries" often describe God's providential care over nature, or the salvation and deliverance of God's elect community both in the present age and in the age to come (Thomas 2009:141-44). More importantly, like the "mystery of existence," "wonderful mysteries" are also revealed (גלה) to one's ears and spoken with a voice. In the *Hodayot*, for example, the speaker understands God's wonderful mysteries because God has revealed them to his/her ears: "These things I know because of understanding that comes from you, for you have opened my ears to wonderful mysteries" (כיא גליתה אוזני לרזי פלא) (1QHᵃ 9:23).[45] Shortly after, still speaking about these mysteries, the speaker declares that anything he could "say" (אדבר) or "make heard" (ואשמיעה) has already been made known by God.[46] Moreover, the speaker "recites" (ואספרה) God's wonders and commands his audience to "hear" (שמעו), so that they may properly understand his divinely inspired knowledge (1QHᵃ 9:35-36). In sum, the speaker describes himself as someone who has audibly disclosed the knowledge that God has revealed in his ears. Like the "mystery of existence," the "wonderful mysteries" are both spoken and heard, orally taught and aurally revealed.[47]

Conclusion

In this article, I use Foley's fourfold taxonomy of oral traditional texts to discuss two bodies of authoritative oral tradition evidenced by the Scrolls: 1) revealed/hidden things and 2) mysteries. More importantly, I suggest that the sectarian communities associated with the Dead Sea Scrolls witnessed the development of certain "oral traditional texts" derived from these bodies of oral tradition. The first body of oral tradition, called "hidden" and "revealed" things, consists of sectarian regulations and authoritative interpretation that God "reveals" through revelation and exegesis. These revealed and hidden laws constitute the "Ruling," an oral traditional text generated from oral performance and textual exegesis during community meetings. More specifically, the "Ruling" is a "Voice from the Past," as it was transmitted both orally and textually, but written records only preserved traces of its body of hidden/revealed tradition.

The second complex of oral tradition, described by various constructions with "mysteries," contains a vast body of exclusive and esoteric knowledge. These "mysteries" twice

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[45] Likewise, according to 1QHᵃ 6:13, "yo[u yourself revealed] in our hearing [wonderful mysteries] (וא]תה [רזי פלא) גליתה אוזננו ל]." Cf. also 1QHᵃ 15:41, where the speaker declares that God has "opened my ear to reports of your wonders" (ולשמועות פלאכה גליתה אוזני). In several other instances, the synonym פתח describes God opening the speaker's ears (1QHᵃ 14:7, 22:26, 22:31, 23:5, 25:12).

[46] 1QHᵃ 9:25. According to this passage, the speaker exclaims, "what could I speak that is not already known [by God], or what could I cause to be heard that has not already been explained [by God]?" (1QHᵃ 9:25).

[47] According to *Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice*, God's wonderful mysteries are described as a "sound of jubilation" (4Q401 14 ii 2-3). I can only speculate about the larger context because these lines are fragmentary. Perhaps, as Newsom (1985:139) and Newman (2008:49, 71) suggest, these mysteries constitute "hidden things" (4Q401 14 ii 7-8) that are taught by the angelic praise in God's heavenly temple.

constitute specific oral traditional texts called the "mystery of existence" and "wonderful mysteries." Moreover, two recurrent themes portray these oral traditional texts as (Foley's category of) "Oral Performance." According to the first trope, these mysteries describe a body of experiential knowledge that is transmitted through oral pedagogy. According to the second trope, these mysteries designate a body of revelatory knowledge derived from divinely inspired oral performance. In both cases, these mysteries were principally transmitted and received orally, "revealed" to one's ears apart from written texts. For the communities associated with the Scrolls, these mysteries were not primarily contained in written texts, and their descriptions of "mysteries" were records after the fact, written reports of oral performance.

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An Examination of the Poetics of Tibetan Secular Oratory: An A mdo Tibetan Wedding Speech[1]

Timothy Thurston

On an auspicious day, two families from Ne'u na Village, a small village along the Yellow River in Western China's Qinghai Province, gather to celebrate a wedding. The day has been chosen specifically for this purpose. Midway through the wedding banquet, a man stands before the crowd already so drunk that his words are almost unintelligible, and he speaks. He begins with an invocation to several deities, and then a statement about how auspicious this day is and how it has been chosen specifically for this purpose. After describing the beautiful dress of the bride down to the smallest hair ornament, he begins to describe Tibet and its geographic and historical relations with Nepal and China. Next, with exquisite imagery, he tells of the unique physical environment of the Tibetan plateau, and finally he discusses the beauty and auspiciousness of the very village in which the wedding is being held. At every turn this area and its people are described with detailed references to the religious and natural worlds in which Tibetans live. The speech is the highlight of the wedding in Ne'u na. Following the speech, guests offer gifts to the new couple—first from the groom's side, then from the bride's—and people from both sides begin antiphonal singing until late into the night.

Introduction

Tibetan oral practices have long stood on the periphery of western Tibetology. Indeed, Anne Klein has noted that, "despite the widely recognized significance of oral traditions in Tibet, relatively little has been written about them" (2003:99 n. 1). Although her work focuses almost exclusively on the oral practices within Tibet's religious traditions, this statement may also be advanced to include more secular oral traditions as well, where there are a number of translations but relatively little scholarly exegesis when compared with the much more extensive corpus of

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literature on Buddhism in Tibet.[2] This essay introduces a speech genre that is both emblematic of the great richness of the Tibetan oral tradition, and the relative paucity of western research on the topic: the *ston bshad* (*"wedding speech"*).[3]

This article attempts to further understand the unique poetic idiom and structure of Tibetan wedding speeches using an example taken from Ne'u na Village (Chinese: Ne na 尼那村). The wedding speech translated below is taken directly from the speech notebook of a noted orator, and it is a unique oral traditional text that is considered one of the best wedding speeches of Ne'u na Village. Tshe dbang rdo rje's published version includes colloquial Tibetan and modern literary Tibetan versions, as well as a transcription in the International Phonetic Alphabet in Tshe dbang rdo rje et al. (2006). This speech has been translated in full elsewhere (Thurston and Caixiangduojie 2016) and any references to the speech, the numbering of lines, and the English translations correspond to that publication. The editors of both publications have graciously allowed for some overlap between the two articles. Although I refer specifically to, and draw a majority of the examples from, this single speech, I cite interviews from other areas of A mdo to underscore the broader applicability of these examples to wedding speeches in A mdo and to the Tibetan speech genre more broadly.

Bauman and Briggs (1990:61) argue that "an adequate analysis of a single performance . . . requires sensitive ethnographic study of how its form and meaning index a broad range of discourse types." In light of this, the essay begins with an introduction to Ne'u na Village, and continues with a brief textual history of this specific wedding speech. Next, I introduce the speech's contents and structure before proceeding to examine the densely referential language of the speech in general, and unpacking the ways in which the speaker metaphorically indexes the auspiciousness of both the wedding occasion and the participants through references to deities, historical figures, religious practices, and, most importantly, the Tibetan landscape. In the Tibetan context, I show that this traditional referentiality (Foley 1995) does more than simply create powerful and aesthetically pleasing content; it also literally creates auspicious circumstances for the wedding.[4]

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[2] Some important contributions to the literature on Tibetan oral traditions include work on satirical street songs in Lhasa (Goldstein 1982), folksongs (Sangs rgyas bkra shis et al. 2015, Ramble 1995, and Anton-Luca 2002), mountain deity stories (Xie 2001 and Punzi 2013), tongue twisters (Blo brtan rdo rje et al. 2009) and proverbs (see Pirie 2009 and Sørenson and Erhard 2013a and 2013b). On the Gesar epic, meanwhile, see FitzHerbert 2015 and 2010, Yang 2001, Li 2001, and Zhambei Gyaltsho 2001. Collections of traditional orature translated into Western languages include Tournadre and Robin 2006, Lhamo Pemba 1996, and Jamgon Mipham 2015. This is not to mention the much more extensive Gesar- and intangible cultural heritage-related publications in Chinese.

[3] Some notable exceptions would be Aziz's (1985) paper on wedding poetry, Jixiancairang 2012, Blo brtan rdo rje and Stuart 2008, Nyangchakja 2016, and Bkra shis bzang po 2012.

[4] In general, this paper uses the Wylie transliteration system for Tibetan terms, and Pinyin followed by characters for Chinese terms. Where terms have obtained some currency in English, the author has elected to use these terms as they are most commonly known and spelled.

About Ne'u na Village[5]

Ne'u na Village is located along the Yellow River (T: *rma chu*) in Guide 贵德 (T: *khri ka*) county, Hainan 海南 (T: *mtsho lho*) Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, in western China's Qinghai 青海 (T: *mtsho sngon*) Province. The town is located approximately 130 kilometers to the southwest of Qinghai's capital, Xining 西宁 (T: *zi ling*), and sits at the confluence of the Yellow River and a winding stream: the Mang ra. The name Ne'u na means "head of a small meadow" and takes its name from this geographical feature relating to the winding stream (Tshe dbang rdo rje et al. 2010:2 n. 3). As the village is located along the river and at an elevation of approximately 2200 meters above sea level, the majority of Ne'u na residents traditionally engaged in agricultural work, while many also raised some livestock as well.

In recent years, two hydroelectric dams have been constructed on the Yellow River to supply electricity to Xining and beyond. The dams are located just above the village's traditional location. This radically changed the fabric of life in Ne'u na Village. The influx of migrant workers changed the area's demographics, and drastically altered traditional lifestyles. Families were forced to relocate to government-constructed houses and lost most of the land on which they had traditionally earned their living. At present, many Ne'u na residents have also abandoned their semi-pastoral existence in favor of construction work. Many have sold their sheep and only have a few pigs to support their family. Many villagers have intermarried with these migrant workers, and, in many cases, their children no longer speak Tibetan, but Qinghai dialect.

Ne'u na Village's population was traditionally composed primarily of Tibetans although there have been increasing numbers of migrant Han workers who have come to the area to help in the construction of the dams. There are also several Hui Muslim families. Religiously, the Tibetan and Han residents of Ne'u na are primarily Buddhist, and the area's largest summer festival (in Tibetan, *drug pa'i lha rtsed*)—held during the sixth month of their lunar calendar—is a multi-ethnic affair with Tibetan and Han residents of Khrika and the surrounding area coming to offer money to two Buddhist idols (Khir ka'i yul lha and Ri lang, from the Chinese *er lang* 二郎) in hopes of obtaining good fortune in the coming year.[6] While this is the easiest description, the wedding speech discussed below also clearly expresses the heavy influence of the animistic Bon religion, which maintains a strong presence in the area.[7]

Culturally, the Tibetans in this area are part of the A mdo sub-group. They speak the A mdo dialect, and several Hui residents have traditionally been able to communicate in both Tibetan and Chinese. Now, however, an increasing number of children, regardless of ethnic group, are growing up without speaking Tibetan, despite having traditionally Tibetan names, and many traditions are slowly evaporating. The wedding speech is just one such tradition.

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[5] This sketch of Ne'u na Village provides only a brief introduction to its demographic, economic, and cultural situation. A more extensive ethnography of Ne'u na may be found in Tshe dbang rdo rje et al. 2010.

[6] For more on Khri ka'i yul lha, see Buffetrille 2002.

[7] The Bon religion is "the indigenous religion of Tibet" (Tucci 1980:213). The nearby Bonpo village, known as Mdzo sna, was originally located near Ne'u na Village, although their relative locations have changed due to recent relocations associated with the construction of hydroelectric power stations.

Weddings as Contexts for Verbal Art in A mdo

In A mdo, the wedding is the context for a variety of traditional verbal art forms that vary regionally within A mdo and across the Tibetan Plateau more generally. In Mang ra (Chinese: Guinan 贵南) County, for example, people sing love songs between the host village's women and the male escorts of the bride or groom (depending on the kind of marriage). In Ne'u na Village, when the honored guests come to the home where the wedding is to be held, they are greeted with alcohol and sung toasts (Tshe dbang rdo rje et al. 2010:44-65). In other instances, the wedding planner gives a speech, wedding songs and folk songs are sung, *a rtsed* ("paired folk dances"), *rdung len* ("songs with accompaniment on the mandolin"), and *glu shags* ("competitive antiphonal singing").

The constellation of folk performances is also regionally specific. In Mang ra County, for example, it is customary for the eloquent representatives to hold a "conversation" at the beginning, and for uncles of the visiting side and the women in the host village to sing love songs together outside the house (Thurston and Tsering Samdrup 2012), while weddings in nearby farming areas like Reb gong feature village women pulling the ears of the groom and matchmaker (37-38), and I have heard anecdotally of similar practices in neighboring Xunhua County as well. Blo brtan rdo rje and Stuart (2007) meanwhile begin their examination of the wedding day earlier, pointing out that songs are sung to awaken the bride, songs that are followed by her mother's lamentations and the bride's response, as well as by separate tea speeches, liquor speeches, and bread speeches. The same holds for traditional weddings outside of A mdo. In Khams, for example, Bkra shis bzang po (2012) notices wedding speeches, wedding dance songs, and wedding songs all as integral parts of a multi-day traditional wedding. Tenzin (2008), meanwhile, documents sending-off ceremonies, greetings, and a number of short speeches and songs. Weddings also seem to be key contexts for oral performance in Ladakh (see, for example, De Rossi Filibeck 2016) and Nepal (Aziz 1985).

Despite the wedding's traditional role as a context for the performance of oral traditions, it is also important to recognize that not every wedding has a wedding speech. According to one informant, whom I will call Klu rgyal, *ston bshad zer go no 'di spyir stang gi bshad yod na/ de ring ston mo byed ni ra ston mo btsa' ya gzig yin no 'di bshad go gi/ da ston mo gzig ga ston mo rtsa mo gzig yin na da bshad rgyu ma red/ 'bring ba gzig yin na ra bshad rgyu ma red/* ("This thing called a wedding speech, generally speaking, if you're going to have a wedding today, then you have to have one. Well, if a wedding, if it's a simple wedding, then you won't give one, nor will you give one at a middling [wedding])" (personal communication, August 19, 2010). For weddings, then, the speech holds pride of place.

Tibetan Wedding Speeches in A mdo

The term *ston bshad,* which I translate here simply as "wedding speech," combines two separate terms: *ston mo* ("wedding/party") and *bshad pa* ("speech"). A *ston bshad* literally refers

to any speech made for any festive occasion, though in A mdo it refers primarily to wedding speeches. Indeed, although the opening syllable may refer to any type of party, it is most often used specifically for wedding occasions. The latter syllable *bshad*, meanwhile, is applied to a variety of forms of oratory.

Wedding speeches, for the purposes of this article, are long verse compositions often reaching hundreds of lines in length, somewhat bound to the context of the wedding event, and devoted to the creation of auspiciousness at the wedding. The economy of language required in such verse performances, and the staccato delivery expected of the tradition's competent performers, ensures that orators frequently rely on particular, culturally bound lexical items that fit the rhythmic and topical requirements of the wedding speech. Moreover, the wedding speech is formally and lexically similar to a number of other performance genres on the Tibetan plateau. They praise the bride and groom, the guests, the religious practitioners who divined the perfect day for the wedding, and the ideal location of the village, all of which create an auspicious wedding event.

Wedding speeches are, perhaps unsurprisingly, meant to be performed at weddings. In general, however, wedding speeches are not so context-dependent as to preclude performance for a foreign researcher with*out* an actual party. In the summer of 2010, while working in the Reb gong region,[8] I recorded wedding speeches from Hor nag and Chu ma villages. One orator performed in his place of business in the prefectural seat, while the other performed his own wedding speech in his home for me and a friend (also from the village). Nevertheless, the atmosphere is quite important to the performer's experience, as this orator excused his own performance, saying it would have been better with liquor (which he said would make any speech performance better) and a better atmosphere. This makes wedding speeches distinct from some other folk genres like *bsang mchod* (*"purification offerings"*) which may only be uttered in the context of making an offering of *bsang* (see Thurston 2012), or of *gtam dpe* ("proverbs") for which there are no restrictions.[9] In addition to being only partly bound to the wedding as its appropriate performance context, wedding speeches are also not bound by the same textual rigidity as some other genres. For example, while both *gtam dpe* and *bsang mchod* require relatively exact reproduction, the wedding speech appears to have no such requirements.

Orators of A mdo's wedding speeches are exclusively male, and can gain great prestige in their local communities for this ability. In many areas, the degree of difficulty associated with performing secular oratory is such that the orator's eloquence was traditionally valued more

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[8] Reb gong is a region that "may roughly be seen as identical with today's Huangnan Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture including the counties of Tongren, Jainca [Gcan tsha], Zekog [Rtse khog] and Henan [Rma lho]" (Gruschke 2001:51). It also may refer to communities in the Dgu chu river valley and its tributaries, or people who go to the valley's main monastery, Rong bo monastery. By this definition, contemporary Henan Mongolian Autonomous County, which is administratively part of the Huangnan prefecture to which Tongren, Gcan tsha, and Rtse khog also belong, may not be a part of "Reb gong" as culturally defined, as the county's inhabitants are more commonly aligned with Bla brang monastery in neighboring Gansu Province. For more discussions of the traditional definitions of Reb gong, see Mkhar rtse rgyal 2009 and Yangdon Dhondup 2011. For more on the cultural practices of Reb gong, see Makley 2013a and 2013b, Snying bo rgyal and Rino 2008, and Yangdon Dhondup et al. 2013.

[9] For more on Tibetan *gtam dpe,* see Cüppers and Sørensen 1998, Pirie 2009, Sørensen and Erhard 2013a and 2013b, and Tournadre and Robin 2006.

highly than folksinging (which is considered a more common skill). Indeed, Ekvall notes that Tibetan secular oratory (1964:143):

> is extremely stylized, has a prestige rating high above the less artificial form of speech-making, and is very frequently used by acknowledged orators—whether ecclesiastics, chiefs, or men of recognized eloquence. It is quite difficult to acquire and practice, and, on first hearing, is hard to understand . . . [it is] characterized by a steady, uninterrupted flow of words uttered at a uniform rate, with no pauses to function as natural punctuation.

Meanwhile, when asked about the qualities of a good orator, Klu rgyal (himself an experienced performer of wedding speeches) argued: *khi dge'i bshad pa kha lce bde dgos gi/ gnyis ba spobs pa yod dgos gi/ gzhan gi bshad rgyu'o de dga' ba yang na spro ba dgos gi/*[10] ("His speech must be eloquent, secondly he must have confidence, and he must enjoy or have interest in the speech of others," personal communication, August 19, 2010). Ekvall's and Klu rgyal's twin invocation of "eloquence" suggests the importance of this term. Eloquence here is the idea that the speaker can speak quickly, think on his feet, and ensure that his voice rises and falls at appropriate moments. Moreover, eloquence relies on the speaker's ability to employ the proper culturally bound idioms and multiforms, and participate in the creation of an auspicious wedding event. Bravery, meanwhile, speaks to the type of courage one must have to get up in front of many people and take responsibility for a display of verbal art. Eloquence, however, is not necessarily the same as intelligibility. Some interlocutors have even suggested to me that this intelligibility or understanding is not necessarily easy for all audiences. Many Tibetans with whom I have spoken confess that they are unfamiliar with a number of the references made.

Textual History

The wedding speech that forms the primary textual source for this study was originally published in 2005 as part of a book describing weddings in an A mdo Tibetan village (Tshe dbang rdo rje et al. 2010). This work provides three versions of the speech itself: "Oral A mdo Tibetan," IPA, and Modern Literary Tibetan transcriptions. The Oral version presents the text as it was written in the performer's own speech book. The IPA version then transcribes the Tibetan script into the International Phonetic Alphabet. Finally, the Modern Literary Tibetan version attempts to make the Oral A mdo version conform to more traditional Tibetan spelling and grammar in hopes that it will be more intelligible to a Tibetan audience.[11]

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[10] Though this article primarily uses the Wylie Romanization system to transcribe Tibetan terms, some colloquial terms have no standard written form. In these cases, I use a romanization based on the orthography sometimes employed in the literature of A mdo authors. *Khi dge* for example, is used to transcribe the A mdo Tibetan version of the third person singular masculine pronoun.

[11] It is worth pointing out that while there have been recent moves toward more vernacular literature (*phal skad*), Tibetans largely resist alternative spellings, writing in dialect, or writing that does not use received "literary language" (*yig skad*).

Prior to 2003, we are told, this wedding speech was often performed at weddings. When Tshe dbang rdo rje first recorded it the speaker was too inebriated to give the speech clearly; however, the orator did provide the collector with the textual versions on which the orator had based his performances. The speech translated here is taken from a locally renowned orator named Bstan 'dzin (b. 1963) from Rdzong 'go Village, which is located nearby Ne'u na, and some say that the two were once a single village (Tshe dbang rdo rje et al. 2010:20 n. 57). It was copied directly from his speech notebook on February 27, 2003.

The text Tshe dbang rdo rje copied on that day is what we may consider a "voiced text" (Foley 2002:40-45): a text that is meant to be performed. And yet the performer's libretto is now silent. Although we can recreate some of the paralinguistic features associated with the genre, this speech will likely never be performed again. It is part of a growing number of silenced traditional voices on the Tibetan Plateau. Nonetheless, we can learn much about the nature of the poetic rules of Tibetan secular oratory from this text, as well as some of the larger cultural expectations that frequently accompany such a project.

Theoretically Approaching Speechmaking

In order to understand the many insights that this text has to offer, one must first understand the language and structure of the text as the structure of the text helps to inform the content. The first question, then, is to determine the best framework from which to adequately approach the speech on its own terms. Since there is no longer an available audio-visual recording of a performance of this particular speech, and because the tradition itself as practiced in Ne'u na Village is rapidly dying out, a true performance-centered approach cannot be applied to understand this work. It may, however, be possible to examine the speech's poetics to examine issues of parallelism, style, and formula that are common to this wedding speech and to better understand the poetics of secular oratory in A mdo more generally and how they operate not simply to entertain, but to actually create the ideal cosmogonic circumstances for a good wedding.

As this is a silent performance text, I follow Foley in accepting that "the continuity of reception of a work that stems from oral tradition but which survives only as a text will depend on the reader's ability to recognize the rhetorical signals that are the bequest of performance and tradition, and then to credit these signals with the institutionalized meanings they carry as a dedicated register of verbal communication" (1995:81). Through examining these "rhetorical signals," it is possible to recognize how both the structure and the content of the Tibetan wedding speech engage with evenemental forces to create auspicious circumstances for the wedding event.

Furthermore, when embarking on a genre-based study, it is important to recognize that form is also inherently related to meaning (Hymes 1981, cf. Briggs 1988). Bauman's (1977) concept of the keys of performance acting as framing devices for the speech act and indicating to the audience that a performance is occurring, provide an excellent starting point for this analysis. In the ensuing discussion, I look specifically to three keys to Tibetan oratory performance that we can see preserved in this wedding speech. Each of these "keys" serves a double purpose. It

centripetally directs us towards a keener definition of the *ston bshad* ("wedding speech") genre, while centrifugally pointing towards much broader cultural themes that underlie the speech's intended function and reception of the speech within the context of a wedding.

It is then helpful for the reader to keep in mind the fact that the discussion given here is very limited. Due to restrictions of time and space, this is, at best, only an introduction. It draws out some aspects that can help the reader understand both elements specific to the *ston bshad* genre, and others that further our understanding of Tibetan speaking styles more generally.

Structure of the Speech

The Ne'u na wedding speech may be etically divided into several basic parts. The first thirty-six lines comprise an invocation, in which the speaker praises several Buddhist deities and mythical figures, ranging from Buddhist meditational deities and Padmasambhava, who, according to legend, converted a number of local deities to Buddhism thereby allowing Buddhism to flourish in Tibet (Tucci 1980:106), to the epic hero King Gesar, to more personal tutelary and protective deities. Immediately following this invocation of Buddhist deities is an extra invocation of Bon deities. This section praising the Bon deities focuses on personal protector deities as well as worship of the sky and earth. Additionally, the structure in this section changes from couplets to three-line iterations.

The second section continues with a discussion of the events of the wedding up to that point in time. This includes the *A khu dpon*'s[12] divination, which set this particular day as the most auspicious day for this couple to wed, as well as the clothing of the bride, groom, and their guests. Following that, the orator provides a brief disclaimer in which he states that he is not a capable speaker.

Next, the speaker launches into a description of the place they are in, the beauty of the perfect bride and the actions of a good groom, a description of the different kinds of marriages, the uncles, and more.[13] The tripartite structure in which things are described in sequences of three from highest or best to lowest or worst, typical of Tibetan folksongs, is employed frequently in describing the different kinds of marriages, and then later also in briefer forms referring to the types of wedding speeches, listeners, praises, and gatherings. The speaker then praises the uncles who play an important role in the wedding itself. He again discusses the tantric practitioners who are responsible for divining the most auspicious day possible for the wedding, and how the day itself is auspicious. He ends his speech with a discussion of the brilliance of the feast, which takes place as soon as he finishes.

With this basic introduction to the speech's structure, it becomes possible to examine the use of some of these special formulae in order to understand some of the formal standards of Tibetan oratory. Additionally, in examining these keys, it is possible to see how they are part of a

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[12] The *A khu dpon* (also commonly known as a *sngags pa*), is a local term for a tantric practitioner, who is also skilled in arts of divination.

[13] The *A zhang* "maternal uncle" plays a very important role in Tibetan weddings in much of the A mdo cultural region (see Tshe dbang rdo rje et al. 2010, and Blo brtan rdo rje and Stuart 2008).

whole nexus of auspiciousness that permeates this speech. Such an examination naturally begins with the first line, an opening formula that helps to clue the audience both into the act of performance, but also serves to distinguish the speech in a religious fashion as well.

Keys to Performance: Special Formulae and Colloquial Speech Styles, The Case of Ye

One of the most obvious ways to signal the beginning of a performance is through the use of special formulae. These formulae may be used to meet metrical requirements, to serve as mnemonic devices, or for any number of other purposes; but despite these differences, they signal to the audience that the performer has shifted to a different register and interpretive frame. In Tibetan secular oratory, the particle *ye* is one such special formula. It appears at the beginning of each new section of the performance, signaling a shift from other parts of the wedding event to the wedding speech performance frame. In addition to beginning each section with *ye,* the orator concludes sections with a loud *zer rgyu red* ("one should say that . . ."), and the audience is expected to respond with a loud and long *ye* of their own. This section examines the uses of *ye* in Tibetan oratory and how the lines introduced with this particle help to further audience interpretation of different sections of the performance.

The particle *ye* does not serve a grammatical function, and despite the fact that it can sometimes be translated into English as the verb "to begin," it does not seem to carry such a literal meaning here. In deviating from its common lexical meaning, the particle's use in oratory suggests a change in register. At first usage, it immediately alerts the audience to a new style of speech occurring. But the particle also appears frequently within the text. Almost always beginning or ending sections of the text, introducing new content or structures, it appears in 28 of the speech's 546 lines and serves a similar function in every instance.

This formula can also be seen outside of the wedding speech tradition, as it also appears in speeches associated with hair changing rituals elsewhere in Khri ka County as well.[14] There is also a variant of the *ye* opening, *ya legs so* (see Tshe dpal rdo rje et al. 2009). In nearby Gcan tsha County, meanwhile, wedding speeches often begin with an elongated *ya* sound. These speeches tend to be much shorter in length and drastically different in terms of content (Blo brtan rdo rje and Stuart 2008).

Ye, however, is not simply an opening formula in the sense that it begins the text. Rather it is more an indication that a new section of the speech has begun, which includes a new topic and a new set of formulas with it. In this way, it represents a special code that allows the audience to recognize that a speech is being given. What immediately follows the initial *ye* often tells the audience about the content of the corresponding section. The first line of the speech is an excellent example of how the phrase immediately following *ye* introduces the entire section following it. The first line reads, "*Ye mchod oM a hUM*" and is repeated three times. The last three syllables, *oM, a*, and *hUM*, are "seed syllables" that, taken together, can elevate regular speech to sacred oration (Ekvall 1964:115-118). These frame both the beginning and the end of

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[14] Hair changing ceremonies are rites of passage for girls aged 13, 15, and 17 to announce their womanhood, and their readiness to begin having suitors and engaging in sexual relations. For more information see Tshe dpal rdo rje et al. 2009; see also Blo bzang tshe ring et al. 2012.

the speech as a whole, but they also frame the sections concerned with invoking the deities. In doing so, the whole speech, and these sections in particular, are immediately understood to be sacred words that activate a whole matrix of ideas about sacred speech, the natural world, purity, and auspiciousness.[15]

The ability to discursively transform ordinary situations is an important part of Tibetan religious thought, as Ekvall points out when writing that "[t]he ascription of powers to the spoken and written word and the use of appropriate thaumaturgic gestures and formulas—written, spoken, mechanically repeated, or represented visually—to achieve religious ends, coerce gods and demons, and control the elements are both intrinsic parts of the Tantric importation" (1964:26).[16] In this way, the use of the seed syllables suggests that the wedding speech, beginning with the very first line, is not merely praising or entertaining, but is actually *doing* something in the context of the wedding event.

Although somewhat different in its intentions, it is useful to examine these special formulas and the speech as a whole with this important cultural construct in mind. Rarely explicitly mentioned, this concept is an underlying precept for the rest of the speech. The ensuing sections will show how, through the repetition of these auspicious phrases, auspicious place names, people, deities, and religious concepts, the words of the speaker further create the auspicious circumstances of the wedding.

Keys to Performance: Parallelism, Linking the Genre to the Larger Folk Tradition

In addition to the special formulas mentioned above, the text makes extensive use of certain kinds of parallelism, generally in terms of three- or four-line groups that repeat certain grammatical structures. Moreover, the text shows several examples of what Yang (2001) would call cross-reiterative locutions, a Tibetan poetic practice in the Gesar epic that repeats a similar grammatical structure. This speech, too, features several such cross-reiterative locutions, including the following, taken from lines 2 through 7 of the speech:

2 *Gnas chos dbyings dag pa'i zhing khams nas//*

3 *yab chos sku kun tu bzang po mchod//*

4 *lho dpal dang ldan pa'i zhing khams nas//*

5 *lha longs sku thugs rje chen po mchod//*

6 *gnas bya rgod phung bo'i ri bo nas//*

7 *lha bcom ldan rgyal ba shAkya thub mchod//*

2 From the pureland Dharmadhātu,

3 Worship the father Dharmakāya Samantabhadra.

4 From the the Southern pureland Shrimat,

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15 For a more detailed discussion of these issues in Tibetan speechmaking, see Thurston 2012.

16 For more on sympathetic magic and the "magical power of words" in other cultural contexts, see Tambiah 1968.

[5] Worship Sambhogakāya, the Great Compassionate One [Avalokiteśvara].

[6] From Vulture Peak Mountain,

[7] Worship the victorious Bhagavan Shākyamuni.

These sorts of "complex prayers" (Yang 2001:304) appear primarily in the early sections of the Ne'u na wedding speech, in which the orator invokes a host of deities. Later in the text, these instances of multi-line formulaic repetition occur less frequently, yet they nevertheless play an important part throughout the speech, particularly in those sections that might be designated as prayer or invocation.

Formulas, however, also come in larger motifs and themes, for example, the three-part formula, which is an important part of Tibetan oral tradition. This works in two different fashions. First, the speaker can explicitly declare that there will be three of something. Lines 351-354 provide a brief example of this sort of cross-reiterative locution:

[351] *Ye da gtam gyi 'dus pa rnam gsum cig bshad na//*

[352] *Stag 'dus gzig 'dus nags la 'dus gi/*

[353] *Nya 'dus sram 'dus mtsho la 'dus gi/*

[354] *Pha 'dus bu 'dus gral la 'dus gi/*

[351] *Ye!* Now if I speak of the three assemblies of speeches:

[352] The tiger assembly and the leopard assembly gather in the forest.

[353] The fish assembly and the otter assembly gather in the lake.

[354] The father assembly and the son assembly gather in rows.

Additionally, there are situations in which the tripartite structure takes on a middling length. These forms go into much greater detail and range from 7 to 15 lines. The longest of these is given below.

[328] *Ye gtam gyi bstod pa rnam gsum cig bshad na//*

[329] *mthon pos mthon po bstod gi/*

[330] *dgung a sngon kha ya sprin gyis bstod gi/*

[331] *mgyogs pos mgyogs po bstod gi/*

[332] *rta 'do ba'i gom pa rlung gis bstod gi/*

[333] *'phyor bas phyor ba bstod gi/*

[334] *gos tsha ru'i 'dab ma sram gyis bstod gi/*

[335] *ser pos ser po bstod gi/*

[336] *ban de ser pos dbus bstod gi/*

[337] *ngang ba ser pos mtsho bstod gi/*

[338] *smyug ma ser pos mda' bstod gi/*

[339] *sngon pos sngon po bstod gi/*

[340] *khrung khrung sngon mos dgung bstod gi/*

[341] *khu byug sngon mos lo bstod gi/*

[342] *rma bya sngon mos sgro bstod gi/*

[328] *Ye*! If I speak of the three praises of speeches:

[329] The exalted praise the exalted;

[330] The azure blue sky is praised by its companion, the clouds;

[331] The swift praise the swift;

[332] The steps of the excellent horse are praised by the wind;

[333] The rich praise the rich;

[334] The lambskin robe's hem is praised by the otter.

[335] The yellow praise the yellow;

[336] The yellow monk praises Dbus [Central Tibet];

[337] The yellow duck praises the lake;

[338] The yellow bamboo praises the arrow.

[339] The blue praise the blue;

[340] The blue crane praises the sky;

[341] The blue cuckoo praises the year;

[342] The blue peacock praises its feathers.

The final form of the tripartite structure is much longer than the two forms above and occurs over the course of three different stanzas. A good example is in the three kinds of weddings, in which the first stanza talks about the highest form of wedding, the second discusses the middle wedding (T: *gnyen gyi bar ma*), while the third stanza discusses the last kind of wedding (T: *gnyen gyi gzhug ma*). Here, the speaker describes a descending hierarchy of weddings, the highest or first being a wedding between deities. The second is a historical wedding between the Tibetan king and a Nepalese princess, and the final kind of wedding is between the same Tibetan king and a Chinese princess (more on these historical figures below).

These groups of three might best be considered "themes," defined as "the groups of ideas regularly used in telling a tale in the formulaic style of traditional song" (Lord 1960:68). These are an important element of the rhetorical strategies available to the orator and in the Tibetan folk tradition more generally. The audience, hearing about the first kind of wedding, can reasonably expect to hear about a middle and last form of wedding in a descending order. When hearing about the *rab* ("best") of a kind of thing, they can expect two more. These themes vary considerably in length and detail. Some of the themes in this wedding speech include the three kinds of weddings (lines 200-265) and three kinds of audiences (lines 272-281). In addition, there are structures that also include *rnam gsum* ("three kinds of") constructions at the head of sections. Examples include the three praises of speeches (T: *gtam gyi bstod pa rnam gsum,* lines 329-343), the three great things of the speech (T: *gtam gyi che ba rnam gsum*, lines 344-347), the three kinds of gatherings (*gtam gyi tshogs pa rnam gsum*, lines 348-351), the three types of meetings (*gtam gyi 'dus pa rnam gsum*, lines 352-355), and three kinds of happiness (*gtam gyi dga' ba rnam gsum*, lines 363-367).

This parallelism gains further support from the orator's sporadic use of metered lines in the speech. Sujata (2005) shows the importance of meter in traditional Tibetan folk songs, and their influence on the works of the famed seventeenth-century Tibetan Siddha and composer of spiritual songs, Skal ldan rgya mtsho. In a 2012 publication on another genre of Tibetan speech, I

noted the similarities between the meter employed in Tibetan speeches and in folksong lyrics (Thurston 2012:59). And those held true for the speech in question at the time, though it does not for this wedding speech. Lines in this wedding speech stretch from six to over a dozen syllables in length. Nevertheless, those sections exhibiting greater use of parallel structure—particularly those engaged in the act of praise—employ a meter similar to that used in *sa bstod* oratory and folksong. In this way, poetic features like meter, parallelism, and special formulas are important keys to speech performance in Ne'u na Village.

Keys to Performance: Figurative Language, Metaphorically Indexing Auspiciousness

As a text created to support the transmission of a Tibetan oral tradition, it is important to recognize that this speech adheres to many of the rules and definitions of performance, particularly that "there is something going on in the communicative interchange which says to the auditor, 'interpret what I say in some special sense; do not take it to mean what the words alone, taken literally, would convey'" (Bauman 1977:7). Thus, as Foley points out while discussing the formulaic expressions of ancient Greek narrative poetry in the form of the Homeric hymns, "noun-epithet formulas, and to an extent all such components of the traditional performance register, promote a continuity of reception by indexing extrasituational ideas and realities according to a predetermined code" (1995:158). This section introduces some of the elements of the "traditional performance register" for this genre of Tibetan oratory. It first examines traditional ideas of purity and auspiciousness in A mdo culture, before examining how these concepts manifest themselves throughout the speech. I examine four major themes for how they interact with concepts of purity in speech: deities, historical figures, the natural world, and religious concepts.

Ideas of Purity in A mdo

Ideas of purity in Tibetan culture have rarely been explicitly discussed in scholarly literature, and yet they are pervasive in Tibetan everyday life and important to how Tibetans interact with the world around them.[17] Auspiciousness and purity are marked in the Tibetan landscape, and in many elements of the daily, monthly, and annual calendar. Concepts of purity are indexed in the wearing of amulets, the daily burning of incense and juniper (T: *bsang*), pilgrimage to holy places (see Huber 1994), and frequent requests for spiritual aid and purification through communal and individual religious practices.

The wedding and other ritual and festival occasions, moreover, require a level of auspiciousness that extends far beyond the purity and good luck of everyday life. As in other life-cycle rituals, a ritual specialist—in A mdo (and particularly the region's more remote areas) this is often a tantric practitioner (often referred to locally as *a khu dpon*)—is consulted specifically to divine the most auspicious day for the wedding. It is this extra level of auspiciousness that is

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[17] One of the few works on concepts of purity in Tibetan culture deals with another important lifecycle moment: childbirth (see Klu mo tshe ring and Roche 2011).

being consistently referenced and even created in the wedding speech. Indeed, the text only occasionally mentions auspiciousness explicitly, but accesses notions of auspiciousness through figurative language that references deities, historical figures, locations and religious concepts. Each mention metonymically refers the Tibetan audience to a much larger set of notions, practices, mythology, and historical background.

Deities

In addition to the first 64 lines, which explicitly offer praise to several gods in turn, ranging from tutelary and hearth deities to major deities within the Tibetan Buddhist pantheon like Samantabhadra, the text makes several references to deities in the course of describing the various kinds of marriage. The surface-level implications of this are obvious: it connects the wedding with religious activity. Additionally, the auspiciousness of this event crosses traditional religious boundaries as seen with the inclusion of Hindu, Buddhist, and Bon deities. Although sometimes there are questions as to whether all the references would be understood by every member of the audience, these cross-religious moments are significant. For example, in describing the wedding of the heaven realm (lines 199-216), the highest wedding, the Buddhist cosmology, with famous deities and Bodhisattvas, is given primacy. In describing the middle wedding (lines 229-249), on the other hand, all the places in which Buddhist deities had been described before are now given to famous Bon practitioners. If nothing else, this makes historical sense, as Buddhism was only introduced to Tibet during the imperial period.

Later in the speech, deities are used in an entirely different fashion. In the description of the highest form of wedding, the deities are used to show which roles at the wedding are the most important. In this section, different deities are given different positions and responsibilities in the wedding. These positions, associated with the first wedding, a wedding between gods, correspond to the most highly regarded positions in the wedding: the *ja dpon* ("tea manager"), *phyi dpon* ("outer manager"), *bar ba* ("matchmaker"), *bag rogs* ("bridesmaids"), and so forth. The Ne'u na wedding would also have people fulfilling each of these roles. Linking the present wedding with a divine wedding with deities in all these important roles helps to index the extremely auspicious nature of the wedding ceremony more generally, and the Ne'u na wedding more specifically. As a custom directly related to and emanating from the heavenly realm, marriage is placed as an auspicious thing. This is made further evident by the deities that are accorded certain positions. Leading roles are accorded not to just any religious figure, but to some of the most important deities and Boddhisattvas in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition: Padma Sambhava, Manjusri, and Vajrapani. We also see the importance of certain phases of the wedding: the traditions of gifts for the matchmaker and of bride-wealth are clearly important parts of the wedding as formulated in this speech. Glaring in their absence, however, are the *bdud* (demons) and *'dre* (ghosts) with the exception of a single reference to *btsan* demons (line 514). Even in this instance, however, the reference is used to show the power of the people of the four clans of Sgo me. Thus, these classes, which serve as the antitheses of the gods (T: *lha*) and are associated with inauspiciousness, have little to no place either in the speech or in the wedding.

Historical Figures

Beyond the mentions of various deities, historical figures are used to show important traditions related to the wedding. The personages vary from the great Tibetan king Srong btsan sgam po—whose fame spreads across the Tibetan plateau and who is also well known in Chinese traditions as well—to Bon adepts and more. This next section examines the presence and implication of these varied figures in the text of this wedding speech.

Most important among the historical figures are the brides and groom of the middle and lower forms of wedding. The groom in both cases is the great Tibetan king Srong btsan sgam po. In the middle wedding, the bride is his Nepalese wife Khri lcam, while the lower wedding involves the Chinese princess Wencheng (T: *kong jo*). These two princesses are credited, in Tibetan lore, with bringing Buddhism to Tibet (see Sørensen 1994), and their marriages constitute Tibet's most famous weddings. The presence of these three important historical figures is not without its historical resonance for listeners. In addition to evoking the arrival of Buddhism, the text also reminds readers of the fact that the Chinese princess and the Tibetan king are said to have been emanations of two great deities: Avalokiteshvara (T: *spyan ras gzigs*) —the Boddhisattva of Compassion and the protector of Tibet—in the case of Song btsan sgam po, and Tārā (T: *rje btsun sgrol ma*) in the case of Princess Wencheng.

Interestingly, juxtaposed with these heroes of the Buddhist religion are Bon adepts given important roles in the wedding process: Bon scholars like Dran pa nam mkha' and Dpyad bu khri shes (a possible misspelling of Dpyad bu khri shing, one of Bon po gshen rab's spiritual sons). While it makes historical sense that there would be Bon adepts prior to the introduction of Buddhism, and while these references may also be related to the presence of Bon communities elsewhere in Khri ka County, the exact resonance that these have for an audience of mostly Buddhist Tibetans in Ne'u na village is hard to discern. In fact, at least some Ne'u na residents were unable to identify these characters. More importantly for present purposes, however, is that these are all excellent people. Through aligning the wedding with heavenly and historical weddings of great importance, the speaker not only connects the wedding event with a greater tradition of weddings, but also further indexes the great auspiciousness of such events.

The Natural World

Beyond the historical figures and unchanging deities, however, the Tibetan natural landscape is prominent in the speech and infused with meaning. The mountains, rivers, and sky are all simultaneously the land on which the Tibetan people earn their living and religious sites, some of them worthy of pilgrimage. The Ne'u na wedding speech begins discussing place within the first few lines. It mentions different pure lands and heavens in relation with the deities who inhabit them; the speech continues to describe first the spiritual world, then the Tibetan region, and then the very town in which the wedding took place. Each toponym carries with it cultural references. In this case, the references are both implicitly and explicitly couched in local concepts of auspiciousness. Thus, the next important vantage from which to explore the speech's figurative language is that of place.

Studies of place in the Tibetan context have traditionally focused more on religious geographical and travel texts (Wylie 1965, Ramble 1995) than on orally performed speech text. Moreover, where Tibetologists have studied nature imagery (for example, Blondeau 1998, Virtanen 2007, Virtanen 2014, and Quintman 2008), nature imagery in oral traditions has featured less prominently (with the exception of Ramble 1995). Nevertheless, metaphors and references to place simultaneously provide significant insight into traditional Tibetan poetics and play an important role in Tibetan secular oratory and other oral traditions as well.

Within the metaphors of auspiciousness, references to environment, creatures, and specific locations—in short, references to the most auspicious places of the Tibetan religious and secular world—locate marriage in general, as well as the particular wedding in which the orator is performing, in a place that is perfect for that purpose. Like the specially divined day itself, everything is in perfect arrangement for this one specific task. In this examination of place, it is important to remember that (Basso 1996:76-77):

> Because of their inseparable localities, place-names may be used to summon forth an enormous range of mental and emotional associations—associations of time and space, of history and events, of persons and social activities, of oneself and stages in one's life. . . . In their compact power to consolidate and muster so much of what a landscape may be taken to represent in both personal and cultural terms, place-names acquire a functional value that easily matches their utility as instruments of reference.

In recognizing the incredible range of referential meanings that place-names can take in a given cultural context, we accept that it is important to attend to how local communities discursively construct their environments within larger cultural frameworks.

Each of the places mentioned in this speech is the purest and most auspicious of places in the Tibetan world. First the speaker locates the continent, Jambudvipa (T: *'dzam bu gling*), next he locates certain places within this continent, including Bodhgaya—the place where every Buddha has attained enlightenment—and after naming other places, mentions that Tibet is in the center. Finally, he works the location all the way to Gsang sngags bde chen, a monastery near Ne'u na, and also to the village itself and its location along the banks of the yellow river, and bisected by a smaller tributary river. The village is the first place mentioned that is not an inherently holy place, and yet it too is turned into an auspicious place when the speaker describes the village's shape as a *g.yung drung*, a Buddhist swastika.

Animals, both real and mythical, also play an important role in indexing the auspiciousness of the participants. This can be seen quite clearly in lines 142 through 148. In each line, the guests are equated with a different animal, each animal thought to be auspicious and bringing good luck. This is beneficial in understanding the places of certain creatures within the Tibetan consciousness.

[142] *bya rgyal khyung chen gshog ru rkyang 'dra can gyi mi tshogs gi/*

[143] *rgya khra hor ba rgod kyi ding ru babs 'dra can gyi mi tshogs gi/*

[144] *seng ge dkar mos g.yu ral phrag la 'phags 'dra can gyi mi tshogs gi/*

[145] *rgya stag dmar bor mtshal gyi thigs le babs 'dra can gyi mi tshogs gi/*

146 *g.yu 'brug sngon mor dung gi gsus pa can gyi mi tshogs gi/*

147 *khu byug sngon mo'i gsung snyan gang yag can gyi mi tshogs gi/*

148 *rma bya sngon mo'i rna sgro gang bkra can gyi mi tshogs gi/*

142 [At this wedding] people who are like the spread wings of the Garuda are gathered.

143 People who are like the hawks with a vulture's humerus bones are gathered.

144 People who are like white snow lions tossing their turquoise manes on their shoulders are gathered.

145 People who are like the vermillion-striped Bengal tigers are gathered.

146 People who are like the turquoise dragons with conch-white bellies are gathered.

147 People who are like the blue cuckoo's sweet considerate call are gathered.

148 People who are like the blue peacock's splendid feathers are gathered.

In each instance, the guests are likened not only to auspicious animals, but in some cases to the very best parts of those animals. As an important element of Tibetan imagery, these references continue to appear in literary and oral works throughout the greater Tibetan cultural area. Ekvall (1964:39) notes that animals, birds and tigers among them, are ascribed certain supernatural powers, "thus making them objects of veneration and accessories in the practice of magic." Some animals may, however, have negative connotations in terms of auspiciousness. Thus it is important to recognize that "[a]mong the beasts of prey, brown bears, black bears, lynx, jackals, fox, and badgers are evil omens, whereas tigers, leopards, snow leopards, and wolves are good" (270). Looking at this brief list, none of the animals considered to be evil omens appears even once in the speech. Conversely, tigers, leopards, and snow leopards are evoked frequently in order to elicit these very positive images of strength, purity, and auspiciousness.

Lines 181-194 show a different use of nature and space, but one that is still meant to align each place with auspiciousness and power. In these lines, different terrains and kinds of places are viewed as lived space. They are the types of locales inhabited by each of the most highly powerful creatures. This section, like many others, begins at the center, the most important of the places. The section begins with the sky, and then continues to describe the snow-covered mountain (and not just any mountain, but the sacred Mt. Tise) and then to forested mountains and downwards in a descending order to the places inhabited by humans. Each place is inhabited by a different kind of creature, and each type of creature is of the type that is commonly an object of veneration in the pre-Buddhist Tibetan religious worldview. Ramble (1995:87) notes the presence of this theme, and the vertical character of the terrain in folk songs, but never extends it to oratory, while it is also worth noting that hierarchical positioning is a formulaic introduction to any sort of historical or biographical narration as well.[18]

Religious Concepts

The invocation of deities, historical figures, and the natural world described above is intimately related to Tibetan concepts of everyday religion. And yet, religion also works its way into the

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18 My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for suggesting this facet of the vertical hierarchy.

speech in more explicit fashions as well. This section examines two additional ways in which the speech indexes auspiciousness, not least through reference to religiously important numbers that introduce and evoke important auspicious concepts and images.

The speech itself is replete with numbers and important Tibetan religious terms and concepts. The numbers three, four, five, eight, nine, one hundred eight, and eighty-four thousand, all relating to various religious concepts in the Bon and Buddhist traditions, all occur within the speech. The number three is most often used, appearing twenty-one times in the text, and it is used primarily in two kinds of situations: stanzas about the "three kinds" of different things, and in discussing different seasons, which in the Tibetan calendar are divided into three-month increments of the lunar calendar beginning with spring.

Number	Number of Occurrences
3	21
4	6
5	1
8	12
108	1
84,000	2

If the number three is used in ways that seem almost secular, the number eight appears in the speech in almost exclusively religious fashion. It appears twelve times within the speech, many of them in the introductory praise of deities. In each instance, it is accompanied by a strictly religious reference including the eight classes of gods and demons (T: *lha srin sde brgyad*), the eight-spoked dharma wheel (T: *gnam 'khor lo rtsibs brgyad*), the eight Auspicious Symbols (T: *bkra shis btags brgyad*), and the eight-petal lotus flower (T: *sa pad+ma 'dab brgyad*). These groupings very economically reference a particularly auspicious part of the Tibetan culture. For example, the eight Auspicious Symbols are the golden fish (*gser nya*), vase (*bum pa*), lotus flower (*pad+ma*), the endless knot (*dpal be'u*), the dharma-wheel (*chos 'khor*), victory banner (*rgyal mtshan*), conch shell (*dung g.yas 'khyil*), and precious umbrella (*rin chen gdugs*). Some of these in turn appear in other parts of the speech. The number eight also refers to the eight-spoked dharma wheel, in which each spoke represents part of the Shakyamuni Buddha's precepts on the eight-fold path.

Related to this, but not entirely similar, is the important presence of the eight trigrams (Ch: *ba gua* 八卦, T: *spar kha*), an important Chinese divinatory practice. It references just one of the divination practices mentioned in the speech to emphasize just how many measures have been taken to ensure that this is a good day. It is placed in the context of, and immediately next to, a more indigenous Tibetan divinatory practice of the nine astrological squares (T: *sme ba lo skor*). These references to a variety of divinatory practices further underscore the indisputable auspiciousness of the wedding day, but they also suggest the cultural complexity of the Sino-Tibetan cultural frontier.

Discursively Creating Auspiciousness

In closing the discussion of figurative language and auspiciousness, I wish to draw attention to a concept discussed elsewhere (see Thurston 2012), namely, that Tibetan secular oratory not only discusses the auspiciousness of the place or event, but also helps to discursively create the auspicious circumstances the speakers describe through performing the speech and engaging in the act of praise. This works because of the interacting network of human agents and evenemental forces Da col (2007) has dubbed "economies of fortune." These evenemental forces include (but are not necessarily limited to) virtue (*dge ba*), blessing (*byin rlabs*), luck (*rlung rta*), and interdependent origination/omens (*rten 'brel*).[19]

From the portents on display when setting out on a journey, or the actions of hosts and guests, human agents in A mdo interpret a variety of actions and natural signs to evaluate the creation or loss of auspicious circumstances (Sa mtsho skyid and Roche 2011). Tibetan economies of fortune are also woven into the verbal fabric of Tibetan secular oratory in A mdo. The contexts in which they were traditionally spoken were events that required auspiciousness. The dates on which they were held were chosen for their auspiciousness, and the language of the speeches underscores this. But in the Ne'u na wedding speech the density of auspicious statements suggests that the speech is doing more than reminding listeners of the auspiciousness of the occasion, but instead plays an important role in the discursive *creation* of these auspicious circumstances in Tibetan secular oratory.[20] This discursive creation of auspiciousness relies on the sort of sympathetic magic operating on Tibetan economies of fortune, which "consists of asserting that a certain wished-for event is taking place, and by the power of the word it is supposed that, if every detail is properly performed, the event does take place" (Thomas 1933:189; cf. Frazer 2009 [1922]). In properly performing the traditional wedding speech, then, the orator ups the proverbial ante, piling on ever-increasing amounts of auspiciousness.

Orators highlight the inseparability of oratory and *rten 'brel* in their statements on the functions and purposes of Tibetan speechmaking. Dbyangs skyabs, from Hor nag, for example, preferred that (Dbyangs skyabs, personal communication, August 18, 2010):

> *Ston mo gzig byas na/ da de khige yin rgyu na thog mar yin rgyu na/ rten 'brel 'bod rgyu'o ra brtag rgyu'o/ gnyis ba 'di bdag po 'di khidge yin rgyu na da ston mo gi khidge rgyud rim gi la ga/ u, gsum pa yin rgyu na khidge bkra shis kha g.yang gi la ga…*

> When holding a wedding, well, first of all, it's calling and examining *rten 'brel*, the second thing, well, it's about the wedding's, well, order, uh, thirdly, it's about auspiciousness and fortune.

For Klu rgyal, an orator from a village in Reb gong, *rten 'brel* is the very purpose of the wedding speech. Unbidden, he too brought the term forward. In the context of the wedding speech, Klu

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[19] For more on the first three terms, see Clarke 1990. See also Thurston 2012, Sa mstho skyid and Roche 2011, and Da Col 2007.

[20] For a more thorough discussion of this discursive creation of the auspicious circumstances described in the *sa bstod* "praise of place" genre of Tibetan secular oratory, see Thurston 2012.

rgyal suggested that *rten 'brel* is most promininently indexed by the combination of *bstod pa* ("praise") and *bkra shis pa'i tshig* ("auspicious words"): *rma gzhi khidge gtso bo da 'jig rten mgon po gyi rten 'brel gzig byed/ khidge rten 'brel rag las yod zer rgyu red/ gnyen gi bshad pa 'di rten 'brel la hra zer no/* ("Fundamentally, it's mainly making worldly *rten 'brel*. You should say that it depends upon *rten 'brel*, the wedding speech says that the *rten 'brel* is good," personal communication, August 19, 2010).

Auspiciousness and economies of fortune are, then, the most basic and essential frame for understanding Tibetan secular oratory. In fact, it is not too much to say that the creation of auspiciousness and *rten 'brel* is an essential part of generic convention and actively directs audience understanding of the speech itself. Though it is, on occasion, possible to step outside of the frame of fortune, a vast majority of Tibetan verbal art works within this framework. From praying for fortune in Lhasa's dice games (Murakami 2014) to praises of place (Thurston 2012), Tibetan verbal art is frequently not simply about entertainment, but is tied directly to attempts to manipulate the conditions of the world around us through the discursive creation of fortune.[21]

In further understanding this concept of auspiciousness, it may be useful to take some of the meditational concepts of Buddhism into account, especially that of the mandala. References to religiously significant places are made not simply for the sake of traditional resonances, but their location and use in the speech can be viewed as discursively creating a mandala.[22] Like the Buddhist mandala practice, this speech begins importantly with the placement of the deities on the edges, and works progressively toward the center, which in this case is the local community. Tibetan oral traditions can thus participate in a process of "mandalization," in which a secular space is transformed into sacred space through "intersentient communication between . . . Buddha Dharma, place, gods, and people" (Yü 2014:495). Through the power of its words, the Ne'u na wedding speech discursively places this village both at the center of the Tibetan world, and temporarily, for the time of the wedding, at one of the most auspicious places in the world.

Conclusion: A mdo Wedding Speeches in the Twenty-First Century

The wedding speech is no longer *de rigueur* for traditional weddings. In Mang ra (Ch: Guinan) County, for example, the wedding speech was—as of 2009—entirely optional (briefly described in Thurston and Tsering Samdrup 2012). At the time, this was ascribed to a lack of gifted orators rather than a change in Tibetan ideas of fortune. By the time of my second period of fieldwork in A mdo (2011-15), I noticed that Tibetan families frequently prefer holding weddings in restaurants, paying an outside emcee, and paying money (the entirety of which can effectively be earned back in the form of monetary gifts) for food rather than spending the inordinate amount of personal time and familial capital required to host a wedding out of one's

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[21] It should be noted that certain frames of modern performance do not seem to be subject, in the minds of performers and audiences, to fortune. Tibetan *kha shags*—comedic dialogues—in A mdo, for example, seem to be exempt from the issues of fortune (see Thurston 2015). In addition, modern songs about love seem also to be exempt from the taboos prohibiting the singing of love songs in the presence of relatives.

[22] See Tucci 2001 [1961] for more on the practice of mandala in Tibet.

own home (see also Tshe dpal rdo rje et al. 2009). This is often competitive, and the extravagance of a wedding as well as the number (and importance) of guests in attendance may later become the topic of gossip and discussion.[23] Families can accrue significant social as well as monetary capital in this way. In these "modern" or "urban" weddings, the presence or absence of the wedding speech depends on a combination of the speaker's competence, and the host family's own preferences. In general, there is a feeling that competence in traditional speech genres is disappearing.

The traditional wedding speech has, in these more urban contexts, been replaced by the hiring of a *mdo 'dzin pa* ("emcee"). Emcees usually have a deep voice and can speak very quickly, clearly, and poetically. They possess many of the same skills required for an orator of Tibetan wedding speeches, but their duties are frequently more limited to introducing the bride and groom, and the entertainment. Some emcees also perform wedding speeches, but they employ a slightly different register and performance style, clearly differentiating themselves from their traditional counterparts.

At the same time, many traditional Tibetan speeches continue to live a textualized life in compilations and in archives. Though not as popular as love songs or folk songs,[24] a burgeoning cultural preservation movement has led to the creation of several documentaries focusing on the Tibetan wedding practices in various weddings. VCDs of these documentaries are widely sold in Tibetan countryside stalls, and although they are not top sellers, vendors do manage to do a steady business stocking them. In 2010, I witnessed an elder watching these VCDs in hopes of learning new proverbs and honing his own oral competence. For most, however, the wedding speech is, like Ne'u na Village before the building of the dams forced its removal from the riverside and like so many other traditional genres, consigned more to the (possibly preserved, but largely irreversibly vanished) past.

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[23] Such competition in terms of conspicuous communal consumption is not limited to the wedding. For a discussion of such discussions in a girl's hair-changing ceremony in Bsang chu (Ch: Xiahe) County, see Blo bzang tshe ring et al. 2012.

[24] See Anton-Luca 2002.

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Magic Questions:
The Rhetoric of Authority in South Slavic Epic Song

Milan Vidaković

People who pose questions and practitioners of magic have one thing in common: they claim power and authority over others. They lay their claim using language that positions them as speakers with access to, and control over, the unknown. Analyzing questions in multiple versions of "The Song of Bagdad," a South Slavic epic, and comparing their use to the authority-building effects of words of power in magic rites, I explore the mechanisms by which questions both affirm and assert the authority of the speaker in "The Song of Bagdad," South Slavic epic song more generally, and beyond. Three categories of authority emerge in the process of posing questions: social authority affirms one's status; narrative authority demonstrates access to the tradition; and epic authority asserts an emerging power. The three categories unveil the source of authority behind questions as they bring into focus the interplay of formal and fictional aspects of the question-and-answer form that bridges the known and the unknown. Speakers use questions as a magic wand with which they mediate between the real on the one hand and the fictive, fantastical, and imaginary on the other. Just as a magician utters magic words to render physical acts of magic "real," so a speaker uses the authority inherent in question-posing as a tool to render that which is imagined—be it an abstraction, ideal, or fiction—part of reality.

I begin with a synopsis of "The Song of Bagdad" through the lens of speech acts, and proceed to three sections expounding on three types of authority—social, narrative, and epic—each followed by a section on a special case of the type. As I unpack the types of authority, two facets of the authority-forming mechanics become clear. One is that the authority arises from the rhetorical but is eventually appropriated by all questions, including information-seeking ones. The other is that questions mark authority imperceptibly, without explicitly referring to it or disclosing themselves as authority markers. Alongside analyzing the interrogative discourse in the song, I compare the logic behind the function of questions as authority markers to that of magic spells as more overt instances of using language to assert power and authority. The essay concludes with the contention that the speakers' posing of questions serves to claim their moral authority by implicitly stating their clout over the unknown and, by extension, the right, the ideal, the proper—that which others ought to follow.[1]

Introduction

Words conjure power. They enact things in the real world, as J. L. Austin (1975 [1955]) claims applying his theory of performatives—later redefined by John R. Searle (1969) as speech acts—to a limited number of verbs, but ultimately expanding the scope of their applicability to all of language. The ability of words to produce actions imparts to them power well beyond that of communication. On an extreme end of such power lies magic, where words combine with object manipulation to constitute magical rites through which their practitioners both assert and exert power. Examining magic formulas, S. J. Tambiah finds that there need not be a qualitative difference between ordinary language and magical formulas (1968:188). After all, according to Annette B. Weiner, "[b]elief in the force and the perceived efficacy of magic is rooted in the *perception* that speech acts have power to disrupt and destroy, or to persuade, influence and convince others" (1983:705, emphasis mine). But a belief in magic ritual is not the only factor imbuing speech acts with additional power. Lucien Lévy-Bruhl says that "[e]very word, every formula uttered aloud acts like a force and more than ever when the words are of a sacred or magical character" (Lévy-Bruhl 1936:184, quoted in Wilson 2000:429), allowing for the possibility that some words can be intrinsically more forceful. Functioning as magic spells outside contexts of the sacred or the magical, questions constitute one such category of speech acts that conjure power.

In literary studies, rhetorical questions are seen primarily as figures of emphasis, while information-seeking questions have attracted little if any attention. Following Austin and Searle, work on questions has yielded long lists of types and categories of illocutionary force behind questions, particularly rhetorical ones. Beyond the rubrics of linguistics and rhetoric, the closest that literary analysis has come to examining them is through Roland Barthes' hermeneutic code, which comprises "all the units whose function it is to articulate in various ways a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer; or even, constitute an enigma and lead to its solution" (1974:17). Barthes thus identifies and codifies a narrative function of the enigma as indicating a question that the rest of the narrative addresses and resolves. Susan Ervin-Tripp too examines language—specifically speech acts—that communicates through connotation rather than denotation, a process that runs counter to the principle of economy in communication. Similar to how Barthes analyzes a work of fiction through narrative codes, Ervin-Tripp analyzes everyday language through polysemy, concluding that one of its functions is to "communicat[e] major social relationships" (1976:150). Conveying the same message using entirely different expressions (for example, a direct order vs. a polite hint, or a statement vs. a question) "assert[s] *actual or claimed features of social relationships* without making those assertions focal or topical" (141, emphasis mine). As two features of the social relationships' power dynamic, "actual" and "claimed" combine in South Slavic epic song, manifesting themselves through three types of authority of the speaker: one actual (social), one claimed (epic), and one hybrid (narrative).

Epic song and magic both arise in oral societies. They take elements of ordinary language and imbue it with power. I use the concept of magic spells, where the relation to authority

through summoning power for oneself and wielding it over others is overt, to examine questions in epic song, where their mechanism of functioning as a tool of power is covert, and their effects connotative. I thus use three lenses to analyze the oral-traditional material in this essay: literary, sociolinguistic, and anthropological. I approach questions as a form of ritual communication, which, through a "poetic-pragmatic view," Gunter Senft and Ellen B. Basso (2009:1) define as

> artful, performed semiosis, predominantly but not only involving speech, that is formulaic and repetitive and therefore anticipated within particular contexts of social interaction. Ritual communication thus has anticipated (but not always achieved) consequences. As performance, it is subject to evaluation by participants according to standards defined in part by language ideologies, local aesthetics, contexts of use, and, especially, relations of power among participants.

Questions are one manifestation of such "artful, performed semiosis" that, based on their illocutionary force, have "anticipated . . . consequences" predicated on "relations of power among participants." The artistic, performative aspect of epic songs renders them language whose functions and effects can then be scrutinized as ritual and performative linguistic features.

The only text I have found to directly address the use of questions in South Slavic epic is Luka Zima's nineteenth-century volume on rhetoric (1880:143-45). Zima excludes non-rhetorical (in other words information-seeking) questions outright from the category of stylistic figures. While I agree that rhetorical questions are more powerful as poetic devices, information-seeking questions too prove to be germane as I demonstrate here. The lack of scholarly attention to questions in South Slavic epic song means that I have had to develop a method to read for them. I began the project by tabulating all instances of questions in the available versions of "The Song of Bagdad" and, to some extent, in South Slavic epic song more widely.[2] Considering that there is really no illocutionary force of a question, especially a rhetorical one, that cannot be expressed as a statement or a request (or, at the very least, as an indirect question), I avoided comparing the content of interrogative statements to the same or similar content expressed in the indicative or imperative. Rather, I traced speaking voices, an approach that soon yielded clear patterns of who poses questions, who does not, and why. Not only does this approach bring into focus the centrality of authority to the use of interrogative form, it also makes it possible to tie the use and functions of questions to the song's oral-traditional context and the questions' roots to the "words of power" used in magic rites.

The oral nature of the object of my analysis, the focus on power in interpersonal relations, and the interdisciplinary approach to the inquiry have shaped my method into that of

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[2] Looking at the form (questions) first and then intuiting its illocutionary force is the reverse of how Elizabeth Minchin (2002) begins her elucidating analysis of rebukes, in which she identifies rebukes (that is, a particular illocutionary force) first and then notes the consistency of their form, before moving on to draw connections with everyday speech and conclusions about how form functions in conveying meaning and mediating interpersonal relations among speakers in both poetic and non-poetic discourse. Minchin's essay is particularly helpful for this study for it establishes that both in oral epic and in everyday speech, "[e]ach speech act format [what she refers to as "prefabricated or, more accurately, prepatterned speech," such as questions] is a schematic representation of a particular pattern of organization, a way to proceed when we wish to express, for example, a rebuke, an apology, an invitation, a threat, or words of consolation or reassurance," leaving the speaker "to find the words and phrases that will give expression to the ideas generated by the format" (90-91).

discourse analysis. Discourse analysis examines what language—spoken and written—is used for through its two fundamental and often synchronous functions of (a) communicating information and (b) expressing and negotiating individual roles and attitudes and social relations (Brown and Yule 1983:1-14). It is, as Barbara Johnstone defines it, "a systematic, rigorous way of suggesting answers to research questions . . . about language, about speakers, and about society and culture . . . posed in and across disciplines" by means of "paying close and systematic attention to particular situations and particular utterances or sets of utterances." The situations and utterances Johnstone refers to prominently include those about power as a negotiable "aspect of social relatedness" that individuals use "to claim membership in groups" (2002:xi-xii, 112-13). The goal of this essay is to analyze the effects that utterances achieve through their form rather than just their connotation, namely the force that questions as speech acts enact not only through individual utterances, but as a type of speech. My approach closely resembles what Minchin (2002:71-72) describes as application of discourse analysis: an analysis of the ways language is used and processed by individuals as a tool of building, maintaining, and reshaping social relations—a way to establish a typology of spoken discourse based on the patterns in utterances, that is, by tracing structural resemblances of speech acts to identify the role they fulfill beyond signification.

Two reasons account for using the South Slavic epic "The Song of Bagdad" as the launching pad and centerpiece of this study. One is that it demonstrates remarkable consistency in the use of questions as markers of speakers' authority, be it as indicators of social status (social authority), through the articulation of right vs. wrong (epic authority), or by harnessing the creative force of mediating between reality and fiction (narrative authority). The other is that the thoroughly documented multiformity of "The Song of Bagdad" allows for analysis of questions across multiple versions and performers, lending credibility to the extension of conclusions about the functions of questions beyond a particular singer or rendition of the song to the whole genre, at least within the South Slavic epic tradition. Oral tradition precedes literature historically and conceptually. And while only the latter is the case with "The Song of Bagdad" (the texts analyzed here were recorded in the 1930s and in 1950), and there are clear limitations to using such a small model (Foley 2002:6), as an oral epic (rather than oral-derived or written) the song allows me to develop a framework for analyzing an essential function of questions that can go beyond the South Slavic epic and oral traditions. This is in keeping with the intentions of Milman Parry and Albert B. Lord for the corpus of songs they collected in the former Yugoslavia, in which "The Song of Bagdad" holds a prominent place: they intended their collection to serve as a source of "evidence on the basis of which could be drawn a series of generalities applicable to all oral poetries" (Parry 1971:440).

"The Song of Bagdad" ("Pjesma od Bagdata") belongs to the Muslim tradition of South Slavic epic song. Multiple versions of it were originally collected in Yugoslavia in 1934 and 1935 by Parry and Lord. Several versions were published in the first two volumes of the series *Serbocroatian Heroic Songs* (*SCHS*; English translations appeared in volume 1, the original texts in volume 2). The six versions of the song presented in these volumes range in length from 710 to 1,620 decasyllabic lines. Three have been transcribed as sung or dictated by Salih Ugljanin (Parry and Lord 1953:8-25, 26-39, 40-54). Two versions by Sulejman Fortić and one by Sulejman Makić recount the same story (*ibid.*:198-207, 208-16, 260-67). An additional five

versions are available in the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature (MPCOL), housed at Harvard University's Widener Library; they have not been published but have been kindly provided on request and have since been made available online. These are by Mustafa Čelebić (PN 12404), Šaćir Dupljak (PN 12422), Murat Kurtagić (LN 15—this is the only version that was recorded during Lord's subsequent visit in 1950, and with its 2,540 verses it is also the longest one), and two by Hajro Ferizović (PN 12406, PN 12444). Story lines and casts of characters in these five versions are more divergent than the ones published in *SCHS*. I use the spelling "Bagdad" to remain consistent with the original translation in *SCHS*.

Synopsis: Interrogative Speech Acts in "The Song of Bagdad"

Both information-seeking and rhetorical questions appear in "The Song of Bagdad." Their signification as speech acts, in addition to the literal meaning, includes illocutionary force, in other words "how [the utterance] is to be taken" (Austin 1975 [1955]:73). I will start with the information-seeking questions.

Twenty years have passed since the Ottoman army surrounded the city of Bagdad. In his palace the sultan ponders whether to continue the siege or withdraw his troops. A councilor suggests to call on Đerđelez Alija, a Bosnian hero.[3] The sultan dispatches the imperial messenger Suka. As he reaches Alija's hometown, Suka inquires:

Bozdrđana upita tatarin:	The messenger asked the shopkeeper:
"Kamo dvore Đerđeljez Aljije?"	"Where is the house of Đerđelez Alija?"
(27, lines 120-21; also in narrator's voice at 41, lines 108, 113)[4]	

Following the shopkeeper's directions, Suka reaches Alija's home, greets his mother, and asks about his whereabouts:

Kam' gazije Đerđeljez Aljije,	Where is the champion Đerđelez Alija,
Da teslimim careva fermana?	So I may deliver the imperial firman?
(9, lines 149-50; also 27, lines 137-38; 41, line 127)	

Alija's mother points him to the local mosque. There Alija receives the sultan's requests to assemble an army. He goes back home, asks for his mother's advice and blessing, and then

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[3] Alija is a stock hero character in the epic oral tradition of South Slavic Muslims. For the historical background of Alija as the first bey (sandžak beg) of the then Ottoman province of Serbia, see Maretić 1966 [1909]: 164.

[4] Verse quotations of "The Song of Bagdad" are cited by page and line number from Parry and Lord 1953. Citations of identical verses in multiple versions of the song are separated with a semi-colon. Citations of verses from a different version of the song with a different wording but the same meaning are preceded by "also." Quotes from unpublished texts are quoted by their archival catalogue numbers (prefixed by "PN" or "LN"). Translations are mine, although I owe the translation of a few obscure words to Lord's translation in Parry and Lord 1954.

dispatches a messenger to his betrothed, Fatima, who lives in the city of Buda, with a question for her:

Da lj' me moreš s rzom prićekati	Can you wait for me with honor?
Jod dušmana Lauš đenerala?	From the foe, general Lauš
Da lj' se moreš branit' sa Budima?	Can you defend yourself and Buda?
(28, lines 231-33; also 11, lines 326-28)	

When the messenger reaches Fatima's home, he greets the servants, asking:

Je lji doma Budimka Fatima?	Is Fatima of the city of Buda home?
(28, line 254; also 11, lines 353-54; 43, lines 263-65)	

Fatima dispatches the messenger back to Alija, urging him in her response to set off to the sultan's aid. But, as Alija's vassals and their armies gather, Fatima sets into motion a plan of her own. She shaves off her hair and purchases a "winged" horse that used to belong to Budimlija Mujo, who has been convicted by the sultanate and is on the run. She departs the city and soon arrives at the army's gathering place. Not recognizing her, Alija greets her:

Barjaktare, sa koje si strane,	Oh standard-bearer, whence do you come
A s kojega grada carevoga,	And from which imperial city,
A kako te po imenu viču?	And by what name do they call you?
(17, lines 843-45)	

All the questions above contain illocutionary force. Messengers' questions, like questions in general, are, in Searle's words, "a special case of requesting," as are Alija's when he asks the newcomer to his camp (Fatima in disguise) for his name (1969:69). Alija's first question to Fatima is not merely a yes/no question, but an appeal to wait for him, while the second doubles as an expression of concern.

Information-seeking questions are interspersed with rhetorical ones. For example, at the beginning of the song, the sultan summons a messenger with a question:

Đe si, Suka, carev tatarine?	Where are you, o Suka, the emperor's messenger?
(9, line 98; also 41, line 77)	

When Suka delivers the firman, the local priest reads it silently first and bursts into tears. Alija speaks to him:

Stari hodža, vais efendija,	Old priest, venerable effendi,
Rašta plačeš, te suze ronahu?	Why do you cry, then shed tears?
(10, lines 201-02)	

And after Alija returns home to consult his mother, he expresses doubt to her about his ability to fulfill the sultan's request:

Kako ću mu vojsku pokupiti,	How will I gather an army for him,
I sa vojskom pod Bagdat otići?	And with the army go to Bagdad?[5]
(42, lines 223-24)	

None of these rhetorical questions is answered in terms of the literal object of inquiry: the whereabouts of the messenger, the reason for shedding tears, the logistics of the task. But they do receive responses to what their illocutionary force conveys: a summons is followed by Suka's appearance, curiosity about the content of the letter is followed by the priest's exposition, and concern about how to proceed next is followed by Alija's mother's advice to write a letter to Fatima. While interlocutors' responses make it easy to identify the perlocutionary force of questions (the effect they accomplish on the interlocutor), my analysis focuses on their illocutionary force (the effect intended and attempted by the speaker). Both information-seeking and rhetorical questions in "The Song of Bagdad" carry illocutionary force—often multiple ones —and they both elicit responses (with only information-seeking questions receiving direct answers), thus determining future actions. But before I examine both types of question, whither do Alija and Fatima go?

After Fatima joins Alija's troops disguised as Budimlija Mujo, together with Alija's seven vassals and the army of one hundred thousand they depart for Istanbul to present themselves to the sultan.[6] When the army sets up camp outside the city, the sultan summons Alija. However, Alija is not aware that the audience with the sultan is also a test. After he submits to the guards' request to fully disarm, the sultan concludes that his lack of wiliness makes him unsuitable to conquer Bagdad. As the standard-bearer, Fatima is brought in next. Noticing Alija's robes in the palace, Fatima infers what happened. She slays the guards and approaches the sultan to kiss his hand. The sultan acknowledges her valor and cunning, commissioning her with the siege of Bagdad. Fatima procures the release of Alija, and they head for Bagdad with their army. As they approach the city, Fatima sets off on her own to find the hidden city gate. Outside the city's bulwark she receives a sign from heaven, secretly enters the city, and finds her way to the queen. When the queen offers to buy the "winged" horse, Fatima jumps at the opportunity to trick her into riding the horse with her. Fatima then abducts the queen and takes her to Alija's camp. She breaks one of the queen's necklaces in half for Alija and herself to keep as a token of friendship. Fatima heads back to Istanbul with the queen, while Alija proceeds toward Bagdad with the keys to the gates that will allow him to occupy the city in the sultan's name. Fatima arrives at the sultan's palace, surrenders the queen to the sultan, then leaves for Buda. Shortly afterward, Alija too arrives at the sultan's palace, presenting him with the keys to and spoils from the city. Alija then returns home. With no news from Fatima, he writes to her. Fatima rejoices at the news that

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[5] This rhetorical question is followed by Alija's expression of concern for Fatima. His mother responds to the latter but not the former.

[6] Fatima moves in the guise of Budimlija Mujo through most of the song. Her identity is known to the singer and the audience, but is revealed to the other characters only at the very end.

Alija is safely back home, and replies that she has waited for him "with honor" and that he can begin to gather the wedding party. She assembles her dowry and departs. The wedding takes place upon her arrival. However, on their wedding night, Alija discovers that Fatima's hair has been cut (she cut it, of course, as part of her disguise). He immediately exits the bride-chamber and asks his mother to negotiate Fatima's return. She attempts to do so, but Fatima insists on talking directly to Alija. Fatima reprimands him for not recognizing that it was she who made his victory at Bagdad possible, and presents her half of the queen's necklace as proof of her identity. Alija begs her for forgiveness, and the song ends with the singer's blessing for the happy future of the young couple.

Social Authority

It quickly becomes apparent in "The Song of Bagdad" that the right to ask questions tends to correlate directly with the authority of the speaker: the person posing a question is the one of higher social status. The sultan asks his messenger, the imperial messenger asks the shopkeeper, Alija asks the newcomer to the camp (Fatima), and so forth. Social authority includes authority-by-proxy, as with messengers: the imperial messenger has a higher status than the shopkeeper in Alija's hometown and Alija's mother, and Alija's messenger is above Fatima's servants; but they are not above the recipient of the message (Alija, Fatima), who by definition is closer in status to the dispatcher (sultan, Alija).

However, there are exceptions. When Suka, the imperial messenger, knocks on the gate of Alija's home, Alija's mother responds:

Ko mi halku dira na kapiji?	Who touches the knocker on my gate?
Doma nema Đerđeljez Aljije.	Đerđelez Alija is not at home.
(9, lines 145-46; also 27, lines 132-34, 41, lines 123-24)	

The two not yet having met face to face, the mother is directing her question not to the imperial messenger, but to a newcomer of unknown identity and does so on her territory (similar to how Alija, in his camp, asks the newcomer). Once they establish mutual hierarchy, only Suka poses questions. In contexts without sufficient hierarchical information, this kind of situational authority—in this case based on territory—takes precedence.

Another inconsistency—more glaring for being conceptual—arises with information-seeking questions. Asking for information or advice comes across as asking for help (in remedying one's deficiency of knowledge). After all, knowledge and wisdom are associated with age and social seniority, and one would be justified in expecting people asking for information to acknowledge the authority of the respondent rather than assert their own. Yet questions are as a rule posed by social seniors. Whatever deficiency the act of asking a question might admit on behalf of the speaker, it is only temporary and comes second to the more established social superiority of the interrogator. Consequently, the illocutionary force common to questions (regardless of any other—more particular and context based—illocutionary forces that each

question might carry) lies in summoning and projecting the authority of the speaker. In the examples examined above, that authority derives from social status.

I have not encountered any studies that link authority to questions in South Slavic epics or even in oral tradition. Tomo Maretić brings up a contrastive example of kissing in South Slavic epic, often as a part of a greeting: typically the person of lower status kisses the hand or the edge of the robe, "skut," of a social elder (1966 [1909]:299-301). However, scenes of kissing are described only in indirect discourse. The elements of direct speech in South Slavic epic most closely related to authority are two exclamation words, "more" and "bre," "which the higher [in status] or elder says to the lower or younger; the former is from the Greek language and means 'you fool,' while the latter is from Turkish (where it is an exclamation meaning: *hey*)" (313).[7] Comparable to them is the Greek interjection *ō* in Homer and Hesiod, which is used only by those in positions of authority, including deities (Scott 1903:192-95). But the closest sociolinguistic analogs I have found are magic spells. Spells and speech acts, in addition to sharing the feature that words do something, are linguistic practices that both depend on and exercise special powers closely correlated with social status. Roman Jakobson, in connecting metaphor and metonymy with Frazer's two laws of magic, similarity and contagion/contiguity— laws that according to Stephen Wilson still stand today as basic principles of magic (Wilson 2000:xxx)—shows that magical practices reflect cognitive aspects of language (Jakobson 1956:81). Tambiah adds that "ritual acts and magic rites are of the 'illocutionary' or 'performative' sort" (1973:221), thus foreshadowing the premise of this essay that, in contrast to the more contemporary examples and scenarios that Austin and Searle adduce, magic spells make for more apt exempla and comparanda for the examination of the illocutionary force of authority in questions as speech acts in the context of oral tradition. The two most prominent points of correspondence between magic spells and questions as authoritative speech acts are the roles of summoning the authority of the speaker and wielding power over the interlocutor.[8]

In magic spells as well as in questions, the speaker summons authority in two ways: by asserting the social status built over time and affirmed by the community, and by appealing to the unknown. In the context of magic, the practitioner's status is of someone holding magic powers: from magicians uttering spells to priests uttering consecration, the power of the more commonly used words of power, such as blessings and curses, "depended in part on the position of the

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[7] This and subsequent quotes from secondary sources published in a language other than English are mine.

[8] To these two I should add a curious third one: their connection to crossroads. Crossroads are associated with magic and considered to both catalyze it and to carry magical powers themselves (for a succinct account of the role of crossroads in magic, see Wilson 2000:456). Christoph Bode and Rainer Dietrich (2013), in their analysis of narrative structure, claim that the main difference between narrative recountings of events and real-world ones is that the narrative is composed of events that are connected causally, while real life comprises nodes: moments in the sequence of events when the agent is faced with a choice that will determine the outcome. With the outcome not predetermined (as in narratives), one finds oneself facing the challenge of making the "right" choice: one is at a deontic crossroads. Questions are such a crossroads. Questions mediate between what is unknown (question) and known (answer), between a hypothetical possibility that is (to be) left behind and the road (to be) taken. They are a metaphorical crossroads where one must take one path and abandon others. Crossroads thus make for an intriguing connection between questions and magic, but only tangential to the consideration of authority in questions, especially considering that, unlike magic spells, a crossroads is a physical place that relates to questions only in its metaphorical iteration.

[speaker] and on his or her relationship to the [interlocutor]" (Wilson 2000:435). Spells thus must meet one of the felicity requirements of speech acts: that the speaker be authorized to make the pronouncement. In a twist of circular logic, speech-act pronouncements retrospectively affirm the status that the speaker needed to make the pronouncement in the first place: to utter this speech act I must be authorized to utter it; I have just uttered it; therefore, I must have been authorized to utter it. The latter two parts of this syllogism make ritual pronouncements prone to manipulation, as John B. Haviland demonstrates by examining uses of ritual language used to assert authority. In the case of an entertainer (mis)using priestly language, his utterances are technically infelicitous in that the speech acts cannot be taken to have fulfilled their purported religious effect, but are nevertheless effective in achieving not only their illocutionary but also their perlocutionary force, as the audience in this case is convinced of the swindler-entertainer's authority to make such pronouncements (2009:22-24). In a different case of an inebriated uncle uttering ceremonial, wedding-style admonitions in a quotidian (non-ceremonial, and thus infelicitous) situation, his niece deflects his authoritative statement, thus nullifying the perlocutionary force of the utterance (34-35). Even if the locution turns out to be infelicitous and the perlocutionary force is not achieved, that does not invalidate the illocutionary force of his utterance. In both cases, by using ceremonial language, the speaker projects the illocutionary force of asserting his authority. The ritual language is so powerful that it takes effect even in cases when the words are used outside sanctioned contexts, or when the felicity requirement of the speaker to be authorized to make the pronouncement is not met.

The summoning of authority that comes from uttering words of power is amplified by the speaker's invocation of the unknown. Henk S. Versnel describes "a process of explosive creativity in which divine powers emerge from powerful words" (2002:114). He identifies "strange and incomprehensible sounds, words, phrases" as "one of the most characteristic features of magic" (117; cf. Ogden 1999:46-47; Wilson 2000:438-39; and Tambiah 1968:177-78; for the role of mystery in magic, see Wilson 2000:449-50). Originally non-referential, incomprehensible, strange words without prior meaning become magical words of power. Questions are not words that lexically have no signified (such as abracadabra or hocus-pocus), but are their syntactical equivalent: a grammatical mood that invokes the unknown. Versnel (2002:145) claims that magical words are semantically empty because their purpose is not to refer to a person or an object, but "to a world" that is outside our realm of reality. Words that belong to or at least enable communication with this other world, according to Richard Gordon, "do not have a meaning expressible in other terms" (1999:243). They are, by definition, out of this world. And by uttering them, the practitioners of magic imply access to that other world. According to Crystal Addey, the "ritual utterance [of the "unknowable names" of gods, for example,] operates as a powerful speech-act: enabling the human to assume a divine role by ascending, through similarity, to the divine" (2011:289). Addey argues against the premise that the utterance of unknowable names "summon[s or] compel[s deities] by force"; rather, it imbues the speaker with divine powers (281, 287). Those in control of words of power—be they mysterious or unknowable—position themselves as gatekeepers to the world of the unknown. In language, questions and answers are the bridge between the worlds of the known and the unknown. The difference between information-seeking and rhetorical questions, and the disproportionate authority that comes with the latter, comes into focus here. Posing rhetorical

questions—questions the right answer to which is determined by the speaker—places the speaker in the position of power by taking control over both ends of the known and unknown. This power dynamic, rather than elevating the speaker toward and closer to the gods, as "unknowable names" do, raises the speaker above and away from the interlocutor(s). And just as the power of magic spells extends to all magic words, even the infelicitous ones manipulated by those not authorized to use them, so the power that rhetorical questions imply over the unknown extends to all questions, even information-seeking ones.

The second correspondence between magic spells and questions is the power that the practitioner of magic or the speaker wields over another person. The assumption that a particular utterance or act by one person can exert power over another (or over objects and events related to them through the metonymic logic of contagion) is the foundation of magic. One of the more ubiquitous magic rites relying on this assumption is name taboo: interdiction of uttering the name of a person, living or dead, to forestall sway over them (note that it is the act of uttering the name, and not merely knowing it, that is typically subject to the taboo). In hierarchical societies the logic of name taboos is reflected in the social norm where not just the individual name but also the personal pronoun becomes the object of taboo in addressing the social superiors to whom one must show deference; they are replaced with the title occasionally combined with the formal (family) name. Queen Elizabeth I, for example, in writing to the few toward whom she took a deferential attitude before ascending to the throne—her father, stepmother, older stepbrother, and older stepsister—pointedly avoids personal pronouns, adhering instead to a combination of a possessive pronoun and the title; to others, however, she is unencumbered in dispensing personal pronouns once she has addressed or mentioned them by their title and/or name as addressees or in the third person (Harrison 1968).

But name taboos are specific to a person. A generalized linguistic equivalent expressing the asymmetrical power of the speakers is found in many European languages in the use of second-person singular personal pronouns based, according to Roger Brown and Albert Gilman, on Latin *tu* and *vos* (1960). The pervasiveness of these verbal indicators of relative rank and their dependence on all participants of a verbal exchange (they require active participation by the interlocutor) shows that they are no longer about a one-off and unilateral exertion of influence as is the case with magic spells, but about infusing discourse with a linguistic feature that asserts and maintains a power dynamic between the speakers through relative status—one that is based on interlocutors with different levels of social power using or being prohibited from using a particular linguistic feature. The more generalized a linguistic feature is, the more pervasive it becomes and, consequently, the more innocuous. When completely lacking a feature that explicitly communicates status, languages rely on polysemy and connotation. Brown and Gilman demonstrate that, even in the absence of the equivalents of *tu* and *vos*, "[i]n America and in Europe there are [other] forms of nonreciprocal address for all the dyads of asymmetrical power; customer and waiter, teacher and student, father and son, employer and employee" (1960:268). Robin Lakoff examines linguistic phenomena such as the particles *doch* in German, *ge* in Classical Greek, or *zo* in Japanese, honorifics, and other linguistic markers that do not offer "information content," but rather "suggest the feelings of the speaker toward the situation of the speech act," including "identity [and] respective social positions" of the speaker and interlocutor. She concludes that, without explicit markers available in a language, speakers express their

attitude "by forms used elsewhere for other purposes" (1972:907-09). Such connotative use of polysemous forms does not necessarily weaken their effect. According to Susan Ervin-Tripp, within directives, "one type [of politeness] is overt, and consists of names, tags, and imbeddings which decorate the bare command. The other type is the systematically framed question or statement which *does not refer* to the desired act" (1976:150). In the latter cases, it is the implicit illocutionary force of the expression that fulfills the function of communicating, asserting, or establishing social relations. Most importantly, Ervin-Tripp demonstrates that, in the case of directives, a more indirect or circumlocutory mode of expression is, perhaps counterintuitively, the more authoritative one. Questions are such connotative indicators of not only status, but the ability to wield power over the interlocutor. They perform their illocutionary force through their presence or absence, in other words either the speaker's right to use them or their proscription, and through connotation made possible by their polysemous nature, achieving the effect of signifying and asserting authority—the power of the speaker—in an inconspicuous way, without overtly flaunting the authority they claim.

Questions and answers function along similar lines as magic spells in terms of their effect on beneficiaries/victims. According to James George Frazer's foundational definition, magic rests on the "assum[ption] that things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy" (hence Frazer's characterizing magic as sympathetic), with "the impulse being transmitted from one to the other by means of what we may conceive as a kind of invisible ether" (1951:14). In traversing the void, magic effects are typically one-directional: they travel from the practitioner of magic to its object as the evil eye travels from the seer to the seen. On either end are "transmitters" that function according to the metonymic law of contiguity/contagion. On the receiving end, the transmitter is typically a physical one—a doll, a strain of hair, a picture. For example, Trobrianders' "hard words" (linguistically marked, powerful words), in order to achieve magic effects, "must be embedded in an object which enters the body of the victim" (Weiner 1983:704). Outside the context of magic, the transmitter can be a word: deictics, such as names and pronouns described above, refer to entities, and the use of and control over deictics by the speaker extends that control and power to the entities the deictics stand for. On the issuing end, the practitioners of magic use as transmitters words of power that, according to the same metonymic law of contiguity, stand in not for the flesh-and-blood practitioners of magic, but for the ones whose powers have been amplified by the special status that they hold and by the words they utter.

Together, questions and answers correspond to the totality of the basic principle of contagious magic that, according to Frazer, "proceeds upon the notion that things which have once been conjoined must remain ever afterwards, even when quite dissevered from each other, in such a sympathetic relation that whatever is done to the one must similarly affect the other" (1951:43). The initial connection between two parts endures in the case of magic. In questions and answers, it draws together the two parts that were initially conjoined but have since been separated. Questions are about the speaker: active, powerful, setting the topic and direction. Answers are about the interlocutor: responsive, under influence, and being directed in adhering to the topic and direction set by someone else. The nature of a question—and its grammatical as well as narrative function—is to cast a hook: expecting or even demanding a response makes it a one-sided linguistic act that asserts authority with or without the compliance

of the victim/interlocutor by obliging interlocutors to (a) act in order to complete the linguistic act that requires a response in words (in the case of information-seeking questions) or deed (in the case of rhetorical questions), and (b) do it in a way determined by the speaker, which by definition limits their scope of (re)action (the answer must match the question). The logic of a magic transaction thus extends to the two ends of questioning: actor and recipient, speaker and interlocutor. Questions cast a "spell" that is linguistically hard to escape and that draws the interlocutor into a social interaction in which the speaker has the upper hand, reifying the power over the interlocutor through a relatively pervasive interrogative form of expression.

One of the most prominent illocutionary forces of questions posed with social authority in "The Song of Bagdad" is chastising. Frazer's (1951:54) description of the societal context of the practice of magic sheds light on how chastising in the form of questions works to maintain social norms and established authority (the status quo):

> The old notion that the savage is the freest of mankind is the reverse of the truth. He is a slave, not
> indeed to a visible master, but to the past, to the spirits of his dead forefathers, who haunt his steps
> from birth to death, and rule him with a rod of iron. What they did is the pattern of right, the
> unwritten law to which he yields a blind unquestioning obedience.

Frazer goes on to criticize the "unquestionable pattern of right" as a cradle of mediocrity. With questions in the hands of the stewards of tradition, change and challenge are forestalled. One way to explain the effect of the illocutionary force of social authority in rhetorical questions in particular is following J. M. Kertzer, who claims that the speaker "encourages agreement," creates "pressure to conform to [the speaker's] judgement," and "encourages us to agree," thus indicating that a rhetorical question "summons authority" for the speaker (1987:246, 247, 248, 250). Furthermore, by forestalling answers, rhetorical questions both nullify the admission of the need for help (for information and knowledge) and deny the interlocutor reciprocal status in a dialogic act. Rhetorical questions thus extend the air of one-sided imposition, driving home the authority-signifying illocutionary force imposed by the speaker. They flip the curiosity-driven, open-ended nature of information-seeking questions, and provide a linguistic form that channels the weight of the tradition and its mores by asserting the social authority of the speaker as the mouthpiece of tradition and the community. Information-seeking questions, too, even though maintaining their primary function of requesting information, draw on the authority-asserting power that appears to derive from rhetorical questions. Name taboos, title and personal pronoun use, as well as different politeness registers are relatively overt ways of asserting social authority or indicating a lack of it. Questions—and particularly rhetorical questions—belong on that list as more subtle but equally powerful indicators of the social authority of the speaker, relatively inconspicuously establishing relative rank with the speaker in the position of authority.

Special Case of Social Authority: Greetings

Questions as a medium of claiming social authority appear even in contexts where social hierarchy might be expected to give way to the spirit of reciprocity, such as in greetings.

Considering the ubiquity of greetings in epic song, it comes as no surprise that there is a wealth of expressions to describe them in indirect discourse (narration). It is worth surveying some of these expressions before looking at the interrogative form in direct speech:

Berberinu seljam naturila,	Upon the barber, she pressed a salaam,
I berbera Bogom bratimila	And called the barber a blood brother by God.
(31, lines 490-91)	

Ej! Svi skoćiše, seljam prifatiše.	Hey! All jumped to their feet, accepted the salaam.
Hožđeldije dodaju tataru.	A welcome they extend to the messenger.
(10, lines 168-71)	

Greetings are often thought of and referred to as questions. For example, in cases where one of the greeters holds the authority-by-proxy, social norms dictate that a question be posed about the third party whose authority the character represents:

Kad Fatima slježe na kapiju,	When Fatima arrived at the gate,
Kahru tome hožđeldije daje,	She extends welcome to Kahro
A pita ga za mir i za zdravlje,	And asks him for peace and health,
Za gaziju Đerđeljez Aljiju.	For the champion Đerđelez Alija.
(28-9, lines 259-62)	

But short of the presence of the authority-by-proxy, a common greeting is a reciprocal action, often overtly manifesting its inherent give-and-take nature:

I svijema hožđeldiju daje.	To all he gives welcome.
Oni njemu bolje prifaćaju.	They accept and return twofold.
(43, lines 353-54)	

Seljam dade Budimki Fatimi,	Salaam she gave to Fatima of Buda
Primi Fata, poleće joj k ruci.	Fatima accepted, leaping to her hand.
(53, lines 1313-14)	

Reciprocity is so ingrained in the nature of the greeting that, when it is referred to in indirect discourse, the verb often takes a grammatically reflexive form:

E! Pitaju se za mir i za zdravlje.	Well! They ask [each other] for peace and health.
(37, line 1062; also 42, line 260)	

Za mirno se zdravlje jupituju.	For peaceful health they ask [each other].
(11, line 351)	

Yet, when a greeting in a song appears as a question in direct speech, it is uttered only by one person:

Zar ti lji si Komljen bajraktare?	Is that you, standard-bearer Komljen?
(20, line 1204; by the queen)	
Aljo skoći, ruke raširijo,	Alija jumped, spread his arms,
Raširijo, te je zagrljijo.	Spread them, and wrapped them around her.
"Jesi l', brate, u životu, Mujo?"	"Are you alive, brother Mujo?"
(50, lines 969-71)	
Sultan skoći, na koljena stade.	The sultan jumped, and stood on his knees.
"Đe s', gazijo, Budimlija Mujo?"	"Where have you been, hero Budimlija Mujo?"
(50, lines 999-1000)	

Even though greetings are often formulaic (neither is information sought, nor is action demanded), and even though once a greeting is set into motion the parties involved are bound by custom to follow through with it, the expectation of an equivalent phrase in return seems to disappear into thin air the moment a greeting is uttered as a question in direct speech. Greetings in interrogative form in direct speech come exclusively from characters in positions of social authority, and are not followed by responses. Thus, in dialogue, the spirit of reciprocity that lies at the core of greetings succumbs to the power of the interrogative form and its illocutionary force of summoning and projecting the social authority of the speaker.

Narrative Authority

In addition to direct discourse, questions appear in narration, where they harness authority of a different kind. Questions posed by the singer are inherently rhetorical. When Alija's messenger Kahro arrives at Fatima's house, he is greeted by the servants, at which point the singer asks:

A što Kahro reće bajraktare?	And what did Kahro the standard-bearer say?
(11, line 352)	

After Fatima reads the letter, she withdraws into her chamber and is about to write back to Alija. The singer retells the content of her letter beginning with the phrase:

I šta beše u knjigu udarila?	What did she strike in the letter?
(43, line 278; also 23, line 1480)	

Alija receives her response and decides to summon his army, dispatching seven messengers to seven of his vassals. As he readies himself to dictate the letters, the narrator asks:

Đe će koju knjigu *j*opraviti?	Which way will he dispatch which letter?
(12, line 442)	

The singer then lists the vassals and summarizes Alija's message to each of them. While the first example above does no more than draw attention to particular details of narration, the other two are followed by long descriptive passages: Fatima's speech and a catalog of Alija's vassals. The singer uses his prerogative as a story-teller to highlight with questions a scene or a sub-plot in the song. Even though they are not social superiors, singers possess the knowledge of the tradition and the art of story-telling. Having something valuable to convey gives them the right to assume a different type of questioning authority: narrative authority.

But rhetorical questions are also used by characters in direct discourse to broach a topic they are about to address at length. Thus in both cases they perform a topic-setting function. When Alija receives the imperial firman and speaks to his mother, she follows her blessing with a question:

A šta ćeš ti knjigi udariti?	And what will you strike in the letter?
(11, line 316)	

She then instructs him what to write to Fatima: about her maidenly honor, his heroic honor and duty, possible death, and aiding the empire. It is a speech, similar to the one that Pasha Sehidija gives to the sultan at the beginning of the song advising him to commission Alija. Unlike Alija's mother speaking to her son, the pasha does not have social authority in relation to the sultan, yet he prefaces his proposal with a question:

Na koga ćeš ferman opraviti?	To whom should you dispatch the firman?
(9, line 70)	

This is one of the rare cases where a direct question is directed to a higher-up—the ultimate higher-up, no less. The content of the letter turns out to be about the valor of Bosnia and its capability to come to the aid of the sultanate. The picture the pasha paints is of a mythical beast sleeping in a cave that will awaken and, properly harnessed, accomplish a great deed for the good of the empire. Like Alija's mother's advice, the pasha's letter is an example of a *muthos*, the way Richard Martin defines it: "a speech-act indicating authority, performed at length, usually in public, with a focus on full attention to every detail" (1989:12). A topic-setting question posed with narrative authority indicates that the character is temporarily leaving dialogue and entering a speech. What these speeches communicate is more important and universal than any single character in the song, consequently allowing characters—even those with lesser social authority, as is the case with Pasha Sehidija—to preface their speeches with a question. In the *muthos*-type speeches topic-setting questions mark authoritative beginnings the way Edward W. Said conceptualizes them: as combining the power-wielding kind of authority with the kind that recognizes the author as "a begetter, beginner" (1975:83). Narrative authority is the second type of question-posing authority, used as a mark of taking on speech-making or

story-telling authority either within the diegetic space of the song (by the hero or another character) or without (by the singer).

While speakers claiming social authority do so from both ends of the magic/questioning process—both asserting their own power and wielding that power over the interlocutor by implying access to the world of the unknown—speakers claiming narrative authority can only rely on their ability to wield authority over others but cannot claim a position of social authority. Social authority is accumulated through a combination of deeds and words, while narrative authority is grounded in words since it derives from knowledge, in other words access to what for others is the unknown. This is no surprise since narrative authority is most often encountered in narration—in other words, it belongs to the singer—and thus has tenuous social authority to lean on. Susan Slyomovics (1987) summarizes the social status of the professional singer across oral traditions when she identifies him as a social outcast. This status remains well into the twentieth century, such as in Upper Egypt, with the singer ꜥAwaḍallah ꜥAbd aj-Jalīl ꜥAli, whom Slyomovics followed during her fieldwork; with Himalayan performers who in relation to their socially superior patrons, according to Marie Lecomte-Tilouine, are "situated at opposite extremes of the social hierarchy within the caste organization" (2016:211); or with the carriers of the longest surviving Balkan epic tradition, the Romanian lăutari (professional Romany singers; Beissinger 1991:15-39). Slyomovics defines a social outcast as someone who generally "defines social boundaries [and] serves as a focus for group feelings," and who in the case of performers is "the artistic bearer of his group's cultural history" (1987:6). This definition applies to South Slavic singers even though by the 1930s, when Parry and Lord first recorded "The Song of Bagdad," professional singers among South Slavs were already a thing of the olden days of a burgeoning Ottoman local gentry who could afford to patronize them. As Matija Murko notes in his account of his fieldwork in the Balkans in 1930-32, "[a]s for the occupation of the singers, there is no status that is not represented. . . . [P]easants . . . land owners, former Muslim beys, now impoverished, owners, rich peasants (gazda), but also poor folk, shepherds . . . land laborers, road workers"—the list goes on (1951:61). South Slavic singers at this point in history come from all walks of life; some can claim social authority, but many cannot.[9] As Slyomovics notes, "What one says, as far as its truth is concerned, is not affected by who one is, whether gypsy, poet or beggar. ꜥAwaḍallah's story is respected; ꜥAwaḍallah is not. This is contrary to everyday experience where the weight of a man's words depends upon his status within the community" (1987:18). But those who speak with narrative authority have more to show in terms of their ability to wield power over others. Social-authority speakers imply access to the unknown by the use of questions that are, more often than not, rhetorical and thus not followed by answers. Narrative-authority speakers too pose rhetorical questions, but since they typically double as topic-setting questions, they follow the questions with answers, usually extensive, speech-like ones. Thus they do not merely imply connection with the unknown, but actively demonstrate their access to it.

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[9] For an insightful discussion of an additional layer of authority dynamic, albeit in an ethnographic rather than a performative context—between the collector (Parry), the translator (Nikola Vujnović), and the singer (Salih)—see Ranković 2012. Even after repeatedly submitting to the interviewers' social authority, Salih, "invoking the ultimate authority of tradition as the bottom line," unrelentingly asserts his narrative authority (45).

Special Case of Narrative Authority: Slavic Antithesis

In South Slavic epic song, questions posed with narrative authority include a sub-category that has earned a name of its own. Sulejman Makić sings a somewhat different introduction to "The Song of Bagdad"; in it the sultan appears to be in great pain and the imperial imam asks him:

Sultan care, stari gospodare!	Sultan-emperor, old overlord!
Jesi l' lašnje, da lj' moš' preboljeti,	Are you better, will you recover,
Alj' si mućno, hoćeš umrijeti?	Or are you worse, will you die?
(260, lines 12-14)	

A few lines later, the sultan's son Ibrahim is summoned, and he directs the same question in the same words to his father.[10] This makes for a puzzling example because not one but two characters without social authority direct questions at the same higher-up, the sultan. When his father informs him that he is about to die, Ibrahim expands his initial question:

Babo, care, zemlje gospodare!	Father, emperor, the master of the land!
Pa što tebe osta najžaljije?	What do you leave behind that causes you sorrow?
Je lj' ti žao što ćeš umrijeti?	Are you sorry that you are about to die?
Je lj' ti žao bijela pajtahta?	Are you sorry for the white capital?
Je lj' ti žao tvoja carevina?	Are you sorry for your empire?
Je lj' ti žao tvoja vjerna ljuba?	Are you sorry for your faithful beloved?
Je lj' ti žao tvoje sultanije,	Are you sorry for your queen consort,
Alj' najviše sina Ibrahima,	Or, above all, for your son Ibrahim,
Što ostade grdan sirotinja?	For he will remain a wretched orphan?
(261, lines 46-54)	

The sultan responds in the negative to Ibrahim's question line-for-line, and then reveals that his one "lingering wound" is the unfinished siege of Bagdad, at which point the sultan charges Ibrahim with fulfilling his will by conquering it.[11] The exposition of this "remaining wound"

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[10] The only difference is that the son addresses the sultan in the first line as "[f]ather, emperor" instead of "[s]ultan-emperor" (261, lines 39-41).

[11] These prima facie information-seeking questions thus turn out to be rhetorical. Rhetorical questions are followed by answers more commonly when posed by singers than by characters in a song. S. G. Armistead (1987) provides a comparative sample of the question-and-answer form in Hispanic epics and ballads and, more broadly, in European traditional narratives (in the case of which, he traces the form to their oral-traditional roots). Such examples offer a valuable insight into the logic of rhetorical questions, which imply answers even when they do not spell them out.

takes no fewer than 159 lines (72-230).[12] At the point where the sultan negates Ibrahim's question and begins to reveal what hangs heavily on his mind, it becomes clear that the questions by the imam and Ibrahim are part of a foreshadowing strategy aimed at emphasizing the forthcoming deathbed speech. Questions are uttered and answers provided with perfect parallelism, initiating an extended version of what is known as Slavic antithesis.

Slavic antithesis is arguably the most stylized among the formulaic patterns of expression in South Slavic epic. It takes the form of A?→not A→but B: a question including typically two options is followed first by a negation of the proposed option(s), and then by an answer that reflects the real state of affairs.[13] It is a variant of a topic-setting question followed by a speech, but between the question and the answer appear optional answers and a negation of those options. In agonistic dialogues it makes sense that speakers begin their speeches by asserting their authority, in other words with a rhetorical (topic-setting) question. But for the authoritative character to deliver the speech in the form of a Slavic antithesis, the question needs to be posed by an interlocutor in order to give the speaker the opportunity to negate the options offered in the questions before presenting the speech (*muthos*). With no antagonism between the speakers, according to Martin, the speech "takes on the appearance of harmless and pleasant fiction" (1989:55), consequently negating the need to assert individual authority and instead establishing narrative authority in the service of poetic stylization.[14] This pleasant speech in the form of Slavic antithesis is also poetically powerful; and for the full force of it to be delivered through negation and then assertion by the character in the position of authority, it has carved out an exception for the question to be posed by the interlocutor while paradoxically reinforcing the narrative authority of the main speaker.

Epic Authority

The third type of questioning authority is the epic one: the authority of the hero in a song. Both Alija at the beginning and end of the song and Fatima in the episode of capturing the queen pose questions to their social superiors: Alija to his mother, and Fatima to the queen. Like social authority, epic authority appears in direct speech. It stems from words and actions that in the given context claim to represent the spirit of the tradition and its *nomos* better than does the

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[12] In Kurtagić's version, LN 15, the sultan expounds on his "remaining wound" to Vizier Ćuprlić in 264 lines (81-344), and then charges his son Ibrahim with conquering Bagdad in another 64 lines (375-82, 385-440).

[13] For a definition and analysis of Slavic antithesis as negative parallelism, see Jovanović 1968. The only point in her argument I would dispute is the claim that "[i]t is true, *albeit not important*, that often the first part of this figure is expressed in the form of a question" (378, emphasis mine). For a more recent overview of Slavic antithesis, its parallels, non-standard forms, a summary of scholarship, and brief references to examples in non-South-Slavic traditions (such as Homeric, Moldovan, and Russian), see Janićijević 2009:21-34.

[14] Questions can be used in this fashion even without launching a Slavic antithesis, such as in the song "Fiery Mary in Hell" (Огњена Марија у паклу) in Vuk Stefanović Karadžić's collection, where her questions to St. Peter serve as a springboard for his exposition (1969 [1845-62]:II, 17-18, 49-50); cf. a similar scene in the song "Wedding of Ivan Rišnjanin" (Женидба Ивана Ришњанина) between a servant, Rade, posing a question to his master, Ivan, to elicit a lengthy speech (III, 167).

social status of the interlocutor, and thus receive social approbation that overrides lack of individual status. In direct opposition to social authority, epic authority thus challenges the applicability of social hierarchy.[15] Maja Bošković-Stulli notes that "junak" (hero, champion) signifies a "young man" or a "lad," which implies that epic authority is inherently positioned to go against social seniority, which privileges age over youth (1971a:13). All speech acts aim to prompt a (re)action, and in doing so they presume the prerogative of the speaker to make such pronouncements. The difference between social and epic authority is not tied to the narrative role of the character (it is not always the hero who speaks with epic authority), but to the character's power positionality. If a character holds established authority, he or she speaks with social authority. If he or she establishes a claim to it in the moment of speaking, the authority is epic. In confronting social authority, epic authority takes on the strategy of fighting fire with fire. It borrows the stance of righteousness from social authority and then goes against that social authority using its own weapon of choice: questions. It can do so because, as words of power, questions on their own—regardless of the context—carry the weight of authority.

The tension between social and epic authority appears prominently in the *muthoi* in the *Iliad*. According to Martin, *muthos* is as much "the speech of one in power" (social authority) as it is of those "laying claim to power," that is, heroes (epic authority; 1989:22); one important way to exert one's status is not only to "be a doer of deeds" but also "a speaker . . . not of words, but of *muthoi*, 'authoritative speech-acts'" (26). But South Slavic epics are considerably shorter than Homeric ones and consequently contain fewer lengthy speeches. South Slavic heroes in agonistic scenes are therefore left to assert their authority with rhetorical questions. Like a *muthos*, which is "the kind of speech that focuses on the speaker," a rhetorical question foregoes the need for a response, thus downplaying or excluding the interlocutor's contribution and effectively keeping the focus on the speaker (14). Martin even cites examples of questions, saying by way of explanation that, while "[s]ome people always make their directives into imperatives[, s]ome have more tact" (33). The posers of rhetorical questions in "The Song of Bagdad" exercise restraint from rashness, demonstrating control over their words. But tact ought not to be confused with a lack of force: questions are not muted imperatives. Ervin-Tripp's analysis (1976) has opened the door to the possibility that, in performing the function of directives (in other words making the interlocutor do something), rhetorical questions achieve not less but more than imperatives. Imperatives direct, while questions direct and convey emotion and attitude, intensifying the power of words, and consequently the authority of the speaker. The most powerful instances of the use of epic authority include challenging the actions of superiors; and on a smaller scale, heroes and heroines use epic authority to announce important actions they are about to undertake. While social authority carries the intensity of moral indignation that seeks affirmation, epic authority projects the emotional charge of injustice in need of rectification.

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[15] Not every challenge to social authority results in the establishment of epic authority by the speaker. Songs in the epic cycle on *hajduk*s and *uskok*s (local bandits that arose as an identifiable demographic in the seventeenth century; Karadžić 1969 [1845-62], vol. 3) tread the line between two types of defiance of authority: anarchistic vs. heroic. According to Svetozar Koljević (1974:216-27), the former grows out of frustration with unjust laws but then deviates into heedless violence. Only the latter can be said to act within the acceptable limits of violence against oppression, struggling to become the expression of nobility.

Social and epic authority reflect the tension between two aspects of sympathetic magic articulated by Frazer. Describing what he refers to as savage society (in other words a societal structure before stratification based on status), Frazer claims that in such a society "[t]he least possible scope is . . . afforded to superior talent to change old customs for the better. The ablest man is dragged down by the weakest and dullest, who necessarily sets the standard, since he cannot rise, while the other can fall" (1951:54). It is only with the rise of status-based social hierarchy that, according to Frazer, arises "the Golden age of humanity, everything that helps to raise society by opening a career to talent and proportioning the degrees of authority to men's natural abilities" (*ibid.*). In his distinctly nineteenth-century view of "savage" societies, Frazer identifies two aspects of a society that gives rise to social and epic authority. On the one hand is the oral society, with its rule of tradition over the individual. On the other is a hierarchical structure that, under certain circumstances, allows an aptly positioned and able individual to crack a few traditional steps on his way to a position of power. The society of South Slavic epic song, as an oral yet hierarchical society, embodies both aspects, and the two modes of authority claimed by characters in song reflect them. The invisible force that the former obeys and the latter subverts to its will is, according to Frazer, "the pattern of right"; this "unwritten law" is about power with its roots in ethics (*ibid.*). Questions, like magic, "ope[n] a career to talent and proportio[n] the degrees of authority to men's natural abilities": they allow those with status to endorse the system, and those without to use their skill to improve it. Questions are a form that both propels the tradition by asserting the authority of those who are inducted into positions of power, by dint of age, experience, birth, or other standards sanctioned by tradition (social authority), and also provides a venue for opposing, countering, and improving the tradition (epic authority).

The most powerful use of epic authority in "The Song of Bagdad" is seen between the two heroes: Fatima and Alija. Fatima reproves Alija with questions four times in the course of the song. The first time is when she responds to Alija's letter asking her whether he should go to the sultan's aid:

A što pitaš Budimku Fatimu?	Why do you ask Fatima of Buda?
Aj, devljetu sljegni u hizmetu!	Go, be of service to the empire!
Ti pokupi Bosnu cip cijelu!	Gather Bosnia, all of it!
Sljegni z Bosnom caru *j*od indata,	Come down thundering to the emperor's aid,
Pa prifati bijela Bagdata!	And conquer white Bagdad!
Fata će te s hrzom prićekati.	Fatima will wait for you with honor.
Dame skolju do tri kraljevine,	Even if three kingdoms surround me,
Branić̌u se sa Budima grada,	I will defend myself from the walls of Buda,
Niti odbit' vara od duvara,	They will neither chip a stone from the wall,
A deljatim Budim prifatiti.	Let alone conquer Buda.
A ne boj' se, careva gazijo!	And fear not, emperor's hero!
Ako ne šće tako *j*uraditi,	If you do not wish to do thusly,
Spremi mene kanalji dorata,	Send to me your dark-red bay horse,
A spremi mi sablju dimiškinju,	And send to me your Damascene saber,
A spremi mi siljah i oruže,	And send to me your wide belt and weapons,

I spremi mi tvojega dorata!	And send to me your bay horse!
Ja ću caru Bosnu pokupiti,	I shall gather Bosnia for the emperor,
I devljetu od indata sići,	And come to the aid of the empire,
Z božom pomoj prifatit' Bagdata.	With God's help capture Bagdad.
Ja ću tebe đerđef opremiti,	And to you I will send my tambour,
Spremit' đerđef i kudelju moju,	Send to you the tambour and thread,
Pa ti predi s majkom u odaju!	You then embroider in a chamber with your mother!

(12, lines 377-98)

Fatima criticizes Alija for stalling, and incites him to action. She mocks him with a rhetorical flourish—the option of her going to war, and his taking over her handiwork duties in her place—beginning with a question and following with an agonistic speech as a direct challenge to Alija's thoughts, doubts, and uncertainties. She inverts the authority-balance between the hero and herself, taking over the role of determining the course of action for him.

Fatima chides Alija again when she first meets him in her disguise as Budimlija Mujo. Alija is so taken with her appearance that he asks her to carry the imperial standard:

| Olj' mi primit' careva sanđaka? | Will you accept the emperor's banner for me? |
| Begenišem tebe i đogata. | I have taken a liking to you and your white horse. |

(32, lines 640-1)

She takes issue with his offer and declines; she thinks it too hasty of Alija to bestow such an honor upon someone who has not yet introduced himself properly:

Ti ne znadeš ko sam ni kako sam,	You know neither who I am nor how I am,
Ni s koje sam strane od svijeta.	Nor whence in the world I come from.
Kako ću ti sanđak prifatiti?	How should I take on the banner for you?

(32-3, lines 643-5)

The two characters spar with questions seemingly over formality and decorum. Alija concedes, and reverts to proper etiquette with another question:

| "Ko si, brate, dobar barjaktare?" | "Who are you, brother, fine standard-bearer?" |

(33, line 647; also 46, line 601-2)

Fatima responds with a lengthy formal introduction of herself as Mujo and eventually accepts the standard from Alija. Thus far we see that, to Alija posing his initial questions with social authority, Fatima counters with epic authority. Since a transgression has taken place, Fatima's questioning leads Alija to correct it by reminding him to follow the custom and, once he does, she reverts to statements.

Fatima reproves Alija a third time during the first audience with the sultan. Having procured Alija's release from the dungeon, she chides him for failing to fulfill his promise to obtain a pardon from the sultan for Budimlija Mujo (who she is disguised as):

Zašto si mi besu založijo,	Why did you make me a promise,
Da mi vadiš itljak buruntiju?	To procure a pardon for me?
(34, lines 801-2)	

While captivity is prima facie a form of subverting the hero's authority, it is unsurprisingly often of crucial value to the plot in that it serves as a precondition for the hero's demonstration of valor.[16] Here it is unusually also a way of positioning Fatima as a heroine and reversing the power dynamic between the two heroes: with his social authority temporarily taken away, there is no need for sparring with questions, so their exchange is resolved with a single one.[17]

Fatima's fourth and final reproach comes at the end of the song. On their wedding night, Alija sees Fatima's shaven head, leaves, and then dispatches his mother to Fatima's chamber to offer her recompense for returning home. Fatima refuses and demands to speak with Alija in person. Alija repeats the offer to her, to which she responds:

Ja ti podmir prifatiti neću.	I will not accept your recompense.
Ko je s tobom u Bagdatu bijo?	Who was with you in Bagdad?
(24, lines 1585-86)	

She describes her adventures, from disguising herself as Budimlija Mujo to penetrating the city gates and abducting the queen of Bagdad, but this time the speech is issued as a powerful string of rhetorical questions:

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[16] For formulaic patterns of the hero's captivity that point to the rootedness of the motif in epic tradition, see Detelić 2011.

[17] At this point it is clear that Fatima emerges as the hero in the song. In a version by Fortić, she formally takes on heroic status by introducing herself to Alija (and later the sultan) with a question: "Have you heard [of] Budimlija Mujo?" ("Jesi l' čuo Budimliju Muju?," referring to herself disguised as Mujo: 212, line 384; 213, line 459). She is not a helper but a counterpoint to Alija. Heroes in South Slavic epic are occasionally paired with characters other than anti-heroes, such as another hero or, as is the case here, a heroine. Just as Alija is a stock hero figure in the Muslim versions of South Slavic epics, so is Fatima: Fatima was a common sobriquet for female warriors in medieval Arabic works (Jason 2011:237), a tradition that is reflected in the Muslim strain of the South Slavic epic songs. Even though Fatima in "The Song of Bagdad" is a different character, her name evokes many of the heroic traits associated with Fatima-the-warrior in the way Olga Levaniouk defines the term: "'evocation' . . . conveys the sense of activating notions and associations, of bringing to mind stories, characters, words, and actions that are not explicitly identified in the poem, but without necessarily presupposing any particular textual point of reference" (2011:8; cf. traditional referentiality in South Slavic epic song as presented by John Miles Foley in *Immanent Art* [1991:1-37]). Bošković-Stulli provides an overview of female characters who, disguised as men, go on to perform heroic deeds, interpreting the motif as an anti-patriarchal strain in South Slavic epic song—a strain which can be placed under the category of authority-challenging motifs and characters even if Fatima ends up obeying the patriarchal expectations of subsuming her role to that of her future husband (1971b:111). Such characters can be seen in traditions other than South Slavic and Arabic: Joanne Findon, for example, identifies in the Irish oral tradition two opposing currents, one "aligning [itself] with the wider misogynistic discourse endemic in the European Middle Ages" and the other offering "portrayal of strong, active women who have much to say" and who "play important roles in the tales" (1997:7). In Kurtagić's version, LN 15, which has a different cast of characters, the two female characters—the young sultana and Jela—both take on similarly authority-challenging roles, posing mocking and challenging questions to their male counterparts (292-302, 1860-63, 2077).

Ko je s tobom u Bagdatu bijo?	Who was with you in Bagdad?
Ko je tebi sanđaktarom bijo?	Who was your banner-bearer?
Ko ti nađe od Bagdata vrata,	Who found the door to Bagdad for you,
I dobavi bagdatsku kraljicu,	And delivered the queen of Bagdad,
I dobavi ključe od Bagdata,	And delivered the keys to Bagdad,
I dade ti polu od đerdana	And gave you one half of the necklace
Od kraljice od Bagdata grada?	That belonged to the queen of Bagdad city?
(54, lines 1333-39)	

This dramatic climax of the story takes the form of a pathos-filled challenge to Alija's authority.[18] In the song, each time Alija makes a misstep, Fatima is there to help him become aware of it and to steer him toward the proper decision and action. Corresponding to Robert J. Fogelin's observation that rhetorical questions lead "the respondent . . . to acknowledge something . . . that is to his or her discredit" (1987:265), the four examples above reveal themselves to be not mere reproaches, but corrective speech acts.

"[T]he weapon of the wronged and oppressed against their more powerful enemies" is how Wilson defines curses (2000:436); they are the weapon of choice for those who claim new rather than assert established authority. Cursing—the quotidian analog of magic curses—is, according to Jack Katz, an emotional response in which the person reconnects with the community he or she feels excluded from while simultaneously claiming his or her own righteousness. Using two-lane traffic as a case study because of its propensity to serve as a metaphor and comparandum for dialogical interaction where conflict (road rage) occurs, Katz claims that cursing often provides emotional release because cursing "dramatize[s the person's] relationship to the offender in a way that emphasizes the offender's extraordinarily inferior moral status and by inference, his or her own superiority" (1999:60). The mental and emotional process leading to cursing—the cursing ritual so to speak—comprises three steps: first, by "[d]efining [themselves] as victimized, the [person] sneaks moral meaning into the situation before projecting a moralistic response"; second, "the immediate social situation is generalized" and thus "given transcendent significance"; the first two set "the stage for [the third step:] an attempt to reverse the moral and sensual process . . . Now the [person] can perform as a ritual actor before the general audience whose presence he or she has invoked" (48). Thus, "a loss of the taken-for-granted basis of action" is compensated by "call[ing] up moral energy to construct a drama of communal importance in the immediate situation, and then to clothe oneself in the role of avenging hero" (48-49). While this process takes on a ritualistic character, its most compelling feature is that it is effected almost exclusively through words rather than action, namely through verbal dramatization. Commenting on Katz's findings on the use of curses in contemporary contexts, Randall Collins notes that cursing "is a 'magical' act." Specifically, cursing, "for all its bad moral reputation in 'proper' social manners, is a moral act; it is carried out with a sense of self-righteousness, and a compulsory quality as if the curser is being pulled into the action by a

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[18] As Armistead notes, "[r]hetorical questions are perfectly consistent with other *guslar* techniques, such as repetition, as a means of creating narrative tension" (1987:52). Another technique that is often coupled with rhetorical questions and repetition, with the effect of building tension, is gradation.

larger force. . . . Cursing is a kind of primitive justice . . ." (2004:205-06). Just as "[c]ursing is the expression of taboo words[, which] call for attention because they break a barrier against what is supposed to be improper to utter" (207), so epic questions break the norm of social inferiors not posing them.

In consonance with W. H. Auden's claim that a "ritual is a sign of harmony between the aesthetic and the ethical . . ." (1948:408), epic questions show themselves to be an aesthetic (or at least formal) device (a ritual) that temporarily destabilizes the ethical (established social hierarchy) for the purpose of regaining its stability long-term (propriety and justice). Like cursing, this call to change breaks down the barriers of social status. In initiating rectification of actions, questions posed with epic authority resemble *muthoi* in the *Iliad*. Martin (1989:43-88) identifies three types of *muthoi* in Homer: commands, performances of memory, and flyting.[19] He claims that the most prominent of the three is performance of memory (which corresponds to narrative authority), stating their length as proof. But in the South Slavic song, the authority-challenging questions and the corresponding epic authority carry the day. Rhetorical questions on their own can never be sustained as long as speeches in the indicative, even when bolstered with repetition and gradation, as in Fatima's fourth and final challenge. But on their own, they make for powerful turning points, punctuating the ongoing narrative by either contrasting potential narratives to actual ones (Fatima contrasting Alija's going to battle to his staying at her home), changing the course of the narrative (Fatima changing Alija's mind about their wedding), or initiating new ones (Fatima's third authority-challenging question to Alija marks the point in the narrative where she replaces him as the hero of the song). Cursing combines, according to Katz, embodied emotional experience with "a positive effort to construct a new meaning for the situation" (1999:24). Epic questions go even further: they demand a new narrative. To make an impact—in word and in deed—in face of the established authority, the speaker uses rhetorical questions that bestow moral affirmation upon the acts of change that mark the high turning points in a song narrative. They thus harness three elements: the power of opprobrium that the tradition imposes on the actions being reproached, the power of the interrogative mood to create the need for a new narrative, and the fighting spirit of the hero that the audience identifies with. Questions posed with epic authority thus model how a change can be enacted with the sanction of the tradition—the same tradition that discourages change by claiming to be unchangeable.

A Special Case of Epic Authority: The Battle of Questions

If questions posed with social authority can be brought under the umbrella of chastising and exhorting, and those with narrative authority are topic-setting, questions posed with epic authority are challenges. As catalysts for conflict based on self-righteousness, they constitute, as cursing does, "a move in the escalation of conflict in a direct confrontation. . . . [H]ere the ritual tends to entrain its recipient into the same kind of formulaic verbal expression" (Collins 2004:209). If the offender responds in (un)kind, the conflict escalates, and turns into a battle that

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[19] The three kinds of authority I identify here match the types of *muthoi*, identifying at least one—if not the most salient—criterion for Martin's division into the three categories.

can only be resolved by one side declaring victory. The dialogical sparring with questions follows the logic not only of cursing but also of a different kind of song—bird song—which offers an analog for the power of epic authority, as demonstrated in studies by Beecher and Campbell (2005) and Burt et al. (2001). Male song sparrows are territorial birds. Each has a repertoire of songs, some of which are unique to the individual, and some of which he shares with a neighbor. Songs are power exchange tools that a bird uses to initiate territorial interactions with a neighbor as they "convey only one basic message, 'I am an adult male of the species in possession of a territory'" (Beecher and Campbell 2005:1297). The neighbor can choose to engage or not. He can respond with a song unique to him—a signal that he is refusing to engage (dropping the topic, so to speak). But if he responds with a song from the shared repertoire, he signals the intention to pursue the interaction. At this point, if he responds with a different song from the shared repertoire ("repertoire matching"), he maintains communication (stays "on topic") in a de-escalating manner. If, on the other hand, he responds with the same song that the other male sang ("type matching"), he is acting aggressively and confrontationally, escalating the interaction. Each subsequent "type matching" response brings the two closer to a physical confrontation. Weiner describes a similar approach to challenges in interactions among humans: Trobrianders' "hard words" (such as accusations) can be either followed by the interlocutor's attempt at suicide (the admission of defeat), met with silence (a de-escalation response), or matched by "hard words," which lead to a physical confrontation (1983:693-95). Not only mirroring the attitude but doing so in the same form resembles responding to a question with a question with epic authority in South Slavic epic song: the speakers "perceive a type match from a neighbour as a challenge and [are] more likely to escalate" (Beecher and Campbell 2005:1298). In epic song, questions are the form that, when shot back, not only asserts the position of the speaker as superior in a given context (which all questions do) and challenges the attitude and actions of the interlocutor (which all epic questions do), but throws down the gauntlet, thus rendering the exchange a duel with the need for a clear resolution. The resolution can come in word or in deed, by reverting to the indicative (staying on topic but dropping the interrogative form) or by complying in action (effectively admitting the interlocutor's authority). There needs to be a winner and a loser.

The power of authoritative questioning extends beyond "The Song of Bagdad" and beyond the South Slavic epic oral tradition. Posing questions to issue a heroic challenge leading to victory is seen in a scene in Book VI of *Gilgamesh*. Ishtar—the goddess of fertility, love, sex, and war—lays her eyes on the hero Gilgamesh and makes him an offer of marriage. Gilgamesh refuses. But he does not stop there; he calls on her cruelty in a speech punctuated with questions (lines 24-79 in the standard Old Babylonian version; translation from Foster et al. 2001:47 and Mitchell 2004:135)[20]:

> [What shall I give you] if I take you to wife?
>
> . . .

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[20] With the exception of the last line, the translation below is taken from Foster et al. 2001. Foster translates the last line of Gilgamesh's speech in the imperative mood, even though it contains the interrogative word "why" (mīnim); I have therefore replaced it with Stephen Mitchell's translation (2004).

[What would I get] if I marry you?

. . .

Which of your lovers [lasted] forever?
Which of your heroes went up [to heaven]?

. . .

And why would *my* fate be any different?

Gilgamesh's speech, according to Tzvi Abusch (1986:145), can be divided into three thematic sections. The first and the third begin and end with questions (the original text of the first section is broken, and the interrogative form is thus inferred from context, but the third contains explicit interrogatives), decrying the inappropriateness of Ishtar's proposal and recounting in sordid detail the eventual sufferings of each of her previous husbands. Gilgamesh's insult-laden challenge to Ishtar's authority, status, and the righteousness of her decisions and actions is delivered through questions with such force that it causes the powerful deity to run to her parents in tears. Ishtar subsequently engages Gilgamesh in a contest—a challenge that Gilgamesh wins in deed after he has won it in (questioning) words.[21]

Closer in time and familiarity is the Book of Job in the Hebrew Bible where Job engages in a veritable battle of questions with God as he poses arguably the most probing ethical question in the Bible: the paradox of the coexistence of evil and the justice of a benevolent God.[22] Job begins by voicing his grievances against God to his friends, interspersing them with questions. Job's friends defend God, but they also match Job's questions with those of their own, calling into question Job's doubts and accusations. God has heard the exchange, and now responds with rhetorical question after rhetorical question (Job 38-41). After Job's sparring with his friends, God now delivers the final blow with an overwhelming salvo of questions that neither require nor receive answers. His questions do not respond to Job's accusations because more important than staying on topic is staying on top. The book ends with Job acknowledging God's authority, the ultimate justice of his actions, and the proper order (described as a balance between interrogatives and declaratives) is one where he will "[h]ear, and I [God] will speak; I [God] will question you [Job], and you declare to me" (Job 42:4 [Coogan 2007]). The effect of the questions is a demonstration of the grandeur of God and, most importantly, his unquestionable and thus ultimate authority. Asking questions is a hallmark of authority, but even questions can be questioned, and when that happens, the ultimate weapon is more elaborate questions. As in other

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[21] Abusch (1986:149-50) notes that Gilgamesh's speech comes in response to Ishtar's unexpectedly unilateral assertion of power, and is delivered in ritual form. Ishtar later initiates round two of the battle, in which Gilgamesh's blood brother Enkidu dies. But even though Gilgamesh loses his friend, he stands on high moral ground, not allowing Ishtar to have her way.

[22] Kenneth M. Craig Jr. prefaces his volume on questions in the Hebrew Bible by noting that questions "may call attention to discrepancies in power" and "remind us . . . of the establishment of power, and of the exercise of authority" (2005:5, 9). However, his argument examines questions primarily as catalysts for characterization and plot development, bringing up the Book of Job only tangentially. Similarly, Lénart J. de Regt (1994:362) notes that rhetorical questions in the Book of Job position the speaker as someone to be listened to, implying their role in asserting the authority of the speaker, but not elaborating; he does provide a helpful overview of rhetorical questions (both marked and not marked by the interrogative particle) as well as the uses of the interrogative particle.

battles of questions, the last question makes for the last word. Unlike the pattern of epic authority challenging and changing social authority, here social authority wins over epic authority, driving home the paradoxical message of the book.

Beyond "The Song of Bagdad"

Not all questions in "The Song of Bagdad" fall neatly into one of the three categories; but rather than being exceptions they are as a rule outliers in relation to the three categories of questioning authority. One common case is when the rank of the characters is unclear. A topos where relative status becomes blurred if not irrelevant is the marketplace: in negotiations and transactions, such as when Fatima talks to the town criers who are about to sell Budimlija Mujo's horse, interlocutors are considered to be on the same footing and can exchange questions without regard to their social status (PN 12406, lines 332, 343; PN 12422, lines 278-80). This can be taken as a special case of situational authority, in other words cases where questions are uttered before relative rank has been established through introductions. Another common case is when two adversaries of seemingly equal strength challenge each other, for example when Mehmed meets the imperial soldier in the longest South Slavic epic, "The Wedding of Smailagić Meho" ("Ženidba Smailagina sina") by Avdo Međedović (Bynum and Lord 1974:141), or between the heroes Alija and Višnjić in Avdo's "Wedding of Vlahinjić Alija" ("Ženidba Vlahinjić Alije"; Bynum 1980:25, lines 2212-20). An extended version of such a scene is found in Petar Petrović-Njegoš's "Ogledalo srbsko" (1845, quoted in Zima 1880:56), where two cocky heroes issue challenges to each other:

Vako reče Orugdžiću Meho:	Thus speaks Orugdžić Meho:
"More vlaše! iz koje s' nahije?	"Hey you infidel! Which district are you from?
Kako li se zoveš po imenu?	By what name do they call you?
Imadeš li ostarjelu majku?	Do you have an elderly mother?
Jesi li se more oženio?	Are you already married?
Postaće ti majka kukavica,	Your mother will wail like a cuckoo bird,
Ostaće ti ljuba udovica,	Your beloved will remain a widow,
S kijem si se danas poćerao."	Because of the one whom you have challenged today."
Besjedi mu Pocerac Milošu:	Pocerac Miloš speaks to him:
"Što me pitaš more poturico! . . .	"Why do you ask me, you converted Turk! . . .
. . .	. . .
Ti otkle si, iz koga li grada?	Where are you from, from which city?
Kako li se zoveš po imenu?	By which name do they call you?
Je li tebi u životu majka?	Is your mother still alive?
Da se nisi skoro oženio?	Have you perchance gotten married recently?
Postaće ti majka kukavica,	Your mother will wail like a cuckoo bird,
Ostaće ti bula neljubljena,	Your beloved will remain untouched,

S kime si se danas poćerao.”   Because of the one whom you have challenged
                                                                today.”

A differently elaborate case of mutual questioning between heroes on equal footing occurs in Avdo's "Wedding of Smailagić Meho," in two consecutive dialogues between blood brothers, Tale and Osman, and then Tale and Hasan: the heroes exchange greetings and news, weaving in questions whose type ranges from greetings (social authority) and friendly rhetorical challenge (epic authority) to topic-setting (narrative authority; Bynum and Lord 1974:339-47, lines 10,643-924).

Questioning oneself is not uncommon in epic song. When part of a soliloquy, questions are typically at its beginning, serving as topic-setting questions followed by exposition, thus posed with narrative authority, as is the case when the imperial messenger beholds Fatima for the first time and expresses to himself words of wonder: "Whence the young fellow, whence his white horse? . . . If girls of Buda are like this, what are Buda's heroes like then?" (PN 12406, lines 400-01, 448-49). Karadžić's collection contains more examples of self-reflexive questions, including the one where "child Tadija" speaks to himself by addressing his "heart": "Why did you, oh heart of mine, take fright?" (1969 [1845-62]:III, 133). Speaking to "one's heart" is a way of challenging oneself in the form of a questioning dialogue, not unlike heroes in the *Iliad* who, rather than thinking aloud, establish an interlocutor within themselves, consequently speaking in question form "to the[ir] greathearted soul" (πρὸς ὃν μεγαλήτορα θυμόν: 11.403-07, 17.90-97, 18.5-7, 21.552-62, 22.98-122). Other impersonal interlocutors appear in addresses to inanimate objects, such as when Radivoje and Manojlo chastise a mountain (Karadžić 1969 [1845-62]:III, 14, 24), or to preternatural beings, as when Old Man Novak curses a nymph (*vila*; III, 27-28). These are questions delivered with epic authority, where characters challenge forces beyond their control.

The most frequent outliers are between masters and servants and male and female couples. Typically these are ephemeral instances of taking on epic authority, cut short when the master or the husband responds with a question, winning the battle and effectively retaking the baton of authority. In Avdo's "Wedding of Smailagić Meho," when Mehmed enters Fata's house for the first time, she asks him to dismount with—unusually—a question (Bynum and Lord 1974:165). Here, context matters. The question is preceded with a long description of the opulence of Fata's home, revealing the full weight of her high-born status to Mehmed and the audience, and at the same time creating a brief window of opportunity for her to switch to the interrogative. While epic authority by definition poses a challenge, it can be attenuated by the context. There are cases where the characters complement each other, such as with a hero and his mother (in a fatherless household, as in the case of Alija and his mother), a heroine with her mother (as in the case of Zlata and her mother in the "Wedding of Vlahinjić Alija" [Bynum 1980:13-16]), or a hero with a potential mother-in-law (as in the case of Mehmed and Fatima's mother in the "Wedding of Smailagić Meho" [Bynum and Lord 1974:170-75, 198-99, 202-04]), where youth and courage are paired with age and wisdom, making the battle of the questions caring and affable, sometimes even playful, rather than agonistic. (A similar situation is seen in Avdo's "Wedding of Smailagić Meho" between the hero Mehmed and his servant, who is also his protector and elder.) These characters pose questions with a corrective function in subplots

where the actions of the main hero require rectification. Consequently, they temporarily take on epic authority even though as characters they do not rise to the status of heroes.

Finally, there are questions which, posed by anti-heroes, are deceptive, such as when empress Milica attempts to seduce Dragon of Jastrebac (Karadžić 1969 [1845-62]:II, 163) or when Šćepan's wife deceives him leading eventually to his death (II, 394). Used in the guise of a challenge issued with epic authority, without the backing of traditional ethos, these questions end up being anti-heroic. A milder version can be seen in Avdo's "The Wedding of Vlahinjić Alija" where soldiers taunt their captain; here the intention is not corrupt, but the soldiers' inebriated state belies moral aspects of the epic authority of the question they are posing (Bynum and Lord 1974:24, lines 2124-25).[23]

Overall, questions show a remarkable level of adherence to the three authority-based types in "The Song of Bagdad" and more broadly in songs from MPCOL.[24] But the adherence of questions to the three authority types does not stop there. In addition to the Muslim strain of South Slavic epic songs, Christian ones too—namely those in Karadžić's collection of epic songs —follow the same rules. Beyond the South Slavic oral tradition, the rule appears to apply to at least one non-South Slavic Muslim tradition, that of the Arab tribe of Bani Hilal in Upper Egypt, as illustrated in the small sample of a single performance in 1983 of the Hilali *sīra* (translated by Slyomovics as "saga, tale, epic, legend, history, biography") by the singer ᶜAwaḍallah ᶜAbd aj-Jalīl ᶜAli: all but two questions in his epic comport to the authority rules. Furthermore, *Gilgamesh* and the Book of Job are not merely accidental parallels—there is sufficient adherence to the three authority types outside the Muslim South Slavic oral epic tradition to warrant further analysis and refinement of the framework I propose here by including the material beyond the songs analyzed above, as the rules carry potential for wider applicability. "The Song of Bagdad" in its multiformity makes it possible to identify the three authority-based categories and consequently to elucidate with precision the overall functions of questions in the South Slavic oral epic tradition, as defined by its most eminent singers and songs, providing the foundation for further examination of the functions of questions in epic song and more broadly across oral traditions.

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[23] This overview of outliers is by no means extensive; a more thorough analysis of the contexts of utterances would likely yield further insights. Minchin, for example, in her analysis of questions in the *Odyssey*, lists examples where the speaker follows her questions with an explanation for asking the question(s) (2004:29-31). Analyzing them through the lens of authority-type, it becomes clear that these are questions posed by social superiors at the moment when the interlocutor has just demonstrated their valor or worth in some way. The speaker asks the question(s) with social authority, but then follows them with a rationale for posing them, in effect attenuating the assertion of their authority and beginning the process of transferral of power to the hero interlocutor.

[24] For information on and an assessment of the work that went into creating these two collections, see Foley 2000. For a brief history of MPCOL, its curating process, accessibility, and potential for further research, see Elmer 2013.

Between Fantasy and Realism: Waving a Magic Wand

Questions assert the authority of the speaker while pointing to the unknown. The former effect derives from rhetorical, the latter from information-seeking questions. Yet all questions achieve both effects, evoking each other's features through common form, as well as a third effect: the deontic force. Rhetorical questions in "The Song of Bagdad" and South Slavic epic song systematically communicate the tension between what is and what ought to be. The speaker contrasts the actual state of affairs with the desired or ideal one (the lack of news vs. the expectation that there ought to be some), the actions that took place with proper ones in the given social context (you are asking me to be the standard-bearer, but you should first know who I am), or the interlocutor's inaction with the anticipated action (you are asking me whether you should go to the sultan's aid, but instead you ought to have acted upon his request already). Structurally, rhetorical questions rely on this antithesis. But the antithesis built on factual, physical, emotional or other elements is merely a superficial manifestation of the real contrast between what is and what ought to be, revealing that both the illocutionary force and the authority that questions carry are, at least in part, deontic.

Most questions—those posed with social and epic authority—demand actions; others, posed with narrative authority, serve as a starting point for an exposition on what is right and how things ought to be. This form of narrative authority—the authority of a word-weaver, one who often occupies positions of social inferiority and cultural superiority simultaneously, who traverses the realms of story and history, one who poses questions in the narrative rather than direct speech, and thus from a privileged narrative position—offers insight into another aspect of questioning authority: in addition to the ethical aspect of the deontic force, questions mobilize the tension between the fantastical and the real. Analyzing fantastical and preternatural elements in South Slavic epic, Koljević (1989) concludes that they serve four functions: they are episodic, introductory, framework-setting, and/or indicative of narrative twists.[25] The preternatural shares with the interrogative that they are devices of emphasis appearing in formally significant places: beginnings, framing statements, and high points. Koljević's four categories overlap with the three forms of authority with clear correspondence: the episodic function is homologous to social authority (punctuating the high points); introductory and framing motifs correspond to narrative authority (contextualizing and presenting the narrative); and narrative twists correspond to epic authority (highlighting turning points). Both the preternatural and questions are about the unreal: the former points to what is imaginary rather than real, while the latter points to something that is yet to be known (information-seeking questions) or is either hypothetical or yet to be realized (rhetorical questions). And within this tension between unreal and real, authority negotiates and mediates between the opposing ends of the antitheses that exist in lived life as in fiction: what is and what could be (imaginary), and what is and what ought to be (deontic). Koljević frames his analysis by contrasting the South Slavic epics' relatively "real[istic] content" to the "empire of imagination," as characterized by Goethe. But while preternatural elements "lend to [what is

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[25] I disagree with Koljević's fifth category of tenor and color, the examples of which can be unambiguously placed under the first four categories. But apparently so does he as he eventually drops it altogether in the abstract to his article (1989:193-94, 198).

taken to be] a historical event the stamp/character of a 'cosmic drama'" (191), emphasizing deeper ethical meaning through the imaginative (196), questions accentuate ethical issues, dilemmas, and tribulations, on the way to resolution.

Deontic authority is the authority of asserting the right thing, as well as of correcting, rectifying, ameliorating, of pushing things toward what they ought to be. It is the authority of diverting from the undesirable and steering it in the direction of the ideal. It is the authority of determining the future in a way approved by the past. It is the power to improve, not just because it is right, but because it is pleasing—as fiction ought to be—to those in the present. And as in fiction so in the real world: even within the (epic) oral tradition that claims to retain, the impulse is to improve, as Martin (1989:206-30) deftly demonstrates by defining the *Iliad* as the story of Achilles that improves on the myth of Heracles. Lord shows that singers, even while claiming with full honesty and confidence to tell the truth, no less strongly feel the urge to best each other (1974:17-18). And to improve one needs to build on rather than maintain, to change what is, and to change it for the better: to propel the endless cycle by which the "ought to" becomes the "is," both in content (ethic) and in form (artistic skill based on rhetorical figures). This is the end toward which questions steer as they mediate between real and ideal.

In serving as a tool of transfer—"the appropriate action of changing the undesirable to the desirable" (Tambiah 1968:177)—questions double as a tool of control by the questioner-magician. Marcel Mauss identifies three ways in which individuals become magicians: through consecration as a gradual process sanctioned by the community; through tradition, when the person is a medium for a larger and older body of knowledge and power; and through revelation, whereby a person feels called upon to act in a capacity that incurs change (2001:50). The three paths reflect the three kinds of power behind the questioners and their authority—social approbation, the gravitas of the tradition, and individual righteousness—as well as the parallels between magicians and questioners as authority figures and power holders. Questions, like "the tools of a magician, which themselves always ended up having their own magical qualities," can hold the power that "immediately transports us into a magical world" (59-60, 128). Even more than a magic spell, they are like a magic wand: an ordinary form made of ordinary substance (a piece of wood, a string of words) that under the right circumstances and in the right hands assumes and wields extraordinary powers. Questions transport us from the darkness of ignorance into the light of knowledge (with information-seeking questions and narrative authority), as well as from the murkiness of wrong into the clarity of right (with rhetorical questions and social or epic authority). Casting the spell of influence over the interlocutors, the magic wand of questioning marks its holder—the speaker—as someone with the authority to direct the addressee toward the right thing to know, say, and do. It is a tool of righteousness and power hiding in plain sight.

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Does Hector's Helmet Flash?
The Fate of the Fixed Epithet in the Modern English Homer

Richard Hughes Gibson

> The most important question raised by studies in oral tradition is "So what?"
>
> —John Miles Foley, "Oral Tradition and Its Implications"

With the publication of his fine press *Odyssey* in view, the great American printer and typographer Bruce Rogers wrote in April 1931 to his translator, T. E. Lawrence, with a request for material to thicken a prospectus. Lawrence duly sent along notes "copied from the back of the book," which became the edition's "Translator's Note" (quoted in Knox 1991:xiv). Among many notable pronouncements, Lawrence offered his deductions concerning the shadowy historical figure lurking behind the text (1932:vii):

> In four years of living with the novel I have tried to deduce the author from his self-betrayal in the work. I found a bookworm, no longer young, living from home, a main-lander, city-bred and domestic. Married but not exclusively, a dog-lover, often hungry and thirsty, dark-haired. Fond of poetry, a great if uncritical reader of the Iliad, with limited sensuous range but an exact eyesight which gave him all his pictures. A lover of old bric-a-brac, though as muddled an antiquary as Walter Scott . . . . Very bookish, this house-bred man. His work smells of a literary coterie, of a writing tradition.

Here Lawrence ventures a solution to the ancient mystery of the Homeric epics' origins, what has come to be known in the modern period as "the Homeric Question," though, as Gregory Nagy has argued, we are wiser to speak of Homeric *questions*—"in the plural"—since there have long been many questions embedded in *the* Homeric Question, and each generation seems to add to the pile (Nagy 1996:1).

Lawrence's "Homeric answers" contrast the usual declarations on these matters as a realist portrait does a silhouette. Where most attempts are filled with disclaimers, Lawrence, with knowing cheek, provides an account full of colorful details. For present purposes, I want to highlight Lawrence's emphasis on the ancient writer's *bookishness*. Lawrence's Homer inhabits a world overflowing with papyrus. He was surrounded by books enough to breed "bookworms" and fellow readers enough to form a "literary coterie." While a participant in the "epic tradition," Lawrence's Homer was also an innovator—the first novelist of the European tradition. The

Odyssey thus appeared to Lawrence the work of not just a single but a *singular* author, a literate of literates. And this notion of the author framed, in turn, Lawrence's labors: to translate the *Odyssey* was, on this account, to carry over a *written document* from an ancient literary culture to a modern one.

I begin with Lawrence's "bookish" deductions because they represent, in the context of English translations of the epics at least, the high-water mark of the notion of Homer as a writer thoroughly at home in the culture of letters. Only one year after the Rogers-Lawrence *Odyssey* was published, 1933, Milman Parry began fieldwork among folk singers in the Balkans—the *guslari*—that would render such a portrait of the artist as a bookworm obsolete and raise, in turn, new questions about the task of the Homeric translator. Parry's contact with the illiterate *guslari* offered auricular evidence of what his prior work on the text of Homer had led him to conclude: that ancient singers composed lengthy narrative poems *in the act of performance*, thanks, in particular, to inherited units of utterance—metrical hand-me-downs, if you will. His example *par excellence* was the body of epithets applied to gods, humans, animals, and recurring events such as "rosy-fingered" (attached to Dawn), "swift-footed" (Achilles), and "resourceful" (Odysseus). In the *guslari*, in other words, Parry found a tantalizing vision of the inner workings of poetic oral traditions—whether living *or long dead*. From this encounter, he was able to imagine bards in archaic Greece improvising an epic on the spot—no writing required.

Parry's "oral Homer" has passed, in turn, through what John Miles Foley well describes as the "predictable and natural life-cycle" of such a revolutionary idea (1997:147). A seemingly inevitable pushback arose in subsequent years in the equally uncertain name of whoever finally did write the poems down—whether Homer himself or some scribe (the "adapter," whom Barry Powell ventures to name as Palamedes), perhaps shortly following the development of the Greek alphabet in the eighth century BCE (Powell 2014b:14). Yet no matter how savvy about the new technologies of writing scholars now believe Homer to be, the epics' author(s) can no longer answer to Lawrence's altogether-literary description. As Bernard Knox observed, it no longer seems possible "that anyone at such an early stage of Greek literacy could have been a bookworm, a member of a literary coterie, or an inheritor of a literary tradition" (1991:xiii). Scholars now often characterize Homer as the "heir" of an oral tradition whose imprint on the written epics remains palpable. The poet is now often imagined as standing between, rather than squarely in, the worlds of orality and literacy.[1]

As Parry himself realized, his theories have implications beyond the parlor-debates of classicists; they also matter to those who would transmit the Homeric epics into modern languages, translators. For this group, what to *make* of Parry's ideas (and the "literate" Homer pushback) isn't simply a theoretical problem—it's also a practical one. Translators wrestle with not only the question of what the texts of the Homeric epics *are*—to what degree they are literature, to what extent "orature." Translators also must render ancient poetic techniques in a

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[1] In *How to Read an Oral Poem*, for example, Foley places the Homeric epics in his third category of oral poetry: Voices from the Past. He describes its membership criteria as follows (2002:46): "[I]t offers a slot for those oral poetic traditions that time has eclipsed and which we can consult only in textual form. . . . Any given poem's original composition may have been oral or written; in many cases we can't tell whether the document we hold in our hands is a direct transcription of an oral performance or an artifact that some generations of editing and recopying removed from performance. The particular version that survives may even have been composed as a text, written down by a poet adhering to the rules of Oral Performance."

manner pleasing to modern readers. Within the English line of translators that concerns us here, the first to address Parry's ideas as a set of *practical* concerns for translation appears to be Robert Fitzgerald, whose *Odyssey* debuted in 1961 and *Iliad* in 1974. "The problem [for the Homeric translator]," he observed in an interview that will be discussed below, "is to bring a work of art in [an oral] medium into another medium formed on different principles and heard and understood in a different way" (1985:109). Another translator whose work we will consider, Robert Fagles, contended that Parry's work faces translators with a "Homeric Question" of their own: how to convey the poem's oral dimensions in the translator's medium of writing? (1990b:ix). Not every translator would agree with Fitzgerald's or Fagles' assessments exactly, mind you. Their remarks are useful, though, in displaying the translator's altered situation in the wake of Parry's work.

There are many materials that we might use to gauge Parry's effect on the modern English Homer. One could, for example, track the fates of ritualized and linguistically repetitive episodes, the so-called "type scenes," such as when heroes don armor for battle or hosts sit down to feast with guests. One could look at lines that operate according to discernible patterns or that are even repeated *verbatim*, such as those that introduce speeches. In the present case, we will focus on an even a smaller, though no less pervasive, sign of the oral tradition's influence—the aforementioned epithets.

In concentrating on epithets as a problem of translation, we in fact follow Parry's own lead. In his groundbreaking thesis at the University of Paris, *L'épithète traditionnelle dans Homère* (1928), he raised the question of what translators are to make of what he called the "fixed" epithet, which he characterized as traditional noun-modifier combinations adapted to— or, perhaps better said, *productive* of—the dactylic hexameter line. Parry contended that such "fixed" epithets cannot be accurately translated for a modern audience, an argument that we will trace in detail below.[2] That Parry believed them inherently troublesome for translation is reason enough perhaps to make a review of how translators have tackled them. But they are also significant, I argue, because they exemplify the Translator's Homeric Question. To translate the epithets is to contend with not only an ancient poetic practice but also the gap between the conditions in which the epics emerged—an oral culture—and the one in which they will be consumed—a literate one.

The epithets have additional interest here given that our translations belong to the "English Homer" tradition. They have, in fact, often been perceived as posing a difficult pill for modern taste, and translators have tinkered with them from the beginning. The Jacobean courtier George Chapman, the first Englishman to translate the Homeric epics in full from the Greek, dropped epithets, made substitutions, and varied expressions seemingly at whim. Consider the fate of the epithet on which I will be focusing here, *koruthaiolos* (κορυθαίολος), which has been traditionally translated as "of the flashing helm" (or some variation such as "shining" or "shimmering"). Chapman renders it, by turns, "warlike," "helm-decked," "fair-helmed," "helm-

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[2] The reader should note that in my subsequent discussions of Parry's thesis, I will be using the 1971 translation by Adam Parry. As paper copies of the thesis can be difficult to come by, readers wishing to consult the French text alongside my remarks below may wish to use the digital version available on the website of the Center for Hellenic Studies (http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:hul.ebook:CHS_Parry.LEpithete_Traditionnelle_dans_Homere. 1928).

moved," and "helm-graced" (Miola 2017:8). Moreover, in his *Odyssey*, Chapman conjures "Homer-like epithets" nowhere to be found in the Greek—including "wave-beat-smooth" and "golden-rod-sustaining" (Gordon 2016:30). Many of the most venerable "English Homers" fiddle with the epithets to some degree. Alexander Pope did it early in the eighteenth century, as did William Cowper at that century's end. In the demonstration passages that he included in the still-influential *On Translating Homer* lectures, the Victorian Matthew Arnold did, too. Writing to Rogers in 1930, Lawrence claimed that he "slaughtered [epithets] freely. From now on we will put in only enough to remind ourselves of a bad business" (1930a:49). A few months later, however, Lawrence would admit that "Some of them have value. The author wrote them deliberately, as part of the epic tradition, and the text loses if they all disappear. Loses dignity, I should say" (1930b:54-55).

The present piece is, then, in truth a study of two traditions in translation. First, I examine how modern translators have practiced their craft in light of their post-Parry understandings of the oral tradition's relation to the written texts of the epics. Second, I consider the English Homer as itself a tradition. Now, translators of the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are obviously members of a tradition insofar as all are engaged in the same long-running process of transmission that includes Chapman, Pope, and Lawrence. All have composed texts designed to make ancient poems available to modern audiences. Yet in calling the English Homer a tradition, I also mean to observe the lines of influence and resistance (which is a kind of negative influence) among the translations *themselves*. No translation stands alone. (Even Chapman's work responded to the earlier efforts of those who attempted to make an English Homer out of French translations.) In some ways, moreover, the translations considered here constitute a tradition analogous to the oral one envisaged by Parry.[3] The notion of oral performance has led a number of modern translators to conceive of themselves as English "performers" of the Greek text rather than its straightforward transmitters. The analogy of a performative tradition helps us to conceive of the ways that translations are shaped by their predecessors—and often judged by readers against the background of previous translations—just as oral performances in antiquity were informed by what came before, even while (deliberately or not) introducing variation and innovation.[4]

We begin below with Parry's reflections on the challenge of translating fixed epithets, which I balance with an influential dissenting opinion about the epithets' functions, that of Parry's son, Adam. I then examine how five modern Homer translators—Fitzgerald, Robert Fagles, Stanley Lombardo, Stephen Mitchell, and Barry Powell—have framed their efforts in relation to the oral tradition on the one hand and the modern reader on the other. We will also consider how their strategies build on or turn away from those of their predecessors. To illustrate their approaches in action, I focus on the aforementioned *koruthaiolos*, which appears on thirty-

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[3] I am grateful to one of the anonymous reviewers for crystalizing this aspect of the study. Subsequent sentences draw heavily on the reviewer's comments.

[4] Also germane here is Foley's argument in *Homer's Traditional Art* that "a tradition is always evolving within certain rules or boundaries, always proving a somewhat different 'thing' from one performance to another and from one practitioner to another" (1999:xii). Foley memorably characterizes oral traditions as "work[ing] like language, only more so" (for example, 2002:127). The latter point helps to frame the problem that the epithets pose for translators: how to translate not just the words' semantic meanings but their meanings within the traditional "language" of the epics.

eight occasions in the *Iliad*, attached to Hector in all but one. (Ares is its other one-time bearer). This is not, let us recognize at the outset, an accidental choice: *koruthaiolos* often appears in the translators' own discussions of their approaches. The tradition has marked it as a representative phrase.

There are, of course, other translations that we might consider. Emily Wilson, the most recent English translator of the *Odyssey*, has rightly observed that we are in a "bull market" for Homer translation—no less than twenty new English Homers having been published in the last two decades (2017a).[5] My selections have been made with an eye toward revealing the variety of strategies that translators have employed, including omitting epithets (on occasion or in full) and altering their phrasing (on occasion or at nearly every appearance). This study is thus in no small way a catalogue of tactics.[6] It is not my ambition, let me emphasize, to advocate for one strategy over the others, though I do at times observe some of their narrative implications. This study, then, is best understood as a diagnostic exercise—the examination of how the recovery of one Homeric tradition, the ancient oral tradition, has impacted the ongoing development of another, that of English translation.

Two Parrys

Parry, once again, must be credited with first recognizing that his conception of the fixed epithet had implications for the task of the translator. His exploration of the issue in *L'épithète traditionnelle dans Homère* thus represents the necessary starting point for our reflections, for whether or not translators reach the same conclusions, Parry's thought now represents the jumping-off point for scholars and translators alike. Yet Parry obviously hasn't had the final say on the fixed epithet or, more broadly, the oral tradition's mark on the texts of Homer. In light of subsequent studies, Parry's characterization of the epithets now seems monolithic and inflexible —*too* fixed. To understand the epithets' fate in modern English translations, then, we need to consider an alternative assessment. As noted above, I concentrate on one influential response, that of Parry's son, Adam. Specifically, we will review A. Parry's less "rigid" (his phrase) notion of the fixed epithet laid out in his "Language and Characterization in Homer" (1972).

To begin with the father: Milman Parry raises the matter of translation in the last section of *L'épithète traditionnelle*'s fourth chapter, which he titled: "Can the Fixed Epithet Be Translated?" Before diving into his thinking in this section, we need to acknowledge the particular understanding of the "fixed" epithet that Parry develops in the preceding pages of the thesis. Now, the idea that the epithets were "traditional" epic material long preceded Parry. (Lawrence, too, as we have seen, conceived of them as elements of the "epic tradition.") Parry's breakthrough was to situate the epithets within a historical process of refinement: he argued that they had been gradually selected over several generations of a poetic tradition—which he would

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[5] For reflection on the recent contributions of three women—Wilson, Caroline Alexander, and Alice Oswald—to the stack of new English Homers, see my essay "On Women Englishing Homer" (Gibson 2019).

[6] I am grateful to the other anonymous reviewer for the suitably Homeric characterization of this piece as a "catalogue."

within a few years pronounce an *oral* tradition—for their usefulness in generating lines of dactylic hexameter.[7] Already in the nineteenth century, at least one English translator, Frances Newman (Arnold's combatant in the early 1860s), had observed that Homer chose some epithets for "their convenience to his metre" (1861:76). In 1928, Parry argued that this was half-right: the epithets were indeed chosen for metrical convenience—but the sifting was done by the tradition, over generations, rather than a single author. The epithets must, he argued, be understood above all as a "functional" element of the epics, equipment for archaic song-building.

In Chapter 4, "The Meaning of the Epithet in Epic Poetry," Parry took the bold next step in light of this analysis, declaring that the epithets were not "meaningful" in the standard *literary* sense. Moderns, he observed, assume that words find their places in poetic lines in order to contribute something to the meaning of the passage at hand. The writer, literates assume, has a point to make, a scene to build, a feeling to express, and he or she chooses each and every word to that immediate end. Fixed epithets, according to Parry, didn't work like that in archaic Greece. They are "invariably used *without relevance to the immediate action* whatever it may be" (italics mine; 1987:118).[8] Fixed epithets are, Parry declared, "ornamental" epithets. They serve the needs of the metrical line, we might say, rather than the sentence or scene at hand.

They are not altogether meaningless, however. Parry grants that fixed epithets have an effect, but it must be registered over the course of the epic or epic poetry as a whole rather than in individual instances: "For [Homer] and his audience alike, the fixed epithet did not so much adorn a single line or even a single poem, as it did the entirety of heroic song" (137). Of their general significance, he observes, for example, that the epithets play an important role in enumerating the qualities of the heroes, whether in general (via a frequently applied epithet such as "godlike") or in regard to an individual character ("fleet-footed Achilles"). On any one given occasion, though, the fixed epithet has no bearing on what's transpiring in the narrative: it is *meaningless in context*. They may make the music move, but they never touch the story. Parry grants that some epithets in Homer are locally significant, dubbing these "particularized" epithets, yet he states in no uncertain terms that this small class does not include the thick stock of fixed epithets. Fixed epithets are *always* ornamental.

In the original context, then, the epithets were experienced on profoundly different terms than moderns ordinarily approach the language of literature. Parry, as we have seen, understood the epithets as common goods in respect to both the bard and his audience. For the former they were the traditional tools of the trade. For the latter they were the familiar strains of heroic song. In so many ways, Parry imagined these phrases as being in the cultural air—the bards breathing them out, their auditors in. And they were like the air in being absolutely necessary to the poetic enterprise and yet remaining imperceptible unless absent: "The audience would have been infinitely surprised if a bard had left them out; his always putting them in hardly drew their

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[7] On the shift in Parry's account of the epithets, John Miles Foley writes in his *Traditional Oral Epic*: "[I]t was not until his 'Studies' I (1930) and II (1932) that Parry first broached the possibility that his earlier demonstration of the *traditional* character of Homer's epics must also mean that they were composed *orally*" (1993:122). I follow the general consensus, in turn, in viewing Parry's expeditions to the Balkans as enriching, even solidifying, what Parry had begun to work out on paper a few years earlier.

[8] Hereafter, all quotations from Adam Parry's translation of *L'épithète traditionnelle*, published as *The Traditional Epithet in Homer*.

attention" (137). Parry memorably distills the point thusly: "Homer's listeners demanded epithets and paid them no attention."

In the aforementioned concluding section of the fourth chapter—which he, again, titled "Can the Fixed Epithet Be Translated?"—Parry despairs about the possibility that the unique nature of the fixed epithet can be adequately rendered in translation. The trouble isn't that no English counterparts can be found for Greek words. Instead, the central problem of translation here is *cognitive*.[9] (We might also label it *semiotic* in the sense of regarding meaning-making generally and perhaps in the more pointed sense of concerning *sēmata* or physical signs as well.) To render the Homeric epics accurately, Parry suggests, the translator has to carry over the elemental nature of traditional expressions, the way that they were for their original audience so commonplace as to become nearly pure sound. The problem of translation here is nothing less than the rendering of the thought-world of a "traditional" culture—again, what within a few years would come more clearly into focus for Parry as an *oral* culture.

In light of this analysis, Parry presents several impediments to the translation of fixed epithets. First, translators often mistakenly assume that Homer is just like them (recall the bookish Lawrence's picture of Homer as a "bookworm"). They thus treat all epithets as deliberate choices meant to enhance the scene at hand. In effect, all epithets become "particularized" epithets. The second issue is related to the first. How might a translator "make clear the crucial difference between the ornamental and the particularized epithet?" (171).[10] As an illustration of this difficulty, he cites passages from both of the Homeric epics that place "ornamental" and "particularized" expressions in close proximity. He cites, for example, Odysseus' vaunting to Polyphemus in Book 9 of the *Odyssey* (lines 502-505). The hero uses what Parry perceives to be an ornamental epithet, "sacker of cities" (πτολιπόρθιος), immediately before describing himself in "particular" terms as the "son of Laertes." Parry writes, "How can we render the ornamental meaning of πτολιπόρθιον without losing at the same time the particularized meaning of the words of the following line?" (171-172). Third, even if the translator is scrupulous in avoiding the suggestion of "particularized" meanings to ornamental epithets, he or she is powerless to stop "the modern reader from following his own literary habits and looking for the specific motivation for the use of each epithet, and for some specific meaning to assign it" (171).

Earlier in the text, Parry details how a student might through repeated exposure develop an "insensitivity" to a fixed epithet, the epithet's "meaning [losing] any value on its own," becoming fused with the substantive it modifies (127). For these readers, the epithet isn't nothing, as it continues to contribute "an element of nobility and grandeur, but no more than that." In the section at hand, though, Parry worries about the average reader operating according

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[9] To use Walter Ong's language in *Orality and Literacy*, which is in part based on Parry's work, we might say that Parry recognized translation as brushing up against the very different "psychodynamics of orality" (1982:31).

[10] The reader should note that Adam Parry's translation here mistakenly reads: "Moreover, how could we in a translation make clear the crucial difference between the *ornamental* and the *fixed* epithet?" (171). The words that I've italicized flag the error. As my preceding remarks have stressed, fixed epithets *are always* ornamental epithets in M. Parry's thought. There is no difference! In the French original, those words are "ornamental" and "particularized" (*ornementale* and *particularisée*).

to the standard modern *modus operandi*. For this audience, the fixed epithet is in essence *unreadable*, since reading in this case almost inevitably becomes *over*-reading.

In the face of these obstacles, what should a translator do? Parry doesn't offer a clear set of instructions here or anywhere else in his writing. His project seems to be that of raising awareness of the numerous difficulties that the epithets pose. In the section's concluding paragraph, he wonders aloud whether the "effort to find an exact equivalent for the ornamental epithet"—one that "[translates] Homer's thought with the least addition of foreign ideas"—might be "[committing] a worse error than those who draw on their own ideas to translate the epithet" (172). An epithet that the translator hasn't assigned a clear purpose seems likely to leave the reader "confused," with the result that the reader will "search and find some meaning or other, and the necessary delay will break the rapid movement of Homer's clear sentences" (172). To conclude, Parry acknowledges that the case at hand is exemplary of the "problem of translation in general," which involves choosing between "what is obscure, but literally faithful, and what is clear, but inexact" (172). He does not tell translators how to make that choice in relation to the epithets. Perhaps unsurprisingly, one translator that we will be discussing, Stephen Mitchell, has found in Parry's bleak assessment authorization for a strategy of widespread omission.

Once again, while the paradigm that Parry was developing here has reshaped the field, it has never been uncontroversial.[11] Within a few years of the publication of Parry's former assistant Albert Lord's *The Singer of Tales* (1960), an important channel for the dissemination of Parry's ideas, even scholars open to Parry's theory regarding the Homeric epics' oral backstory were calling into question his portrayal of the fixed epithets, particularly as his theory applied to the written texts of the epics in our possession. Among these respondents, once again, was Parry's son, Adam. His "Language and Characterization in Homer" (A. Parry 1972) offers an alternative account of how the fixed epithets function in the Homeric texts that is equally illuminating for present purposes.[12]

The opening section of this piece is tellingly titled "Meaning in the Fixed Epithet," an echo of the chapter title in M. Parry's thesis noted above. A. Parry raises the question of the meaning of Homer's formulaic elements as follows: "Do the set pieces in which the poetry so largely consists have a meaning dependent on the individual words which are their ingredients? Or does the formulary style preclude such meaning, so that these phrases are in operation equivalent to single words?" (1972:2). In the latter sentence, A. Parry is referring back to M. Parry's argument that the epithet so bonds to the substantive it modifies that the two become, in effect, a protracted way to say the substantive (often a character's name).

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[11] For a rich reflection on the reception of Parry's ideas, see the aforementioned John Miles Foley's "Oral Tradition and its Implications" in *A New Companion to Homer* (1997). For an attempt to update Parry's arguments in light of subsequent criticism, see Merritt Sale's "In Defense of Milman Parry: Renewing the Oral Theory" (1996).

[12] The reader should note that the question of the meaning of traditional epithets *remains* a live one in Homeric studies. For a very recent reflection on this matter, see David F. Elmer's "The 'Narrow Road' and the Ethics of Language Use in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*" (2015). The piece is notable in many respects, including its arguments concerning the ethical significance of moments when epithets seem out of joint given their contexts. But for present purposes it is particularly useful for its examination of Parry's take on the epithets and that of later scholars, including Lord.

A. Parry's response to these questions is not a simple Yes or No. As I have highlighted above, A. Parry advocates for a less "rigid" understanding of the fixed epithet. While granting that epithets "do indeed possess metrical convenience," he questions whether it necessarily follows that they lack meaning-in-context (4). He cites several passages to establish how what M. Parry classes as fixed epithets seem more than accidental deposits, including *Odyssey* 9.504-505, which as we noted above, his father had used as an example in the "Can the Fixed Epithet Be Translated?" section:

> Φάσθαι Ὀδυσσῆα πτολιπόρθιον ἐξαλαῶσαι,
> υἱὸν Λαέρτεω, Ἰθάκῃ ἔνι οἰκί᾽ ἔχοντα.
> Say that Odysseus sacker-of-cities blinded you,
> Laertes' son, who makes his home in Ithaca.

M. Parry had argued that since πτολιπόρθιος was found elsewhere in the text, it must be fixed and thus ornamental in the present instance. A. Parry counters: "It is hard to think of an epithet, in fact, which serves better to reveal the nonentity in the cave suddenly as one of the greatest heroes of the epic tradition" (8). This epithet is perfectly pitched to the episode, not just the needs of the line. Indeed, A. Parry further points out, the epithet takes a variant grammatical form and sits in an unusual position in order to be included in that line. In so many ways, this epithet bespeaks a conscious choice—an effort—to place it there. The epithet defies M. Parry's extremely rigid model: here is a stock item used in a "particularized" manner.

As A. Parry observes, one could "run Milman Parry's argument into the ground" with such examples if one wished. But A. Parry counsels against that course. The distinction between "the fixed and the particularized adjective" remains for him a valuable one (8). There are indeed "adjectives which the evidence allows us to classify as fixed . . . often used in such a way that they add little to the meaning other than, as Milman Parry so well said, to remind us of the heroic nature of the world of epic poetry." On such occasions, the epithets indeed lack individual significance. A. Parry concludes: "But the distinction is not rigid, and there is no absolute line of demarcation" (8-9).

Between the two Parrys, then, we are offered rival yet nonetheless related accounts of the epithets' performance in the epics. What does this mean for translation? M. Parry's system offers a straightforward answer: an epithet is fixed if it echoes across the epic or epics; if it is fixed, then it is ornamental; and if it is ornamental, then it is essentially untranslatable. As we noted above, Parry doesn't say that the translator shouldn't *try* to translate them; rather, he underscores how fraught the act of translation is in this case.

As for the consequences of adopting a view like A. Parry's, we do not have direct word from the scholar himself. Yet the flexible view of the fixed epithet that he describes has clear implications for translation. Andrew Ford well describes the result in his introduction to Robert Fitzgerald's *Iliad*: "The problem for translators . . . is to know whether a given word is being used for effect and when it is more generic" (2004a:xxxv). The translator's role as a critic is thus emphasized in this understanding of the epithet: to him or her falls the assessment of an epithet's local relevance in the Greek and, in turn, the problem of rendering that significance in English.

By turning to the translations themselves, as we will now do, we see that translators are indeed deeply concerned with the problem of signaling the significance—or insignificance—of epithets to the scenes in which they appear. In fact, several of our translators go to great lengths to demonstrate that the epithets matter, even refashioning them—linguistically and grammatically—so that their pertinence is evident. We will see epithets converted into matter and energy, the stuff of battle, the fuel and fire of action. At the head of this campaign stand Robert Fitzgerald's efforts, which we consider next. From Fitzgerald, we will then turn to two successors in their handling of the epithets, Robert Fagles and Stanley Lombardo. Stephen Mitchell's *Iliad* then allows us to see, as mentioned above, a strategy of omission rooted in M. Parry's judgments. Finally, I examine Barry Powell's *Iliad*, the most recent of the texts considered here, which attempts to outline a "middle way" (Powell's own phrase) between earlier strategies discussed here. As noted above, I use the *Iliad*'s *koruthaiolos*, "of the flashing helm," as my model epithet for the purposes of comparison across the translations, though the fates of others will be mentioned in passing.

Fitzgerald: The Translator as Modern Performer

For some critics, the idea of beginning our review of Parry's influence with Fitzgerald would seem profoundly mistaken. Consider the following remarks from D. S. Carne-Ross' introduction to the 1998 edition of Fitzgerald's *Odyssey* (which, once again, debuted in 1961) (1998:lxvi):

> Fitzgerald's *Odyssey* was immediately recognized as a masterpiece, but it has not always pleased
> professional classicists, who complain that it pays no attention to the most influential contribution
> made to Homeric scholarship in this century, the demonstration by the American scholar Milman
> Parry that Homer's poems are oral compositions.

Speaking in Fitzgerald's defense, Carne-Ross then makes a general observation that recalls M. Parry's remarks noted above: "the oral-formulaic style cannot be adequately reproduced in translation" (lxvii). He observes, in particular, that "the recurrent phrases" (epithets serving as his examples) are bound to seem "repetitious" to modern readers (lxvii). Fitzgerald is praised, in turn, for not trying to reproduce the oral-formulaic style: "Fitzgerald at all events does not try to pretend that he is himself composing orally and allows himself the liberties that fine verse translators have always taken from the time of Dryden and Pope" (lxvii). Among other examples of Fitzgerald's "liberties," Carne-Ross notes a line that often introduces Odysseus' speeches, τὸν (or τὴν) δ᾽ ἀπαμειβόμενος προσέφη πολύμητις Ὀδυσσεύς. As Carne-Ross notes, Richmond Lattimore (1967), Fitzgerald's immediate predecessor in the English Homer line, translates this line consistently as "Then resourceful Odysseus spoke in turn and answered him." At one moment in Fitzgerald's text, though, this line is rendered "The great tactician carefully replied" (7.258), "His mind ranging far, Odysseus answered" (13.398) at another, and later "And the great master of invention answered" (19.191), among other variations (lxix). Carne-Ross'

point is that Fitzgerald has translated the oral-formulaic style right out of the text—just as, the critic believes, a translator writing for a modern audience should.

In a 1976 interview with Fitzgerald, however, fellow poet and translator Edwin Honig argued that Fitzgerald was in fact the first translator of Homer to draw "consciously" on Parry's ideas about "the oral tradition behind the compositions" (1985:106).[13] Honig's focus, we should recognize, was not the oral-formulaic *style* but what he calls "performance-invention," referring to the improvisatory nature of ancient oral performance revealed in Parry's writings (107). While Fitzgerald's own lengthy postscript to his *Odyssey*, published for the first time in 1962, already hinted at his use of Parry in this way (along with acknowledging his debt to Parry as his "friend and teacher"), the Honig interview offers the most direct testimony to Fitzgerald's understanding of how Parry's ideas influenced his approach to translation.[14]

Two passages stand out for present purposes. The first relates to the consequences of "performance-invention" for the translator (1985:105):

> Homer, as we now know, was working in what they call an oral tradition. Now the performer—because that's what he was—had at his disposal a great repertory of themes, narrative and dramatic situations, and he had at his disposal a great repertory of formulae, of lines, half lines, phrases, all metrical, let it be observed, that could be modified or used in many contexts during his performance, which was always to some extent extemporary. Now, as he went along with his tale, he could and did invent new ways of handling episodes and passages that made each performance, in some way, a new thing. Do you see how this fact liberates, to a certain extent, the translator?

Over the course of the interview, Fitzgerald repeatedly frames the ancient bard's art as an "inventive" one—as in the present passage's claim that the bard "could and *did* invent new ways of handling episodes and passages." Since there was no single, canonical version of the *Iliad* or *Odyssey*, the translator is thus not, Fitzgerald reasons, bound to the letter of the text, as she would be when dealing with the work of a writer "who had, like say Paul Valéry, labored over every line and for whom the final text in every detail had more importance than for the Homeric singer" (105). The changeable nature of the tradition thereby actively encourages "freedom in translation" (his phrase). Indeed, Fitzgerald goes so far as to suggest that this is what the "original performer" would have *expected* of the translator (105). In this account, the ancient kind of invention authorizes invention on the modern translator's part. The "free" translator

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[13] The reader should note that although the interview was recorded in 1976, it didn't appear in print until years later and was ultimately included in the collection of interviews conducted by Honig referenced here, *The Poet's Other Voice* (1985).

[14] Fitzgerald makes a number of remarks in the postscript that gesture toward his understanding of the translator as the new Homeric "performer," but his most telling words appear in his concluding remarks about the practice of translation: "If you can grasp the situation and action rendered by the Greek poem, every line of it, *and by the living performer that it demands*, and if you will not betray Homer with prose or poor verse, you may hope to make an equivalent that he himself would not disavow" (italics mine; 2004b:508). I have italicized the key phrase for present purposes. It hearkens back to Fitzgerald's earlier notes in the postscript about that "living performer," whom Fitzgerald views as a shrewd and original deployer of his traditional resources. Yet it also characterizes any would-be translator of Homer, including Fitzgerald himself. He does not elaborate this claim further in the postscript but the phrase is richly suggestive, encouraging the reader to map the qualities of ancient oral performance—traditional yet original, improvisatory yet practiced, in Fitzgerald's account—onto his written translation.

effectively continues the oral tradition—in spirit rather than letter. To make a "new thing" out of the received text is to be faithful to the tradition behind it.

The second passage I quoted in part in the introduction. These are Fitzgerald's words concerning the need to understand the task of the Homeric translator as not simply the "problem" of working across languages but also across *media*. Here is the passage in context (108):

> Homer's whole language . . . was all on the tongue and in the ear. This was all formulaic, by its very nature. The phrase was the unit, you could say, rather than the word. There were no dictionaries and no sense of vocabulary such as we have. Now, the language that had grown up and formed itself on those principles is what one is dealing with, and the problem is to bring a work of art in that medium into another medium formed on different principles and heard and understood in a different way. So it's really a larger question than merely the question of whether one is to reproduce in some standard form formulaic expressions in Greek by formulaic expressions in English. The question is how to bring a work of imagination out of one language that was just as taken-for-granted by the persons who used it as our language is by ourselves.

Hiding in the background here are translations such as Richmond Lattimore's (first published in 1951)—the ascendant ones at the time of Fitzgerald's efforts—that indeed "reproduce in some standard form formulaic expressions in Greek by formulaic expressions in English." Consider his treatment of my exemplary epithet, *koruthaiolos*. Lattimore translates it repeatedly as "Hektor of the shining helmet," though he makes occasional substitutions of "glancing" and "bronze" for "shining" and the abbreviated "helm" for "helmet" (2011). Fitzgerald's "media theory" of translation implies that such a strategy fails to acknowledge the gulf between the media situations of past and present. It produces a phrase that is not only "strange" to us. It also gives the impression that Homer's text was distant and "strange" to its original audience, too. Fitzgerald suggests that the translator's responsibility is not to convey the medium-specific conventions of the past exactly; it is to carry over a "work of the imagination" into the language of our literate times. Here again, Fitzgerald's awareness of the oral tradition— in this case, of its *difference*—licenses "freedom in translation."

Fitzgerald's handling of *koruthaiolos* offers an ideal illustration of how he put these principles into practice. If we include a handful of outright omissions among the variations, Fitzgerald translates this epithet twelve different ways over the course of its thirty-eight occurrences in the source text, including such variations as "under his shimmering helmet" (2004:125), "his helmet flashing" (144), "in his shining helm" (146), and "in the bright helm" (282). Immediately apparent from this collection is that Fitzgerald does not follow the tradition in rendering this (or any) epithet as a *static* description, an honorific, as we have just seen in Lattimore's translation. Fitzgerald thoroughly integrates the epithet into the scene at hand. Take, for example, the epithet's first appearance, 3.83 in the Greek text. Agamemnon calls for the Argives to cease firing because "some proclamation" is going to come from "Hektor, there in the flashing helmet!" (64). The phrase "in the flashing helmet" is already noteworthy because it emphasizes that Hector is wearing his helmet this very moment. By pairing the phrase with "there" (the translator's invention), moreover, Fitzgerald presents the helmet as a feature of the character that is conspicuous to observers *within the plane of narration*. On other occasions,

as my list of variations suggests, the epithet is transformed into a dependent clause that briefly turns our attention to its "shimmering" presence within the scene—as in his rendering of 5.689 in the Greek text: "Silent under his polished helmet, Hektor . . . " (125). Again and again, it flashes before us—and often the characters within the world of the text as well.

The fate of *koruthaiolos* exemplifies Fitzgerald's "freer" approach to the epithets, and the formulaic aspect of the poem more generally, in three respects. First, Fitzgerald claims the discretion that A. Parry grants the critic to determine the relevance of the epithets on a case-by-case basis. This includes the possibility of an irrelevance that translates into omission. (This move seems designed to promote speed and drama, as in Achilles' recollection of his directions to Patroclus at the outset of Book 18: "You must not fight with Hektor!" (430).) The second we have already noted, but now it is important to name as a stylistic marker: Fitzgerald embraces variation in the diction of his renderings. "Flashing," "shimmering," "shining," "bright": the list of adjectives is, in fact, not that much longer than Lattimore's. Yet in Fitzgerald the sense of variation is much more apparent because there is no standard expression, no baseline from which the fluctuation occurs (as there is in Lattimore's "of the shining helmet"). There is some repetition across the text—a whiff of the formulary, if you will—but the clear drive of the translation is to vary the epithet as much as possible.

Notably for our purposes, this aspect of Fitzgerald's approach was flagged by A. Parry in a 1962 review of the translator's *Odyssey*. A. Parry begins his analysis of the epithets by pointing out their function in Homer: "It is in fact [the epithets'] constancy that makes them resonant for us" (1962:52). He cites as an example an epithet applied to Penelope, *periphrōn*, which he glosses as "prudent" or "circumspect." "It is important," the reviewer continues, "that she remain so, because this single quality, fixed in a single word, is the background against which all her actions . . . take place" (52-53). A. Parry does not chastise Fitzgerald for his strategy; on the contrary, he praises the translator: "it is [Fitzgerald's] aliveness to what goes on in each scene and the variety of his expression that make the translation sparkle as it does" (53). But A. Parry calls attention, too, to what is lost in the process—the contributions of the "constant" epithets to the development of the epic's "principal motifs" (53). In the case of *periphrōn*, the epithet marks the constancy of the wife who resists the suitors' advances over the long years of her husband's absence.

Finally, and most strikingly of all, Fitzgerald tinkers with the epithets' "grammatical relations," that is, their roles in the structures of sentences, and thereby their relations to the action, their narratological functions. This titanic change is wrought with the mere swap of a preposition—from the standard "of" to "in," "under," or none at all (as in "his helmet flashing"). With these substitutions or subtractions, Fitzgerald draws the epithetical helmet into the scene, making it a focal point for characters and readers alike. The material that M. Parry is at pains to keep *out* of the action, Fitzgerald thus makes a vivid presence. For a purist, Fitzgerald might seem to commit a sacrilege with such grammatical meddling, turning an honorific into an eye-catching prop.[15] One might, in short, complain that the helmet catches too much light in this translation. Yet, for our purposes, this tactic is perhaps the most illuminating of the three I have

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[15] As an example of such a "purist" approach to the epithets (applied in this case to Fagles' *Iliad*), see John Farrell's 2012 piece in the *LA Review of Books* on recent translations, "The English Iliad," which is cited below.

named. It shows Fitzgerald not only adopting an "extemporaneous" and "inventive" approach in imitation of his bardic forebears. We also see him here intervening to reduce the strangeness of the Homeric text for modern readers for whom univocal renderings of the formulae are bound to seem, to recall Carne-Ross' phrasing, "repetitious." In the continuous reshaping of *koruthaiolos*, then, we observe how Fitzgerald works to make the epithets *readable* for his modern audience.

I have stressed thus far the innovation of Fitzgerald's approach. Yet in his embrace of variation, Fitzgerald was also continuing an established practice within the tradition of the English Homer noted at the outset of this piece. He was joining a club whose membership included the likes of Chapman and Pope. Yet it is important to recognize that he was doing so on new "post-Parry" terms. His engagement with M. Parry's thought produced what I am tempted to call the "Fitzgerald paradox." By applying the logic of "performance-invention" to the epithets, Fitzgerald makes them more difficult to spot *as* epithets. The translator's "use" of the oral tradition erases—or at least diminishes—some of the signs by which we recognize the presence of that tradition in the translated text.

Fitzgerald's Successors: Fagles and Lombardo

Fitzgerald represents the first member of an emerging line of translators whose ruminations on the epics' ties to the oral tradition have licensed similarly "free" approaches to the epics' formulaic elements. Briefly, I want to consider two of the best-known of these successors: Robert Fagles (*Iliad*, 1990; *Odyssey*, 1996) and Stanley Lombardo (*Iliad*, 1997; *Odyssey*, 2000). In the "Translator's Preface" to his *Iliad*, Fagles articulates with particular clarity the new terms of Homeric translation in the post-Parry age. As noted in the introduction, he calls this the "Homeric Question facing all translators: How to convey the power of [Homer's] performance in the medium of writing?" (1990b:ix). In the corresponding "Translator's Postscript" to his *Odyssey*, he notably adds the adjective "quieter" in front of "medium of writing" (1996b:489). The translator isn't just conveying a text; he or she is also tasked with expressing the dynamism of live performance. Somehow the page must become the performer.[16]

Now, Fagles does not take Parry's insights uncritically. In that same preface, he characterizes Homer as "less the creature of an oral tradition whom Milman Parry discovered, and more and more its master, as envisioned by Parry's son, Adam. Homer the brilliant improviser deployed its stock, inherited features with all the individual talent he could muster" (1990b:ix). Fagles' answer to what we might call the "Translator's Homeric Question" is, in turn, propelled by this answer to the scholar's Homeric Question of the epics' origins.

This Homer mixes tradition and individual talent, and Fagles translates that mixture into his approach to the epithets: "I have treated them in a flexible, discretionary way, not

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[16] Fagles' translations are notable in this respect for the dynamism of their punctuation and page layouts (or what bibliographers commonly refer to as "mise-en-page"). Fagles makes rampant use of indentations, dashes, and ellipses, among other typographical fireworks, especially in his depictions of action scenes. In his *Odyssey*, Fagles employs at strategic moments triadic lines that recall the work of William Carlos Williams—including in his memorable description of the death of the suitor Antinous: "from his nostrils— / thick red jets— / a sudden thrust of his foot—" (1996a:440).

incompatible with Homer's way, I think—especially when his formulas are functional as well as fixed—while also answering to the ways that we read today" (1990b:ix). Fagles' conspicuous debt to Fitzgerald lies in his adoption of his predecessor's grammatical-cum-narratological approach to the epithets. A case in point is *koruthaiolos*' first appearance, 3.83, as noted above. Like Fitzgerald's rendering, Fagles has Agamemnon mark Hector's position by his helmet's glaring: "Look, Hector with that flashing helmet of his" (1990a:131). Again, the epithet is not an honorific but a distinctive prop. In subsequent scenes, we see—à la Fitzgerald—Hector's "eyes averted under his flashing helmet" (139), "his helmet flashing" (125), "a flash of his helmet" (208), and even "This flashing Hector" (445). As this list suggests, Fagles deviates from Fitzgerald's practice in maintaining a consistent root across the variations, a kind of *figura etymologica* strung across its thirty-eight appearances, none of which—another break with Fitzgerald—are omitted in this translation.

Fagles seems to have taken A. Parry's critique of Fitzgerald to heart, creating through this root-repetition a stronger sense of continuity across the epithet's appearances. In the "Translator's Preface," he explains his approach to the epithets by way of the example of his constrained variation of *koruthaiolos*: "And so with Hector's flashing helmet, in the epithet that clings to Hector's name: I like to ally its gleaming with his actions, now nodding his head in conversation, now rushing headlong to the front lines. But a flashing helmet it is, again and again" (1990b:x). He continues (x-xi):

> The more the epithet recurs, in short, the more its power can recoil. And the inevitability of its recoil for Hector is further stressed by a repeated passage in the Greek repeated verbatim in the English version. . . . All in all, then, I have tried for repetition with a difference when variation seems useful, repetition with a grim insistence when the scales of Zeus, the Homeric moral balance, is at issue.

On this view, the translator must maintain a degree of consistency between the variants in order to alert the reader to the epithet's overarching thematic significance.

Fagles might be said to split the difference in his handling of the epithets—between the oral tradition and the modern reader, between the "constancy" that A. Parry champions and the variation that Fitzgerald modeled. All of this is in keeping with his notion of "Homer the performer" (as Fagles calls him) as a "brilliant improviser" of the formulaic. For Fagles as for Fitzgerald, the translator must become such an improvisatory performer.

Perhaps Lombardo has an even stronger claim to having "translated" the performer's art, as his *Iliad* "began as scripts for solo performances," as he reports in his "Translator's Preface" (1997a:ix). As he then points out, "In this respect, the production of the translation mirrors that period in the evolution of the *Iliad* when writing began to shape the body of poetry that had until then existed only in the mind of the composer in live performance" (ix). Here again, the source text is positioned at the crossroads between the worlds of orality and literacy. In this case, Lombardo adds the additional wrinkle of his own mediation between the project's beginnings as scripted oral performances of select scenes and its final form as a complete translation for readers of the printed page.

His approach to the formulaic elements arises out of the many pressures of these conditions. He tells us, for example, that for a script-toting modern oral performer speaking to an audience of literates the formulaic elements are a drag on rather than an aid to performance: "strict replication of the formulae (especially those introducing speeches) and heroic epithets would have made the performance seem less alive—stilted in style and slow in pace" (xi). Regarding his preparation of the text for print publication, meanwhile, he argues that "strict replication" of the epithets and other formulae is problematic for two reasons. The first is speed: "Greek hexameters can manage to be both rapid and direct while incorporating polysyllabic compound adjectives that would be deadly in English" (xi). The second is semantic: "no single word or phrase in one language ever completely translates even a simple word or phrase in another language" (xi). The result in the first case is some "streamlining," and in the second variation. In the latter case, he notes that he not only attempted multiple translations; he also employed "the technique of turning an adjective into an image or an event and integrating it into the action" (xii). Lombardo observes the results on Athena's epithet *glaukopis*, which has been generally translated as "gray-eyed" or "owl-eyed." In one spot, he renders it as "eyes as grey as slate," in another "as grey as winter moons," and in a third "Athena's eyes glared through the sea's salt haze" (xii).

In all of these strategies—of streamlining, varying, and "imagizing" (if you will)—, Lombardo falls in line behind Fitzgerald. In respect to the last two tactics, though, Lombardo is no thoughtless imitator. Whereas Fagles "recoils" to a degree from Fitzgerald's inconstancy, Lombardo outdoes Fitzgerald in diversity. Again, the example of *koruthaiolos* is instructive. If we include omission among the variations, Lombardo translates the epithet nineteen different ways over the course of his *Iliad*. This includes variations on "helmet shining": we see it "shimmering" (1997:337), "glancing in light" (104), "collecting light" (115), "flashing light" (127), and "gathering the fading light" (135). The epithet is solidified as "his burnished helmet" (122), "Hector's helmeted face" (154), and "Hector's bronze mask" (231). And it is energized, too, becoming "his helmet flashed gold" and "Sunlight shimmered on great Hector's helmet" (337, 119). In its last appearance, near the end of Book 22, it reverts to an honorific: "tall-helmed Hector" (437). If Fagles' method might be said to comprise a *figura etymologica* writ large over the epic, Lombardo's is perhaps best likened not to one figure but to the family registered under the head of *amplification* (the spur to Erasmus' famous 195 variations of "Your letter pleased me mightily" in *De Copia*). The translator here does not just bear out different suggestions of the Greek; he revels in drawing out the aesthetic possibilities of the image.[17] This helmet is repeatedly polished across the text, flashing both in the battle and on the page.

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[17] In her new translation of the *Odyssey*, Emily Wilson practices similar sorts of amplification, and, notably for present purposes, on "media theoretical" grounds. Wilson argues in her translator's note that "In an oral or semiliterate culture, repeated epithets give a listener an anchor in a quick-moving story" (2017b:84). However, "In a highly literate society such as our own," she argues, "repetitions are likely to feel like moments to skip" (84). In her translation, she often puts a slightly (or greatly) different spin on an epithet with each appearance. Take, for example, the rising of "rosy-fingered" Dawn. It becomes in one context, "The early Dawn was born; her fingers bloomed" (2017c:121), in another, "vernal Dawn first touched the sky with flowers" (187); and in yet another, "Dawn came, / born early, with her fingertips like petals" (301).

Mitchell: Omission is the Best Policy

In Stephen Mitchell's *Iliad* (2011), we encounter a text that has been controversial from the get-go. Indeed, we might say that Mitchell made his translation controversial even before he wrote a word by basing it on M. L. West's two-volume edition of the epic (1998, 2000).[18] West's approach is worth pausing for a moment to consider, since it, too, hinges on questions of orality and literacy. Like all of the scholars that we have been discussing thus far, West viewed the received *Iliad* text as an archeological site unto itself. Yet rather than go digging in pursuit of the precursor bardic tradition as Parry had done, West searched the text for signs of its corruption by a later group of oral performers, the rhapsodes. In his review of the edition, Gregory Nagy provides a superb summary of West's account of the *Iliad*'s provenance (2004:40-41):

> The poem was written down in the course of the poet's own lifetime. Even during his career, the poet had the opportunity to make his own changes in his master poem . . . . After the master's death, the scrolls (*volumina*) of his *Iliad* were abandoned to the whims of *rhapsōidoi* (ῥαψῳδοί), "rhapsodes," who kept varying the text in their varied performances, much like the actors of a later era who kept varying the text left behind by Euripides . . . .

As Nagy further observes, "the opportunities for introducing more and more interpolations kept widening" in subsequent centuries, including the "Athenian accretions" that trailed the text's formal adoption for recitation in the Panathenaia in the late sixth century (41). In contrast to the other scholars we've been examining, then, West's goal was to demarcate the *intrusions* of an oral tradition—again, that of the rhapsodes rather than Parry's non-literate bards.[19] His goal, in turn, was to illuminate the text's *written* composition, "the seventh-century Ionic text of the master poet" (41). "Wherever West has deleted or bracketed a passage," Mitchell writes, "I have omitted it from my translation," including the entirety of Book 10 (2011c:lvii). The goal, the translator explains, is to "[get] back to an original and a text that I could use as the basis for the most intense poetic experience in English" (lviii).

This same drive to pare the *Iliad* down in order to produce an "intense poetic experience" is evident in Mitchell's approach to the epithets. In the translator's note, he writes, "I have been quite sparing with one of the characteristic features of Homer's oral tradition, the fixed or stock epithet: 'flashing-helmeted Hector,' 'bronze-clad Achaeans,' 'single-hoofed horses,' and so on" (2011b:lx). His explanation of the difficulty of their translation echoes M. Parry: "Throughout Homeric poetry the fixed epithet simply fills out the meter and is usually irrelevant to the context, and sometimes inappropriate to it" (lx). Mitchell further channels M. Parry's anxiety that modern readers are prone to attribute significance to epithets where there is none.

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[18] In the note on the Greek text in his 2013 *Odyssey* translation, meanwhile, Mitchell laments that there is nothing comparable to West's *Iliad* edition available and describes all of the editions on offer as inadequate to the task of ferreting out rhapsodic interpolations: "I have not been able to depend on any of them" (xxxix).

[19] To use Foley's categories in *How to Read an Oral Poem*, the rhapsodes would comprise "voiced texts," which he defines as a "type of oral poetry that begins life as a written composition only to modulate to oral performance before a live audience" (Foley 2002:43). West's edition hinges on the notion of a feedback loop between the "voicing" of the text and the text itself during the "rhapsodic" period.

Indeed, Mitchell seems to take M. Parry's argument to the extreme in asserting that the epithets have no meaning at all—they are "simply" metrical filler. M. Parry's suggestion that the epithets *do* have meaning against the background of the texts-as-a-whole isn't mentioned in this translator's note, a point to which we will return below. While Mitchell grants that "occasionally" an epithet can be meaningful in its immediate context (another point to which we will return), his overall judgement is clear: epithets are dangers to be avoided when dealing with readers who can't help granting every word weight. He ultimately claims M. Parry's authorization for his general strategy of omission: "as the Homeric scholar Milman Parry said, they are best left untranslated" (lx). Yet, as we saw above, Parry's point was that the epithet's *functional* role is untranslatable. He does not directly advise such a scorched earth approach.

Mitchell also notably cites Matthew Arnold's counsel in *On Translating Homer* (1861) in defense of his strategy (lx: emphasis in first paragraph mine):

> In Greek these epithets elevate the style; in English they are often merely tedious. Here again Arnold's advice is helpful. "An improper share of the reader's attention [should not be] diverted to [words] which Homer never intended should receive so much notice." "Flashing-helmeted Hector," for example, means no more than "Hector"; *the poet is not calling attention to Hector's helmet*. The Trojans aren't any less "bronze-clad" than the Achaeans. The "single-hoofed" horses are not being differentiated from any imaginary double-hoofed horses."
>
> Another example: at the beginning of Book 1 Apollo shoots plague-arrows at the Achaeans. The Greek says literally, "First he attacked the mules and the swift dogs." Here Apollo is attacking *all* the dogs—the slow ones too, if there should be any, not just the swift ones.

We should recognize that Arnold's immediate concern in the passage cited here is to observe that translators hatch "strange unfamiliar" phrases in English when rendering expressions that are "perfectly natural" in Homer's Greek. His particular example is *merops* (μέροψ), which his rival —and partial catalyst to the *On Translating Homer* lectures—Frances Newman had unforgivably translated as "voice-dividing" (91). Arnold attends, in other words, to how the English rings in the ear. He would preserve what we have seen Fitzgerald characterize as the "taken-for-granted" nature of much of the Greek. As the italicized bit of the first paragraph shows, Mitchell is concerned with the way that the epithets play up certain qualities of the object in question, thereby lending them a significance that he doesn't find in the Greek. The foregoing analysis suggests why our chosen epithet, *koruthaiolos*, makes the list of error-prone examples. For this epithet exemplifies how Fitzgerald and his successors make something tangible of the epithets, something eye-catching. While the Victorian Arnold is the only party explicitly named, the passage would seem to have other targets in view: Mitchell's immediate predecessors, including the figures discussed above. By largely omitting the epithets, Mitchell quietly suggests, his translation steers the English Homer back on course.

Of Mitchell's treatment of that epithet, we can say nothing of its active role in the text, since its lone appearance in this *Iliad* is in the translator's note. In all thirty-eight of its occurrences, Mitchell omits it, leaving in its place a bare proper name, whether "Hector" or, in the case of 20.38, "Ares." *Koruthaiolos* is thus exemplary of what the classicist John Farrell calls Mitchell's "art of subtraction" (2012). Yet the translation is not completely bereft of epithets.

Mitchell's "sparing" inclusion of them still admits, for example, the famous pair in the seventh line of Book 1: "that king of men, Agamemnon, and godlike Achilles" (2011a:1). And in the translator's note, Mitchell himself singles out the appearance of "godlike Priam" at Achilles' tent in Book 24 as an instance where an epithet "does have meaning" (lx). Thus, while M. Parry is the authority named in the translator's note, critics of the more flexible A. Parry-type have left their imprint on this translation, too. In fact, the translator's discretion might be said to be particularly on display in this translation, as the few epithets that do make the cut stand out all the more against the background of the general policy of omission. Priam appears all the more "godlike" in Book 24 as a result of the removal of the word on numerous other occasions where it appears in the Greek.[20]

The translation of the oral tradition is treated here, as we saw in M. Parry's thesis, not as a linguistic problem. Mitchell can readily enough supply English renditions—including for epithets that appear only in the translator's note. The issue is the reader's likely misunderstanding of (what Mitchell takes to be) their *lack* of significance.[21]

The value of Mitchell's *Iliad* for present purposes, though, lies not only in its interpretation of Parry's remarks on translation. It also allows us to reflect on the consequences of the strategy of omission. Here I want to begin by recalling that M. Parry held that fixed epithets *do* have meaning—only when measured against the epics-as-a-whole, or heroic poetry more broadly, rather than individual appearances. (Recall A. Parry's apt phrasing that the epithets "remind us of the heroic nature of the world of epic poetry.") This global significance included, once again, the enumeration of the specific and general qualities of the Homeric heroes. This function of the epithets is sacrificed in Mitchell's translations, as noted in several reviews.

Consider, for example, the aforementioned John Farrell's remarks. Farrell, let us acknowledge, voices his preference for Mitchell's practice of cutting epithets as "dead weight" over Fagles' of "bringing them falsely to life." Yet he nonetheless observes that Mitchell's strategy results in "a certain thinness to the characters' identities" because the reader is not "ritually reminded . . . of their distinguishing characteristics and the names of their fathers. Those repetitions may be an artifact of oral composition, but they also reflect the concerns of Homer's world" (2012). On this view, cutting the epithets brings more than just the loss of the air of "nobility and grandeur" that the epithets bestow even after their novelty fades (M. Parry's argument noted above). Stripping the epithets from the text amounts to a thematic disrobing of the heroes. On this point, Foley has memorably likened an epithet's effect to "a trademark musical theme associated with a character in a modern film or a costume that identifies a re-entering actor in a drama even before he or she speaks or is spoken to" (2007:15). Mitchell leaves out the vast majority of the fixed epithets on the grounds that they are "simply" the vestiges of ancient musical performance. Foley and Farrell would have us see that the repetition is not only mechanical; it is the drumbeat of a heroic world.

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[20] The phrases "godlike" or "like a god" show up a little more than twenty times in Mitchell's text. By contrast, Fagles includes one of these expressions—which encompass two epithets in the Greek—more than fifty times. Lattimore includes more than eighty in his *Iliad*. And he has been recently outdone by Caroline Alexander (2015), whose translation features more than one hundred sixty such expressions.

[21] The translator also observes that the mass omission of epithets speeds the text up—in keeping with Arnold's argument that "rapidity" is one of the signatures of the Homeric style.

Again, the fate of *koruthaiolos* is illuminating. Mitchell does not cast Hector's helmet out of the *Iliad* entirely. It still appears on several occasions in the text, including the famous meeting with his wife and son (where it frightens the latter) in Book 6. Yet the removal of thirty-seven references to Hector's shining headgear reduces not only his grandeur but also the frequent reminders that Hector is a creature of the battle plain rather than the city (or the bedroom like his brother Paris). He is a member of Ares' brood, as the attachment of this epithet to the War-God emphasizes. Even in the narrator's recollection of Hector's wedding to Andromache in 22.471—at once the last invocation of the epithet in the poem and chronologically the earliest—he is "Hector of the flashing helmet"—at least he is in the Greek original. Whether or not Fagles' particular argument about how the epithet "recoils" over the course of the poem is correct, he is right to argue that the epithet serves as a consistent backdrop against which the audience evaluates Hector's choices and ultimate fate. The wholesale omission of the epithet does more than dim the helmet's luster; it alters the audience's relation to the man under the epithet.

Mitchell quietly contends that Fitzgerald and his ilk have gone astray in making the epithets material cynosures. Better to omit, he argues, than mislead. Yet as Farrell and his fellow reviewers have argued, the epithets are far more deeply woven into the fabric of the epics than Mitchell admits in characterizing them as "simply" ancient musical filler.[22] The "art of subtraction" may thus avoid one pitfall but not without introducing hazards of its own.

Powell: A Middle Way?

Thus far, I have presented Fitzgerald (and his imitators) and Mitchell as rivals. Yet we must recognize that their approaches to the epithets are in fact driven by a common desire to reach modern readers. Fitzgerald and company would do this by animating the epithets, Mitchell by cancelling them out. Barry Powell's translations of the *Iliad* (2014) and *Odyssey* (2014) present an alternative conception of the audience's role, which underwrites, in turn, a third "post-Parry" approach to the epithets' translation. Unlike the aforementioned parties, Powell argues that the audience must to some extent conform to the "repetitive style" of the text *exactly because* it springs from the oral tradition. The foreignness of the poem's style is thus not a problem that the translator alone must solve: the onus is also in part on the reader to adapt to it. In his *Iliad*'s introduction (which he titles "On Translating Homer" with a nod to Arnold), Powell writes, "To enjoy our modern Homer, we must teach ourselves to accept this repetitive, formulaic

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[22] In his review of Mitchell's *Iliad* for *The New Yorker*, titled "Battle Lines," Daniel Mendelsohn astutely observes that Mitchell's argument that the epithets were meaningless obscures their role in establishing the poem's "authority" (2011):

> For Mitchell, Homer's famous epithets can obscure what he calls the "meaning": "'Flashing-helmeted Hector,'" he writes, "means no more than 'Hector.'" But "meaning" isn't the point. Part of the way in which the epic legitimizes its ability to talk about so many levels of existence and so many kinds of experience is its style: an ancient authority inheres in that old-time diction, the plushly padded epithets and stately rhythms.

On this reading, the strangeness of the epithets that we have seen translators trying to remove is, in fact, key to its ancient success. The more traditional-sounding the poem, the most powerful its voice on the deepest human matters.

style, evolved in order to help the poet create his rhythmic line on the fly in oral composition" (36).

Yet Powell is not a hard-liner. In the ensuing paragraphs, when he takes up those formulaic elements, the epithets in particular, he argues not for their consistent, literal rendering but what he calls a "middle way" that allows for both repetition and variation (37):

> The translator faces the temptation to ignore these epithets entirely and translate "Achilles the fast runner" simply as "Achilles." This would produce a translation that is not very fair to the poet-singer, obscuring the reality of the origin of these poems as oral compositions. Another strategy is to always translate the epithets in a different way, for example, "swift-footed Achilles" or "Achilles the fast runner" (for the Greek *podas ôkus*, "swift as to his feet"), again hiding the origin of the text as an oral poem.
>
> I have followed a middle way: using the epithets, thus making clear that his poem is composed in an oral style, but sometimes allowing a different wording, or ignoring the epithet altogether, in accordance with modern taste. Still, we have to adjust to the repetitive style if we want to read a translation of Homer. Homer is an oral poet and he is singing in an oral style, a style utterly practical but grounded in the practicalities of oral presentation.

This passage reveals Powell to be not only a careful reader of the Greek Homer but also its varied English counterparts that we have considered. Both of the strategies that we have considered above—the arts of subtraction and diversity—are rejected here on the grounds that neither is "very fair" to the poem's origins in the context of oral performance. In response to the subtraction camp, embodied here by Mitchell, Powell argues that the epithets must be "used" lest this vital sign of the oral style disappear. With the diversifiers, the line of Fitzgerald, though, Powell acknowledges that modern taste can tolerate only so much repetition. So "sometimes" variants are admitted. As the last words again stress, Powell wants the reader to perceive the strangeness of the poem's style. Powell recognizes that the oral style poses a problem for translators due to its distance from modern literary practice; yet, in contrast to his predecessors, Powell sees that strangeness as an essential quality of the Homeric epics. The translator must, in turn, strive to *preserve* it. To do otherwise amounts to a betrayal—of the poet-singer, of course, but also of the reader from whom the epics' origins would be concealed.

Regarding our exemplary epithet, *koruthaiolos*, Powell's approach yields six variations over the course of the text, only slightly less than Fagles' nine. But there is a pronounced and telling difference in the relationship between their variations and the sentences in which the epithet is lodged. Fagles, as we have seen, endeavors to integrate the epithet into action in diverse ways—again, at one point the epithet becomes a helmet that "flashes," at another a "helmet flashing," and at yet another a "flash of the helmet." Powell, by contrast, maintains the distinction between the action taking place in the sentence and the epithet. The two translations that he most frequently uses, "of the flashing helmet" (thirteen times, once with "helm" in place of "helmet") and "of the sparkling helmet" (nine), are applied to Hector in a general manner rather than a site-specific one. While Powell offers four other renditions of the epithet, their differences amount to the swapping of synonyms within a grammatical pattern announced in the epithet's first appearance at 3.83: "Hector, whose helmet flashes" (2014a:94). Whether the

helmet "flashes" or "flashed," "sparkles" or "sparkled," these renderings are all sealed off by commas as relative clauses that do not contribute to the action immediately taking place. Thus, while Powell has clearly taken his cue from Fitzgerald and his successors in introducing a degree of variation to satisfy "modern taste," his grammatical management of the epithets suggests that he agrees with Mitchell that translators should not convert the epithets into tangible goods. Hearkening back to Lattimore (and a long line of English translators before him), Powell wields them as character-markers. They have the air of a herald's introduction rather than the weight of battle-scene props.

In turn, Powell is the most successful of the translators under consideration here in rendering the "ritualistic" nature of the epithets' reappearances (to borrow Farrell's language), their function as reminders of characters' "distinguishing characteristics." The risk of this tactic is that the epithets may at times (even often) seem extraneous to what is going on around them. It is the avoidance of this possibility, of course, that drives Fitzgerald to assimilate them and Mitchell to set them aside. In Powell's case, by contrast, that scenario seems less a risk than a reward. For in seeming detached from their immediate settings, the epithets gesture toward the oral origins of the poems that Powell wishes to reveal rather than conceal. In the repetition of "Hector's flashing helmet," Powell would have us see at once the Homeric technique of characterization—a "capsule biography" of its wearer—and the "practicalities" of oral performance at work (2014b:37).

Conclusion

We have now seen that there is no simple consensus among modern translators about how the epithets ought to be handled in the wake of Parry's theories. For some, the epithets are irreducibly strange, prompting efforts to polish them up, to make them more vivid presences and active participants in the text. That same diagnosis has licensed wiping out large numbers of them, some epithets completely. To our final translator, those tactics concede too much to contemporary taste; he argues that the work of adjusting to the epithets belongs, for the most part, to the reader rather than the translator. In their responses to the epithets, these translators employ strategies that recall those of their forebears in the English Homer tradition. Yet they debate the epithets' merits on entirely new terms.

Those terms, as I have stressed throughout this piece, derive from Milman Parry's linguistic excavations of the traditional roots of the Homeric poems. Through the example of the epithets, and one "flashy" specimen in particular, we have pondered the multiple issues that have trailed Parry's discoveries. For Parry's unraveling of the unfamiliar terms on which ancient Greek oral poetry operated—in the case immediately before us, the traditional motive for epithet-invocation—was also the revelation of the psychological gap between ancients and moderns. In Parry's own writing, as we have seen, that gap made the epithets appear especially troublesome for translators. Beginning with Fitzgerald's translations, we have witnessed translators adopt numerous stances in response. For all of them, though, Parry's thought has changed the game. To translate Homer now is to do more than make judgements about diction, syntax, meter, and other familiar matters. It is to mediate between the strategies that arose within the crucible of ancient

composition-in-performance and those that hold the attention of the modern reading public. The epithets demand that the translator become a kind of medium, speaking with the dead and writing to the living.

In our review of options here, we have seen a kind of tug-of-war for the oral tradition among translators. Some view it as a problem, which must be kept from or adapted to by readers. Others have set it up as a model for their own "inventive" approaches to the text. Parry taught us to ask *how* an oral tradition means. In the English Homer tradition, I have tried to suggest, that question remains a live one, at once conceptual and practical. We are still working out its answer generation-by-generation, line-by-line.

Does Hector's helmet flash? *We'll see*.

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The Myth of Milman Parry: Ajax or Elpenor?

Steve Reece

The Myth of Milman Parry

Oral traditions are creative: they romanticize and sensationalize otherwise mundane events. The memory of a historical but probably minor conflict between the Mycenaeans and Trojans over commercial interests—access to the straits of the Hellespont that connected the Black Sea to the Aegean—evolved over time into an extensive cycle of myth about a ten-year siege of Troy triggered by the abduction of the most beautiful woman in the world. Oral traditions are also fluid. The poet of one version of this mythic cycle, later called the *Iliad,* took full advantage of this fluidity to make dramatic changes in his inherited material both in small details and in larger themes. He brazenly substitutes the nymph Charis for Aphrodite as Hephaestus' wife; the crafter of the shield of Achilles could not be married to the matron goddess of Achilles' dire foes! He adds the motif of hunger to the paradigmatic tale of Niobe that Achilles relates to Priam; like Niobe, Achilles and Priam must remember to eat, even though they are both worn out with weeping. Contrary to the tradition, he gives the wife of Meleager the name Cleopatra. As a morphemic inversion of the name of one of the *Iliad*'s central characters, Patrocles, this name-change buttresses the paradigmatic value of Phoenix's tale of Meleager: both Cleopatra and Patrocles succeed in bringing their sulking heroes back onto the battlefield. Homer refashioned his inherited material in order to have it better serve his particular narrative; this was his prerogative as an oral poet.

The Homeric scholar Milman Parry (1902-1935) appreciated the tension between inherited and innovative epic material better than most, having conducted a detailed investigation of the Greek epic tradition from its smallest to largest components (from formulae to type-scenes to larger themes), and having determined that their traditional nature betrayed their oral composition and transmission. But little could Parry anticipate that his own life and death would become the material of a creative and fluid oral—and eventually written—tradition, romanticized and sensationalized by both his admirers and critics.

Within a few years of Parry's sudden and unexpected death at the age of 33—the consequence of a fatal wound to the chest by a bullet from his own pistol—his life and death took on heroic proportions. In tributes Parry was compared to Lawrence of Arabia: an adventuresome spirit and love for the exotic had led both to journey abroad; both had discovered a nobility and heroism in a foreign culture that was lacking in their own worlds; both had met

untimely and tragic deaths just a few months apart in 1935.[1] Parry's contribution to Homeric studies was compared—albeit equivocally—to Charles Darwin's contributions to biology.[2] As time passed Parry's heroic persona grew to mythic proportions. Parry was said to remind those who became acquainted with him of Don Quixote.[3] He was described by others as Alexander the Great *redivivus*: both had established a new order in the whole territory of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Alexander in the field of battle, Parry in the field of academia; both had died tragically at the age of 33; after their deaths their successors had taken over their territories but could not match their masters' ingenuity.[4] Parry's work began to be compared to that of artistic geniuses like the English poet John Keats, the French artist Paul Gauguin, and the Russian composer Igor Stravinsky, the works of all of whom were not fully appreciated until after their deaths.[5] Parry himself had contributed to this mystique. He was known to don the traditional dress of Yugoslavian heroes during his fieldwork and to regale his friends and family with heroic tales.[6] And, on the occasion of his departure from Yugoslavia, after his first expedition in 1933, he even

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[1] H. Levin (1937:265): "The accident in Los Angeles on the third of December, 1935, was as trivial and pointless as that which killed his hero, Colonel Lawrence of Arabia, a few months before. Lawrence, like Parry, had been a scholar. Parry, like Lawrence, recognized in an alien people the dignity and magnanimity he had missed in his own world. To him, as to Lawrence, the heroic values were no less real than the unexpected explosion of a loaded pistol." Milman's son Adam too compares his father to T. E. Lawrence, as well as to Ernest Hemingway, because of his adventuresome spirit and love of the exotic (A. Parry 1971:xxvi, xxxvii).

[2] H. T. Wade-Gery (1952:38-39): "The most important assault made on Homer's creativeness in recent years is the work of Milman Parry, who may be called the Darwin of Homeric studies. As Darwin seemed to many to have removed the finger of God from the creation of the world and of man, so Milman Parry has seemed to some to remove the creative poet from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*."

[3] H. Levin (1937:260): "Against this cosmopolite background, his return to America contrasted unsatisfactorily. Parry was capable of meeting fully civilized or definitely uncivilized people on their own ground, but not of reaching his level on the faculty of a small middle-western college. The souvenirs of that year which he was happiest to take with him to Harvard were a pair of handsome white dogs, the larger worthy of the name of Argos. He used to wash them in Fresh Pond until a policeman abruptly informed him that it also served as the Cambridge reservoir and he was forced to stride home after two lathered and shivering animals. That was not the only occasion on which he reminded his friends of another connoisseur of heroic lore, Don Quixote."

[4] W. B. Stanford (1971:36): "From the time when in 1924, at the age of twenty-three, Milman Parry began work on his thesis for a doctorate of letters in the Sorbonne, he concerned himself almost entirely with the style of the Homeric poems. When he died ten years later he had, like Alexander the Great at a similar age, established a new order in the whole territory of those much-disputed poems. After his death his Epigonoi developed his conquests. A new age in the study of early Greek epic poetry had begun."

[5] A. Nicolson in his popular book *Why Homer Matters* (2014): "Milman Parry is a god of Homeric studies" (73); "The motivations apparent in Keats are in Parry too" (75); "Parry is like Homer's Gauguin or Stravinsky" (89).

[6] A. Parry (1971:xxxvii) mentions that Milman took a photograph of himself in native dress, revealing "a romantic and even histrionic side of himself which reminds one of T. E. Lawrence." This photograph appears on page 438 of the 1971 hardback edition of *The Collected Papers of Milman Parry*, but it is not reprinted in the 1987 paperback edition. Parry is apparently wearing the traditional dress of his host Began Ljuca, a Muslim story-teller and adjutant in the court of King Nikola of Montenegro, who helped Parry and Lord with their fieldwork in the town of Bijelo Polje in northern Montenegro. The hat, vest, and sash that Began wears, and even the cigarette holder and large-handled knife that he carries, in a photograph in the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature (MPC0749, accessible in Harvard Library's HOLLIS Images catalog), are the same as Parry wears and carries in the photograph on page 438. The background is also identical, so both photographs seem to have been taken at the same place and on the same occasion.

became the subject of a heroic song composed by the singer (*guslar*) Milovan Vojičić and fully ornamented with traditional formulas: "Professor Milman Parry the glorious," the "gray falcon," who "flew from the beautiful land of America," "to our heroic fatherland," to "gather songs of heroes."[7]

Parry's unexpected death too took on the aura of a tragic, and even heroic, event. His death was dramatic enough in reality and had no need of embellishment; nonetheless, details were changed and invented to sensationalize the event in oral traditions, in the popular press, and even in the academic publications of professional scholars. Classical scholars in particular, like the epic poets whom they studied, took the liberty to manipulate the inherited details in order to fit them better into the frameworks of their own narratives. An embellishment that began to appear very shortly—after the observation of a respectful silence—was that Milman Parry's death was a suicide. He had deliberately shot himself with his own pistol while alone in a hotel room in Los Angeles. Another embellishment followed upon this one: that Parry had killed himself out of despondency over Harvard's refusal to grant him a permanent appointment. We had, so to speak, a modern Ajax, who killed himself out of anger and dismay over not receiving the armor of Achilles, a prize that he thought he deserved. At first an oral tradition, these embellishments eventually began to work their way into written documents, not just in the popular press but even in the serious publications of highly-regarded classical scholars. This version of the event has now become a staple in the broadly-used media of digital biographies and encyclopedias.

In what follows I aim to focus on the myths that have arisen around Milman Parry's life and death. This is, admittedly, a trivial topic compared to Parry's enduring intellectual legacy: his discovery that the Homeric epics are the result of a long oral tradition; his formal articulation of the oral-formulaic theory; and his (and his student Albert Lord's) hypothesis of oral dictation as the driving force behind the survival of the Homeric epics as we know them. Parry's scholarship brought new questions to the rich banquet of Homeric Studies, and it caused scholars to reconsider old ones in a new light. Was Homer completely illiterate? When and how were the Homeric epics initially written down? What is the relationship between our inherited manuscripts of the Homeric epics and their first written forms? Did the Homeric epics continue to be transmitted in multiple versions even after their initial transcription? Does the oral-formulaic theory completely undermine the analytic view of multiple authorship? Does it preclude creativity or originality on the part of the poet? There is an enormous body of literature on Parry's intellectual legacy, and to become familiar with it one can do no better than to begin with Adam Parry's introduction to his father's collected works (A. Parry 1971), balanced by Stephen Mitchell and Gregory Nagy's introduction to Albert Lord's *Singer of Tales* (Mitchell and Nagy 2000), with Lord's *Singer of Tales* itself, and enlarged by John Miles Foley's exhaustive annotated bibliographies and monographs on Parry's influence on the study of oral poetry (Foley 1981, 1985, 1987, 1988, 1990, 1991, 1995, and 1999a). The bibliography is vast, and I have contributed to it from time to time myself (Reece 1993, 2005, 2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2014, and 2015). The great majority of scholars who have contributed to Parry's intellectual legacy, however, have not been bothered by the details of Parry's biography or by the myths that grew

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[7] "The Song of Milman Parry" is printed in Lord 1960:272-75.

up around his life and death. And that is as it should be. Here, though, I wish to focus precisely on these myths, trivial as they may seem to some in comparison with Parry's rich intellectual legacy. The two topics overlap at times, and I have tried to highlight where they do, but in essence I am interested here in Parry's *mythos* rather than his *logos*.

The Final Days of Milman Parry's Life

The following details of the final days of Parry's life are drawn from the police report, coroner's report, and death certificate,[8] and from contemporary newspaper accounts,[9] with background material drawn from national censuses, birth, marriage, and death certificates, city records, voter lists, passport applications, ship manifests, academic transcripts, and university archives,[10] and from other contemporary documents by people who knew the Parrys.[11] While these details paint an interesting human portrait of Parry in his final days, they lack the sensational features of the many embellished accounts.

On September 12th of 1935 Milman Parry (age 33), along with his wife Marian (age 36), daughter Marian (age 11), and son Adam (age 7), as well as his assistant Albert Lord (age 23), arrived on Ellis Island aboard the S.S. Conte Grande from Trieste, Italy. The Parrys had spent the previous fifteen months in Yugoslavia, and Lord had joined them for the last eleven. The Parrys

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[8] In 1999 I obtained from the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk of Los Angeles an official copy of Milman Parry's Certificate of Death. The coroner's report is embedded in the Certificate of Death. I reconstructed the police report, which can only be obtained by subpoena, from contemporary newspaper accounts, which are largely based on *Associated Press* and *United Press International* reports.

[9] The most informative accounts are in the December 4th and 5th issues of *The Los Angeles Times* and the December 4th issues of *The Oakland Tribune*, *The New York Times, The Boston Globe, The Harvard Crimson*, and *The Joplin News Herald.* Parry's death was widely reported, and additional details can be found in the December 4th issues of *The Hanover Evening Sun*, *The Biddeford Daily Journal*, *The Carbondale Daily Free Press*, *The Madison Wisconsin State Journal*, *The Nevada State Journal*, *The San Antonio Express*, and *The Bluefield Daily Telegraph*.

[10] I gained access to many of the U.S. federal census records (espec. 1880-1940), birth, marriage, and death certificates, military records, U.S. city directories (for addresses), state voter lists, U.S. high school yearbook collections, passport applications, and U.S. immigration forms (form 630A: "List of United States Citizens Arriving at a Port of Entry") through a subscription to Ancestry.com LLC. I gained access to Milman Parry's employment and teaching records at Harvard from the reports of the President of Harvard College and of the Harvard University Treasurer, as published in the *Official Register of Harvard University* (available online at https://guides.library.harvard.edu/harvard-radcliffe-online-historical-reference-shelf).

[11] I received from Milman Parry's grandson, Andrew Feld, an official copy of Parry's academic transcripts from Berkeley, both for the B.A. and M.A., a ten-page draft of a time-line of Parry's life crafted by Sterling Dow in 1964, and an anonymous four-page draft detailing some of the major events of Parry's life. I acquired from the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature a copy of a personal letter from Milman to his sister Addison in November of 1935 and a transcription of an interview by Pamela Newhouse of Milman's wife Marian in 1981. I have also benefitted from conversations with David Elmer, Professor of the Classics and Curator of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature at Harvard University, with Robert Kanigel, Professor Emeritus of Science Writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who is in the process of writing a full-length biography of Milman Parry for Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, and with Blaž Zabel, Ph.D. candidate in classics at Durham University, who is writing a dissertation that includes a consideration of Milman Parry's life. Their reconstructions of the details of Parry's life largely dovetail with mine, though they come to some different conclusions in areas where the documentary evidence is obscure.

had rented a house on a hill overlooking the Adriatic Sea in the scenic town of Dubrovnik, where the family would establish a home, and from which Milman and Albert could go out on excursions to various regions of the country to make acoustic and dictated records of live performances by South Slavic singers (*guslari*). By all measures their fieldwork had been a stunning success: they had recorded around 700,000 lines of South Slavic song, more than 12,500 individual texts, mostly in written form, but also around 750 of them in oral form recorded on 3,580 aluminum disks, all of which they would shortly deposit at Harvard University in what would later be called the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature.[12] The timing of Parry's fieldwork was felicitous, resulting in a unique collection that could never be replicated: it was late enough for Parry to use new technologies of electronic recording but early enough that there still existed a true living oral tradition in Yugoslavia that could be recorded.

Parry had been appointed in 1929 to a position at Harvard as Instructor in Greek and Latin and Tutor in the Division of Ancient Languages. After three years as instructor, Parry had been promoted in 1932 to Assistant Professor of Greek and Latin and appointed to a three-year term. Then, during the summer of 1935, as he had recently learned while still in Yugoslavia, Parry had been reappointed to a second three-year term as Assistant Professor of Greek and Latin. Parry had been granted a reduced teaching assignment for the fall semester of 1935: a single undergraduate course in Greek prose composition with only three students—and with the teaching responsibilities shared with two other professors. He needed some leisure to unpack and organize the considerable materials from his previous year's fieldwork in Yugoslavia, materials that would provide, he thought, the foundation for a new book-length project on comparative oral traditions, to be titled *The Singer of Tales*.

The reduced teaching responsibilities also gave Parry the latitude, late in the fall semester, to make what appears to have been an unexpected trip out to California in order to attend to some family matters. So, after organizing his collected materials, persuading his apprentice Albert Lord to begin graduate study in comparative literature at Harvard, attending to the bulk of his minimal fall semester teaching duties, and delivering a lecture on his field work at one of Harvard's undergraduate residences just a few days previous, he set out for California in late November for what was expected to be a fairly short visit.[13] He fully intended to get back to the East Coast by Christmas, at the latest, for he had submitted an abstract of a paper for the annual meeting of the American Philological Association to be held at the Hotel Astor in New

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[12] In addition to the records from his fieldwork in Yugoslavia, the estate of Milman Parry donated to the Harvard Library upon his death "875 manuscript note-books and a large collection of records, as yet untranscribed, containing much new material on Serbian ballad poetry, together with 202 volumes, 303 pamphlets, and 13 maps," in addition to "a rich treasure of rare books from Parry's personal library." So Briggs 1937:286, and also Bynum 1974:264-65.

[13] Milman's wife Marian was already in California, so he left his two children Marian (age 11) and Adam (age 7) in the custody of his colleague William Greene and his wife, who lived just down the street from the Parrys (so *The Daily Boston Globe* [December 4, 1935:17]). However, Milman Parry's granddaughter, Laura Feld, has shared with me (via e-mail, April 3, 2019) her mother Marian's memory that their new live-in maid, a young Swede, took care of the children at their new apartment in Cambridge (at 43 Linnaean Street) during their parents' visit to California.

York City from December 26-28.[14] This paper, titled "Homer and Huso: I. The Singer's Rests in Greek and Southslavic Heroic Song," was drawn from his recent fieldwork: it considered the singers' rests during long performances of traditional heroic songs among Bosnian Muslims and what these might suggest about the divisions of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* into books or chants. Instead, as fate would have it, Parry's name would be included in the necrology of the A.P.A. proceedings, and his paper would be read "by title."[15]

Marian Parry had gone out to Los Angeles earlier in November to attend to her physically ailing mother, but she had met up with Milman in the Bay Area by late November, where they spent some time visiting Milman's relatives in Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco. Milman's father Isaac and his third wife Blanche (Milman's mother Alice had died seventeen years earlier) lived in San Francisco. His oldest sibling, his half-brother George, and family lived in Oakland. One of his older sisters, Mary Addison, still single, lived in Berkeley, but her twin sister Mary Allison had married in 1930 and moved to Houston, Texas. His older sister Lucile, whom Milman and Marian intended to visit later in their trip, had also married and moved to San Diego. Parry also took advantage of the occasion to visit his former teachers at Berkeley.[16] Perhaps he had timed his visit to coincide with the 37th annual meeting of the Philological Association of the Pacific Coast at Stanford University on November 29-30, where his former mentor at Berkeley, George Calhoun, was giving the presidential address. In any case, it appears that the Parrys stayed in the Bay Area for several days.[17]

By December 3rd Milman and Marian had made their way from San Francisco down to Los Angeles. Their purpose in visiting Los Angeles was to assist Marian's ill mother, Mildred Thanhouser, with financial matters related to her estate. The details of these financial matters remain obscure, but they appear to have been important enough to bring Marian, and later Milman, on a cross-country journey to Los Angeles. Mildred, 64 years old, had been living in a large and luxurious home at 6680 Whitley Terrace, near the Hollywood Bowl, and may have been planning to move into a smaller dwelling in the Nob Hill Towers at 2430 Ocean View

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[14] In fact, Milman expected to be back in Boston well before mid-December, but, once he was able to assess the situation in California, he sent a telegram to his close friend James Ware, Lecturer in Chinese at Harvard, notifying him that he might not be able to return to Boston until December 17 (so *The Daily Boston Globe* [December 4th, 1935:17]).

[15] I am citing here from the proceedings of the 67th annual meeting of the A.P.A. in Post 1935:vi (panel listing), xii (necrology), and xlvii (paper abstract).

[16] Sterling Dow relates in some notes that he composed in 1964 about Parry's life—now housed in the Milman Parry Collection—that his former professor, Ivan Linforth, recalled having a visit with Milman at the time and that he seemed happy, quiet, and composed.

[17] The chronology is very difficult to reconstruct here. A letter written by Milman to his sister Addison on November 16th—recently donated to the Milman Parry Collection—indicates that he was still in Cambridge at that time, and that Marian was with her mother in Los Angeles and was planning to come up to Berkeley. But if this is the case, the statement on the coroner's report that Milman had been in California for 21 days prior to his death must be inaccurate. Perhaps the detail of Milman's "twenty-one days" in California on the coroner's report was extrapolated from the number of days that Marian had been in California. I owe this last conjecture to Robert Kanigel, who is writing a full-length biography of Milman Parry.

Avenue, six miles closer to the downtown area.[18] Mildred had lost her husband Frank when she was 43, while they were living in Milwaukee, and had been left to raise her 16-year-old daughter Marian there. She was very close to her only child and also to her son-in-law Milman. When Marian headed off to college at the University of California, Berkeley, Mildred had followed, and the two even shared a rented house in Oakland for some time. There Mildred was able to make the acquaintance of Marian's college classmate, Milman, who had lost his own mother when he was a senior in high school. Mildred herself decided to take classes toward a master's degree at Berkeley and stayed in California long enough to witness Marian and Milman's marriage in 1923 and the birth of their daughter, also Marian, in 1924. Mildred had even visited the three of them for an extended period the following year in Paris, while Milman was studying at the Sorbonne. Since then, Mildred had moved to Los Angeles.

On the afternoon of December 3 the Parrys, having just arrived in Los Angeles from San Francisco by plane, rented a suite in the Palms Hotel at 626 South Alvarado Street, opposite Westlake Park (renamed MacArthur Park in 1942). Built ten years earlier, this 100-room hotel with private bath and phone charged $5 per week for a room. The Palms Hotel was conveniently located just a ten-minute walk from the Nob Hill Towers. Apparently the financial matters that they had come to Los Angeles to help Mildred resolve were not too pressing by this time, for the Parrys had made plans to visit San Diego the next day for an extended stay with Milman's older sister Lucile Youngjohn, her husband Ramiel, and their two children Christine (age 13) and Milman (age 8).

Once they entered their suite at the Palms Hotel, Marian remained in the main room while Parry went into the bedroom to unpack his suitcase. Very shortly thereafter, Marian heard the muffled report of a gunshot from the bedroom and rushed in to find Parry wounded and bleeding on the floor. Milman had apparently gotten into the habit of carrying a handgun in response to the dangerous conditions he encountered during his travels through rural areas of

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[18] I base this conjecture on the sparse documentary evidence that has survived. Mildred's address at 6680 Whitley Terrace in Hollywood is noted in the October 8th, 1935, issue of the *Los Angeles Times*, A6, and also in Milman's November 16 letter to his sister Addison. But the "local address" listed for both Milman and Marian on the coroner's report is 2430 Ocean View Avenue (the Nob Hill Towers). Whose address could that be other than Mildred's? The "financial matters related to her estate" plausibly had something to do with her move to a new residence. Milman Parry's granddaughter, Laura Feld, has shared with me (via e-mail, April 1, 2019) the additional detail, drawn from the family's memory, that "Mildred's substantial fortune was disappearing into the hands of gigolos and gangsters."

Yugoslavia.[19] He had packed his handgun, wrapped in a shirt, in his suitcase. The safety catch had jostled loose, or had not been set to start with, and as Parry was unpacking his suitcase the handgun discharged from inside, shooting a bullet into Parry's chest that grazed his heart. Marian immediately called an ambulance, but Parry died before any medical help could arrive on the scene.

Detective Lieutenants Ed Romero and B. L. Jones of the L.A. Police Department filed the police report after questioning Marian and examining the hotel room. They reported that the incident was an accident, the weapon having discharged when Parry reached into his suitcase. The Los Angeles County coroner, Frank A. Nance, who examined Parry's body, made a formal inquiry into Parry's death, and signed his death certificate, reported that the principal cause of death was a "gunshot wound of the chest," that the death was due to an "accident" (the terms "suicide" and "homicide" are crossed out on the death certificate), that the nature of the injury was a "shooting," and that the manner of injury was a handgun "accidentally discharged in suitcase." Dr. Wagner from the Los Angeles Coroner's Office also signed the death certificate, and Dr. George Parrish filed the certificate. No autopsy was performed. All contemporary newspaper accounts, which are largely based on *Associated Press* and *United Press International* reports, which are, in turn, drawn from the police report, attribute Parry's death to an unfortunate accident.

A funeral service was held two days later, on Thursday, December 5, at 1:30 pm at the Pierce Brothers Mortuary. After the service Parry's body was cremated at the Los Angeles Crematory. No record survives of the disposition of the ashes.

In sum, based on contemporary documents, there appears to have been nothing mysterious or sensational or heroic about Parry's death. Carelessness resulted in an unfortunate mishap that led to the sad and pointless death of one of the rising stars in the fields of classics, comparative literature, and anthropology.

Obituaries, tributes, and memorials by those who knew Parry well—his teachers, colleagues, and students—all attributed Parry's death to an unfortunate accident. In his 1934-35 annual report, the president of Harvard, James Conant, informed the college that "Milman Parry . . . was killed by a tragic accident in Los Angeles on December 3 in his thirty-fourth

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[19] Adam Parry (1971:xxxvi) reports that "the country itself was wild . . . banditry was not uncommon in the inland valleys, and an air of risk and adventure always accompanied Parry's several trips into the interior." Sterling Dow asserts in the notes that he composed in 1964 about Parry's life that Parry was killed by the very pistol he had carried in Yugoslavia. Erich Segal (1971:16), in his review of *The Collected Papers of Milman Parry* in the *New York Times*, reports that Milman Parry carried a gun: "Yugoslavia in the thirties was primitive and wild; Parry was obliged to carry a gun for his own protection." Mary Knight (1993:12) also reports that Parry carried a gun in Yugoslavia: "He killed himself accidentally with a gun he had long carried to defend himself against bandits." She informed me (via e-mail, December 8, 2018) that her sources for this statement were Charles Rowan Beye and John Miles Foley. Beye, she says, was confident in his sources, including Adam Parry, who were personal contacts. Barry Powell, in his contribution to a 1993 discussion on the University of Kentucky's Classics-L "listserv," says: "There is a lot of folklore about the death of the Parrys, but the story I heard is that Milman often carried a loaded pistol with him (a carry-over from days in Yugoslavia, where there were bandits on the roads)." Marian Parry (daughter of Milman) gave a short speech at a 2010 conference at Harvard, documented in the archives of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature, in which she describes her father bringing back home as a guest to Dubrovnik a Slavic "hero" who sported a gun in his sash. The hero pointed out the notches in the handle and told her that they represented the number of men he had killed. He went on to say that "it was best when they died fast, both for them and for me." And, indeed, some of the photos of Slavic "heroes" in traditional garb in the Milman Parry Collection illustrate a highly-ornamented handle of a pistol sticking out from the sash.

year."[20] In the February, 1936, issue of the *Harvard University Gazette*, Parry's colleagues Charles Gulick, William Greene, and John Finley (1936:93) concluded their obituary for Parry with the words: "On what was to have been a brief visit to California, he met his accidental death in Los Angeles on December 3, 1935."[21] Parry's student at Harvard, Harry Levin, in a touching memorial to his mentor in *The Classical Journal,* lamented (1937:265): "The accident in Los Angeles on the third of December, 1935, was as trivial and pointless as that which killed his hero, Colonel Lawrence of Arabia, a few months before." Parry's advisor at the Sorbonne, Aimé Puech, in an affectionate tribute to his student, wrote, upon hearing the news of his death (1936:87): "Une triste nouvelle m'est arrive récemment d'Amérique; ce charmant Milman Parry, que nous avions connu, jeune étudiant, à la Sorbonne, et qui, retourné dans son pays d'origine, s'était fait apprécier et aimerà Harvard, comme on l'appréciait et aimait à Paris, vient de mourir, victim d'un accident tragique."

Nonetheless, as is often the case in the wake of a sudden and unexpected event, initial accounts, especially in the newspaper reports from all over the country, contained conflicting details. Was Milman Parry 32 or 33 at the time of his death? Where did he go to college: Berkeley, Stanford, or the University of Southern California? Was his wife's name Marion or Marian? Did the Parrys travel together or separately from Boston to the West Coast? Did the Parrys arrive in Los Angeles on December 2nd or 3rd—or had they arrived three weeks earlier? Did they come to Los Angeles directly from Cambridge, or did they pass through San Francisco? Did they check into a hotel or an apartment? Did they check in during the morning or afternoon? Did Parry shoot himself in a hotel/apartment or in his mother-in-law's home? How long had they been at the hotel/apartment when the gun shot occurred? Did Marian hear the gunshot from the next room, or did she fail to hear it at all? What kind of firearm did Parry possess: a .25-caliber pistol, a .38-caliber automatic pistol, a revolver, or a shotgun?[22] Did he die in the hotel/apartment or *en route* to the hospital? A comparison of these initial accounts offers a revealing study in the unreliability of both oral and written versions of unexpected but newsworthy events.

The Myth of Milman Parry's Suicide

It wasn't long before whispers of suicide began to circulate. Some simply found the circumstances suspicious: a man killed by his own pistol in a hotel room in downtown Los Angeles. Some apparently relished the contemplation of the macabre. But others appear to have had a deep desire to see in Parry an epic, or perhaps even tragic, figure. They seemingly subscribed to the notion that truly exceptional human beings, and especially "those whom the

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[20] Conant 1936:30: "Milman Parry, Assistant Professor of Greek and Latin, was killed by a tragic accident in Los Angeles on December 3 in his thirty-fourth year. By his death the University loses one of its most promising younger scholars."

[21] Similarly William Greene's memorial of Parry the following year (1937:536): "On what was expected to be a brief visit to California, Parry met his accidental death in Los Angeles on December 3, 1935."

[22] The introduction of a shotgun to the story is probably much later, in spite of Marco Gemin's (2014:1) assertion: "Reports at the time said that he was accidentally killed by a shotgun in a hotel room in Los Angeles."

gods love," tend to die heroic deaths at a young age. A sensational death at 33 years of age was particularly appropriate for a larger-than-life hero, calling to mind Alexander the Great, Jesus Christ, or King Richard II. A mere accident was just too trivial and meaningless. Classical scholars, steeped in the Greek epic traditions as they were, did not want to see in Parry an accident-prone Elpenor, who in a drunken stupor fell off the roof of Circe's house and broke his neck; they preferred an heroic Ajax, who out of anger and despondency chose to fall on his own sword after not receiving the prize he thought that he deserved. This is borne out in the recurrent oral tradition—one that arose fairly quickly after his death—that Milman Parry had committed suicide, and, moreover, that he had done so out of despondency over Harvard's refusal to grant him a permanent appointment.

This oral tradition became pervasive enough that Charles Rowan Beye, in his entry on Milman Parry in a 1990 biography of classical scholars, felt the need to squelch it (1990:364):

> On 3 December 1935, in a Los Angeles hotel room, Parry died of wounds from a gun he had in his possession. Despite the academic world's persistent determination to see this as a suicide on the theory that Parry was denied tenure at Harvard, there is no evidence that he would not have been promoted (he had just been reappointed to a second three-year term as Assistant Professor in the summer of 1935), and the physical circumstances of his death argue against suicide.

Such attempts as Beye's, however, did little to suppress the oral tradition. In 1993 there occurred a sustained and wide-ranging conversation on the University of Kentucky's Classical Greek and Latin Discussion Group (Classics-L, an electronic "Listserv") about the untimely and tragic deaths of scholars who worked in the field of Homeric Studies: Milman Parry, Adam Parry, Anne Amory Parry, Michael Ventris, Colin MacLeod.[23] The discussants were mostly prominent scholars in the field of classics and especially Homeric studies. I record some of their comments below, but, because of the informal nature of the discussion, I have not included their names.

First, there appear in the informal conversation, as in any oral tradition, numerous factual errors: that Parry died in an auto accident (a conflation with his son Adam's death); that he died in San Francisco while visiting his wife's parents (he was in Los Angeles, as was his mother-in-law, but his father-in-law had died 20 years earlier); that he was in Los Angeles because the annual meeting of the American Philological Association was being held there (the meeting was in New York City that year).

Several discussants express suspicion about the unusual nature of Parry's death: "Parry's obituary, which reports that Parry was unpacking his bags in the next room when the gun went off accidentally, is bound to raise anyone's eyebrows." "I suspect that many readers of Parry's obituaries found it possible to infer the possibility of suicide." "Milman Parry shot himself while he was cleaning his gun, according to his family. It may or may not have been an accident." "Of course, what appears in print after a man's death is always sanitized—speak no ill of the dead. Suicide is a nasty business and easy to cover up."

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[23] The searchable archives of the University of Kentucky's Classical Greek and Latin Discussion Group (Classics-L) no longer go back as early as 1993. The archives are available at http://lsv.uky.edu/archives/classics-l.html.

Some discussants take the additional step of relating Parry's death to Harvard's unwillingness to offer him a permanent position: "It always takes me aback, but Parry had just been denied tenure at Harvard." "I heard that Milman Parry died in Los Angeles after being denied tenure." "Harvard's ill-treatment of Parry is a standard part of the tale." "Milman Parry was in Los Angeles to take up teaching duties [having broken his ties with Harvard, presumably]."

Digital media such as this electronic discussion group are modern analogues of ancient oral traditions, and the association of Parry's death with suicide has seeped deep into this digital universe, permeating standard digital biographies and encyclopedias. The short articles on Milman Parry in the digital versions of *The Cambridge Dictionary of American Biography* and *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia* state that Milman Parry "taught at Harvard from 1930 until his sudden death (possibly suicide) in 1935." The article on Milman Parry in that font of all modern knowledge, *Wikipedia* (accessed 03/22/2019), asserts that Parry "died in Los Angeles from either an accidental gunshot while unpacking his suitcase or suicide."

Popular works by scholars outside the immediate discipline of classics have continued to perpetuate this myth to the present day. So Jonathan Gottschall in his 2008 book *The Rape of Troy* (16): "Classicists have argued, often bitterly, about whether it may have been a suicide linked to depression over possible denial of tenure at Harvard." Also Colin Wells (2015:95) in a series of articles from 2015 to 2018 on the introduction of the alphabet to Greece: "In 1930s America such phrasing was commonly used to mask suicide, which left a greater residue of social stigma than it does now."[24] More often than not such comments are inserted flippantly, for their sensational value, and do not have much to do with the larger narrative of the work.

However, more complex and sophisticated versions of the myth of Parry's death have been fashioned by some highly-regarded classical scholars who have committed their suspicions of Parry's suicide to print in the more traditional media of scholarly reviews, articles, and books. These versions tend to be more insidious inasmuch as they make a deliberate attempt to mold their accounts of the events to support their own larger narratives. They are, in a sense, creating a Parry in an image that they find useful for their purposes, and, in some cases, they even appear to be creating a Parry in their own image.

I offer as an example, first, the implications that classical scholar William Calder has drawn about Parry's death. We see them in a comment that Calder makes in a review of Paul Dräger's edition of the school notes on Wilamowitz's lectures on Homer's *Iliad* taken by a 20-year-old Swiss student, Alfred Züricher (1867-1895). In a brief aside, Calder (2008:302) observes that Züricher "died in a manner uncannily similar to Milman Parry, whether a suicide or accidently in his bedroom, shot by his personal revolver." Nothing further; just a brief aside, perhaps to increase the pathos over the death of a promising scholar, whether Züricher or Parry, who died far too young.

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[24] C. Wells (2015:95): "Speculation about his death continues to this day, and the question remains unsettled. One possible motive for suicide—entrenched academic resistance to Parry's revolutionary ideas—has been commonly assumed, yet seems unlikely." C. Wells (2018:107): "Such phrasing was commonly used at the time to mask suicide or, conceivably, an accident at the hands of a child or other family member. Parry's death remains a blank."

One might not think too much of this except for the fact that this is a narrative that Calder (1977:316-17) had pushed earlier in his accounts of the lives of various classicists in the U.S., but there with the further implication that Parry's suicide was triggered by Harvard's rejection of him, and that Harvard's rejection of him was a result of anti-Semitism. In his description of the professional life of James Loeb, who studied classics as an undergraduate at Harvard and went on to fund and establish the Loeb Classical Library there, Calder asserts that a professional career in classics was unthinkable for an American Jew of the time (Loeb's ancestors were German Jews, and his extended family members were still practicing Jews in New York City in Loeb's own day). Calder goes on to record that Loeb emigrated to Bavaria, and that Harvard never granted him an honorary degree, despite his generosity to the college—although Munich and Cambridge, with which he had much looser ties, saw fit to do so. Calder then mentions two other classicists who suffered similar fates: Charles Waldstein, later Sir Charles Walston, a Jewish-American archaeologist who received a master of arts degree at Columbia in 1873 but who was forced to go abroad to pursue an academic position at Cambridge, and Milman Parry, who "took his own life."

Calder's strong implication—really much more than an implication—is that Milman Parry, like James Loeb, was shunned by Harvard because of anti-Semitism, but while Loeb responded by emigrating to Bavaria, Parry responded by killing himself. Throughout his many commentaries on the personal correspondence of Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, Calder demonstrates his penchant for salacious and tawdry details about noted scholars, especially details that might tarnish their reputations. Theodor Mommsen was a little man who was irritated that his son-in-law Wilamowitz was forty centimeters taller than he, and therefore refused to be photographed near him (Calder 1980:222-23). James Loeb fell in love with a Christian woman, but his (Jewish) family would not allow his marriage to a gentile; Loeb's ensuing psychological collapse led to his seeking help from Sigmund Freud in Vienna (Calder 1977:317). The sudden and premature death of William Oldfather was thought by some to be a suicide triggered by his despair over the defeat of Germany in WWII (Calder 1976:119). Calder includes these details, apparently, to show that he is "in the know" about the personal lives of these highly-esteemed scholars. His assertion about Parry, though, is not just a flippant aside based on hearsay; the detail of Parry's suicide is marshaled to support his narrative about a deep-seated prejudice against Jewish scholars at Harvard at this time.[25] Never mind that Parry's ancestors were Welsh, Scottish, and English Quakers.[26] And never mind that Parry had at one time even entertained the

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[25] Parry's tenure at Harvard does coincide with a time in Harvard's history, under the presidency of Abbott Lawrence Lowell (1909-1933), when there was a conscious effort made to reduce the number of Jewish students. By the early 1920s, 20 to 25 percent of the undergraduate student body at Harvard was Jewish. President Lowell proposed a formal Jewish quota of 12 percent. See M. Keller and P. Keller 2001:48-51; Synnott 2004:195-214; Karabel 2006:77-109. According to M. Keller and P. Keller (2001:243), Herbert Bloch became the Harvard Classics Department's first tenured Jewish professor in 1953, Ernst Badian its second in 1971. To be precise, Badian was appointed to a position in History in 1971 and then also in classics in 1973.

[26] So Levin 1937:259; A. Parry 1971:xxii; Beye 1990:364. Milman's great-great grandfather Thomas Parry emigrated from Pembrokeshire, Wales, according to the 1841 Wales Census, and he is listed on the Exeter, Pennsylvania, Quaker records (as is his son Isaac).

notion of committing himself to a life of full-time Christian ministry.[27] It is conceivable that Calder is here invoking the ancestry of Milman's wife Marian (née Thanhouser): she had German Jewish roots, perhaps going all the way back to the village of Thannhausen in Bavaria, from which many Jews emigrated. Elsewhere Calder reports that the classical philologist and philosopher Julius Stenzel (1883-1935) was removed from his post at the University of Kiel because his wife Bertha Mugdan was Jewish. Stenzel was humiliated and broken and died an unexpected death from thrombosis just a week before the death of Milman Parry (Calder 1983:267). Whatever Calder's intentions are here, it seems far beyond the pale that Harvard, even in the 1930's, would have denied Parry a permanent post because of his wife's ancestry.[28]

I offer as a second example the insinuation of classicists Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath in their popular book *Who Killed Homer?* (1998:15-16) that Milman Parry's fate was the natural result of a self-made commoner like Parry not being justly respected by a snobby, elite institution like Harvard. This depiction of Parry as an "everyman" who challenged the "privileged elite" can be traced back to the period shortly after his death.

Parry's student at Harvard, Harry Levin, in his 1937 portrait of Parry's development as a Homeric scholar, invokes his mentor's humble beginnings in Oakland (1937:259):

> He [Parry] had not come upon the language [Greek] until he left his modest Quaker family and crossed the bay to study chemistry at the University of California. The things he valued meant all the more to him because he had not always been able to count upon them. The illumination which Greek suddenly shed on an overburdened adolescence led him through Homer and Hesiod and whatever he could find of the earliest monuments, without other guides. When a distinguished Harvard scholar visited Berkeley in 1923, he had a pupil who had qualified himself for stringent graduate studies in Pindar and Aeschylus.

It appears that Levin is incorrect on almost all counts here. Parry had no interest in studying chemistry; in fact, the only science course he took in college was a zoology course in his sophomore year (he dropped out of anatomy in his junior year). Parry did not have to "cross the bay" to get to Berkeley; the campus was just a few miles away, all by land, from his home in Oakland. There is little indication that Parry was unable to pursue what he valued before he enrolled at Berkeley; he had attended one of the finest high schools in the Oakland area, the newly opened Oakland Technical High School, where he had devoted himself to a curriculum heavily weighted toward college preparation in the humanities, including four full years of Latin. Once at Berkeley, Parry did not need any affirmation from "a distinguished Harvard scholar" (here Levin is referring to Herbert Weir Smyth, who was Sather Professor at Berkeley

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[27] The Saturday evening, March 27th, 1920, issue of *The Oakland Tribune* reports that Milman Parry, an undergraduate at Berkeley at the time, attended the Y. M. C. A.'s Christian Calling Conference in Modesto, California, "for serious consideration of Christian work as a life calling."

[28] This is not to say that Marian Parry did not encounter anti-Jewish sentiment at Harvard. In an interview that Pamela Newhouse conducted in 1981 (housed in the Milman Parry Collection) Marian recalls feeling excluded from the social life at Harvard because of her Jewishness, and she even recalls several unpleasant remarks directed toward her by members of the Classics Department. She says that Milman responded by discouraging her from attending certain social functions.

when Parry was a graduate student); he already had at his disposal several distinguished Berkeley scholars to guide his way. In short, as Parry's own son Adam points out, "his adolescence was no more burdened, or 'overburdened,' than is that of most of us" (A. Parry 1971:xxii-xxiii n. 2).[29]

Levin's portrait of Parry going off to college to pursue the practical sciences but abandoning them for the study of classics is reasserted in Charles Rowan Beye's biography of Parry (1990:361): Parry was "intent on finding a major field in the natural sciences," but once at Berkeley "his interest turned to classical literature." The detail is also repeated in John Miles Foley's (1999b:77-78) biography of Parry in *American National Biography*: "Parry intended to study chemistry." In fact, Parry's transcript at Berkeley depicts someone who was deeply interested from the beginning in the humanities, and specifically in the classics. Parry enrolled in beginning-level Greek and in more advanced Latin already in his first year, and he tried to fit as many Greek courses as possible into his seven semesters at Berkeley. His two main interests outside of classics were in English literature (six semesters) and in the new field of anthropology (three semesters).[30]

The depiction of Parry as a practical blue-collar worker, and even, when circumstances demanded, a denizen of the peasant class, appears again in a 1974 survey of the study of oral traditions at Harvard since 1856 by David Bynum, former curator of the Milman Parry Collection of Oral Literature at Harvard. Bynum compares the contributions of Milman Parry with those of his Harvard predecessors Francis James Child and George Lyman Kittredge (Bynum 1974:255, 258):

> Milman Parry's early intellectual development paralleled Child's in several fateful ways. The similarity of their minds had roots in the similar circumstances of their childhood. Child's father, a sailmaker, and Parry's father, a carpenter, were both independent artisans whose modest incomes afforded no material luxury or educational advantage for their children. Born to the idea of reliance on their own talent and work, both Child and Parry were practical men as well as extraordinary scholars. . . . To some extent Child had always remained subject to the nineteenth-century bourgeois prejudice that rural or agrarian life was incompatible with culture of high quality. Parry, who had been a poultry farmer for a year before he went to Paris, had no such prejudice.

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[29] In the same discussion, A. Parry points out some of the factual errors in Levin's account of his father.

[30] Parry's transcripts from Berkeley reveal that he was actually quite narrowly focused on the classics from the start of his college education. He took the courses in military science, physical education, and hygiene required of freshmen and sophomores, but reluctantly, and he did not distinguish himself in those subjects. He took the minimum number of courses required for breadth in the social and natural sciences (for example, political science, economics, public speaking, zoology), and he did not distinguish himself in these subjects either. He maintained an interest in English literature throughout his undergraduate program (six courses), and received high marks in these courses, at least in his first two years. And, somewhat unusual for the time, in his junior and senior years he took three courses in anthropology. He took one Latin course during each of his seven semesters at Berkeley, and he scored the highest marks possible in four of them. But his real passion from the beginning was in Greek. He took as much Greek as he could fit in—thirteen courses in seven semesters—and got the highest marks possible in nine of them. He even took a graduate-level Greek course during his senior year. Classicist John Garcia (2001:58-84) has written about Parry's unusual interest in anthropology and of his teacher A. L. Kroeber's influence on his later fieldwork in Yugoslavia.

In fact Parry's father was not a carpenter but a pharmacist, and apparently a rather successful one at that, as he owned his own drugstore for a time. And while Parry worked with his hands at several temporary jobs throughout his youth—sawmill, railroad, metal works, electric works—there is no record of his ever working at a poultry farm. During their final year in California Milman and Marian lived near Santa Cruz for a very short period with a family who had some chickens, and Milman may have helped out with the chores; and they may have had some chickens themselves when they lived for a period out in the country in Mill Valley, but many people raised their own chickens in those days, and that hardly qualifies Milman as living "a rural or agrarian life incompatible with culture of high quality." Yet, for some reason, this caricature of Parry as a poultry farmer has caught on. It is perpetuated by Adam Nicolson in his popular book *Why Homer Matters* (2014:73, 76):

> There was nothing precious or elitist about him [Parry], and his life and mind ranged widely. For a
> year he was a poultry farmer. . . . In 1922 the classics faculty at Berkeley told Parry that there was
> no chance he would get a doctorate by following up on his master's thesis on the formulas in
> Homer. It was not what an American classicist did. For a year Parry worked with his chickens, but
> he recognized that his future studies would find most encouragement with the anthropologists in
> Paris, and when he was twenty-two he went there to do his doctorate at the Sorbonne.

Again, Parry may have tended to some chickens for a short period between his completion of the master's degree at Berkeley and his departure for France—the year during which his daughter Marian was born—but this is irrelevant to the fact that he was from an average middle-class family in Oakland in the early 1900s.[31] His father, who had traveled broadly and was a corporal in the National Guard, was a stably-employed pharmacist whose salary could support their family of seven in a rented home. His mother, Marie Alice Parry (née Emerson), was a piano teacher, and she taught her son how to play. Parry went to the finest public high school in the area, where he took four years of Latin, and then to the finest university in California, where he studied Greek with George Calhoun, Ivan Linforth, and James Allen, three of the most distinguished Hellenists of the time. Parry was also exposed to the regular cycle of visiting professors at Berkeley, including two Sather Lecturers who appear to have had an influence on his academic life: John Scott, who in 1920-21, when Parry was in his third year as an undergraduate, offered eight lectures on Homer that are saturated with the issues of the analyst-unitarian divide (Scott himself espoused a conservative form of the unitarian position); and Herbert Smyth, who in 1922-23, when Parry was a graduate student, lectured on Aeschylus, and later recommended Parry for a position at Harvard. In short, Parry, who had a supercilious indifference about being inducted into the academic honor society Phi Beta Kappa at Berkeley, and who did not even bother to attend his own graduation, was not compelled to follow a

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[31] In the short speech, mentioned earlier, that Parry's daughter Marian gave at Harvard in 2010, she recalls that her father once brought fifteen chickens and a rooster back to their home in Dubrovnik from one of his excursions into the countryside (this was during their second stay in Yugoslavia in 1934-35). Marian reports that she was happy that they now had eggs (and chicken).

vocational path; he had the leisure, the capacity, and the will to pursue whatever intrigued his sharp intellect.

Also, by marrying his college classmate, Marian Thanhouser, Parry had attached himself to a wealthy family of the mercantile class and had thereby increased his opportunities further.[32] Marian had received a substantial inheritance as a 16-year-old upon the death of her father. She drew from these resources to fund the family's move to Paris, where Milman spent a year learning French and another three years on graduate study at the Sorbonne. Parry had also won a scholarship for at least two years of that study, so with the combined funds they were able to live comfortably in Paris, and even to hire a maid. Marian had grown up in a home with live-in servants, and she maintained this practice throughout her marriage with Milman. They hired a live-in servant, a recent Irish immigrant, when they took up residence near the Harvard campus. Even while abroad in Dubrovnik, a popular seaside resort at the time, where the entire family stayed in a rented house on a hill overlooking the sea, they enlisted the services of a maid.

Nonetheless, the accounts of Harry Levin, David Bynum, Adam Nicolson, and others have combined to create a caricature of Milman Parry as a working-class stiff—a poultry-farming son of a carpenter—who managed to lift himself up by his own bootstraps from his peasant origins, thanks, in part at least, to the graciousness of the more privileged classical elite of his day. Perhaps the single most influential propagator of this caricature of Parry, and particularly of its relationship to the myth of his suicide, is Victor Davis Hanson and John Heath's popular *Who Killed Homer?*, a book-length screed lamenting the demise of classical studies in the United States. Hanson and Heath (1998:15-16) mention in their account of Parry's tragic death that "the gun found near his body in a Los Angeles motel room, combined with his insecure position at Harvard, led many classicists to conclude that his mysterious death was a suicide caused by a denial of tenure." They go on to admit that there was "little conclusive evidence for either the suicide or the failure of promotion," but by then, as they must have known well, the genie was out of the bottle. And Hanson and Heath clearly meant it to be, for this anecdote of Milman Parry's death nicely supported their narrative about the reasons for the demise of classical studies in the U.S.: that snobby, dull, cloistered, professional classicists at (mostly) East-Coast, Ivy League, parochial research institutions like Harvard University were squelching the energy of imaginative, robust, adventurous, self-made, self-taught, untraditional zealots of the classics like Milman Parry (or Heinrich Schliemann, or Michael Ventris, or Hanson and Heath themselves), who had been born in California and educated in its public school system (again, like Hanson and Heath themselves), and who had been granted no scholarship money for

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[32] Milman's wife Marian was the only child of Frank and Mildred Thanhouser (née Landauer) from Wisconsin. The January 27, 1894, issue of *The Atlanta Constitution* describes Mildred Landauer as "a member of one of the wealthiest and most prominent families of Milwaukee," and Frank Thanhouser as "one of Atlanta's prominent and successful business men." Marian's uncle Edwin Thanhouser was the founder of the famous Thanhouser Company (later the Thanhouser Film Corporation), a pioneering movie studio that produced over a thousand films. Marian's father Frank was a dry goods merchant, as was his father Samuel (who had an estate worth $6,000 in 1860, plus a servant and a clerk). Frank and Mildred had two live-in servants in 1910. Mildred appears still to have had a substantial estate when the Parrys visited her in Los Angeles in 1935.

graduate study in the United States (here quite unlike Hanson and Heath, both of whom did their graduate work in the rich bosom of Stanford University).[33]

Milman Parry's Status at Harvard

Since Milman Parry's academic prospects at Harvard have played such a central role in the development of the myth of his death, it may be worthwhile to evaluate Parry's professional status there. In short, while Parry was benefitting from the excellent professional opportunities available to him as an instructor and then assistant professor at Harvard, his future there was uncertain, as the potential of a permanent position for him was unclear.

On the one hand, Parry's academic career was following what should have been for him a reassuring upward trajectory. Upon receiving the Docteur-ès-Lettres at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1928, Parry had accepted a post as Head of the Latin Department at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, for the 1928-29 academic year.[34] While he was there, the recently retired Eliot Professor of Greek at Harvard, Herbert Weir Smyth, who had been very impressed by Parry as a graduate student at Berkeley in 1922-23 when he was visiting as Sather Professor, recommended Parry for a position as an instructor at Harvard and suggested that he deliver a paper at the 1928 annual meeting of the American Philological Association in New York City in late December.[35] Parry's paper, "Did Homer Understand the Epic γλῶτται?," was a précis of his article of that year, "The Homeric Gloss: A Study in Word-Sense," in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*. This was the moment of Parry's permanent shift in orientation from the West to the East Coast. He accepted a one-year appointment as Instructor in Greek and Latin and Tutor in the Division of Ancient Languages at Harvard. This appointment was renewed twice, and after three years as instructor, Parry was promoted in 1932 to Assistant Professor of Greek and Latin and appointed to a three-year term. Then, during the summer of 1935, toward the end of his second visit to Yugoslavia, Parry was reappointed to a second three-year term as Assistant Professor of Greek and Latin.

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[33] This is a leitmotif that winds its way through Victor Davis Hanson's subsequent writing as well (for example, Hanson 2016), as he becomes a conservative political commentator for *National Review* and *The Washington Times* (and currently senior fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University).

[34] F. H. Potter (1928:158): "Dr. Milman Parry has been appointed head of the Latin department to succeed Professor Charles O. Denny, who was forced by ill health to retire last spring after many years of valuable service at Drake University." According to the recollection of his wife Marian, in the interview recorded in 1981 by Pamela Newhouse mentioned earlier, Milman's appointment at Drake was facilitated by George Calhoun, his former professor at Berkeley. Marian recalls that shortly thereafter Milman was offered two positions at Berkeley—one in French and another in Latin—but that Milman didn't really enjoy teaching Latin and saw no prospect of a position opening up in Greek at Berkeley any time soon.

[35] A. Parry (1971:xxix): "Herbert Weir Smyth of Harvard University, as Sather Professor at the University of California, had taught Parry when he was an undergraduate. On learning that he was once more in America, Smyth suggested that Parry read a paper at the American Philological Association meeting in New York at the end of 1928. At that meeting Parry was offered and accepted a position at Harvard." Two corrections should be made to Adam Parry's account: Milman Parry was a graduate student when Smyth visited Berkeley; and he was formally offered the position at Harvard shortly before the A.P.A. meeting via a letter from C. N. Jackson, Chair of the Classics Department.

During his six years at Harvard Parry and his family—wife Marian, daughter Marian, son Adam, live-in servant Bridie Fitzgerald, and two handsome white collies—lived at 14 Shepard Street, just half a mile from the Classics Department, from where Parry could be intimately involved in the activities of the college and department. He held a position as tutor of Kirkland House, acted for several years as Secretary of the Department of the Classics, and served for four years as one of the editors of *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology*.[36] Parry's enthusiasm for drama received an outlet when in 1933 he proposed and directed a production for the Classical Club at Harvard of Sophocles' *Philoctetes* in ancient Greek.[37] He reportedly recruited the cast for the production by holding before them the privilege of memorizing several hundred lines of Sophocles in Greek (Levin 1937:259).

Parry's teaching at Harvard is reported to have been of a high quality. His teaching situation would be the envy of most classicists today. He was on paid leave for three of the thirteen semesters that he was employed at Harvard. While in residence he taught eight different courses a total of twenty-one times (plus one independent study). His staples were Homer and Greek prose composition, but he also taught undergraduate courses in first-year Greek and in Latin literature, and graduate-level courses in Thucydides, Tacitus' *Annales,* and Greek and Latin metrics. Half of his courses were team-taught full-year courses, and the other half were half-year courses, so, by current methods of accounting, he was responsible for around 75 students during each of his five years of full-time teaching.[38] This was an ideal teaching situation professionally: one pictures with envy a full-year course on Homeric Greek team-taught with John Finley to twenty-two undergraduates, or a semester-length course on Greek and Latin metrics to three graduate students. According to his closest colleagues and most dedicated students Parry was a gifted and effective teacher. As three of his colleagues recall (Gulick, Greene, and Finley 1936:93): "His critical gifts and his wide knowledge of many forms of literature made him a remarkably effective teacher. He spared neither time nor effort in laboring for his students, and his advice was at once sympathetic and forceful." Harry Levin, Parry's student at the time, recalls his exhilaration as a freshman at Harvard (1937:260):

> After an anticipated routine of parsing and scanning, Parry would dismiss Terence and introduce
> Molière and Sacha Guitry, or further illustrations from comic supplements and burlesque
> shows. . . . Literal-minded graduate students sometimes complained that they would carefully

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[36] Parry was one of three editors of *HSCP* in 1930, 1931, 1932, and 1933; he published articles in *HSCP* too, in 1930 and 1932.

[37] C. W. Gleason and J. B. Stearns (1933:73): "The Harvard Classical Club presented the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles on the fifteenth and seventeenth of March, in Lowell House, Cambridge. The performance, which was directed by Professor Milman Parry, was given in Greek. Masks were used, and the choruses were sung to music written by Mr. Elliott Carter. The chief speaking parts were taken by R. S. Fitzgerald, R. V. Scudder, and H. T. Levin, all undergraduates in Harvard College. The chorus was trained by Mr. E. C. Weist. A large audience was present at each performance." This was not Parry's first foray into drama. In the Spring of 1923, while pursuing an M.A. in classics at Berkeley, Parry, along with three other students, wrote the script for a musical called "But it Wasn't," on the topic, "Does a man win a girl through strength, poetry, or by being a practical business man?" This was performed at the Senior Extravaganza in May, 1923 (right around the time that he married Marian).

[38] I have elicited Parry's teaching schedule from the 1929-36 reports of the President of Harvard College, as published in the *Official Register of Harvard University*.

collate a passage in Tacitus and be greeted with a lecture on its use by Racine, or that those who wanted to know the history of textual criticism of Thucydides were asked to criticize Spengler's theories of history.

Parry was also making significant headway on his many research projects. The two French theses that he had completed for his Docteur-ès-Lettres at the Sorbonne in Paris in 1928 were well received by those who could gain access to them. The two long articles in *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* in 1930 and 1932 that introduced his work in English were beginning to have a major impact on how American and British Homerists were addressing the "Homeric Question." Parry also published three shorter articles in *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association*, two in *Classical Philology*, and one in *Language* between 1928 and 1934, and he delivered several papers at the annual meetings of the American Philological Association. As an indication of the value attached to Parry's work, in 1932 he joined all the senior members of the faculty in the Classics Department at Harvard in being elected as a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

There was, to be sure, some resistance to Parry's work, as there always is to any novel, and especially iconoclastic, idea. This resistance came on at least two fronts. Some, especially German Analysts who objected to Parry's essential Unitarianism, deliberately ignored his work: for example, Wolfgang Schadewaldt, Reinhold Merkelbach, and Karl Reinhardt.[39] Others, primarily Anglophone scholars with a more Unitarian bent, who romantically championed Homer's individualism as a mark of his greatness, were uncomfortable with the idea of a poet who seemed to them imprisoned by his tradition: for example, Samuel Bassett, Theodore Wade-Gery, William Stanford.[40] They objected that Parry had removed the creative poet from the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, turning the greatest of poets into a puppet on a string or a well-trained ape. They could not acknowledge that anything of worth about the sophisticated poetry of the highly-esteemed Homer could be learned by comparing it with the popular folk-songs of Yugoslavian *guslari*.

But many prominent scholars, even outside his immediate Harvard and Berkeley circles (Albert Lord, John Finley, George Calhoun, and so forth), perceived the full importance of Parry's work quickly, long before his works were collected and published together by his son Adam in 1971, and appreciated that Parry had opened up a new window into many aspects of the study of the Homeric epics: for example, Pierre Chantraine, Martin Nilsson, Rhys Carpenter, and Denys Page.[41] James Conant, President of Harvard College, was not exaggerating when, in his 1934-35 annual report, he lamented that "by his [Parry's] death the University loses one of its most promising younger scholars" (1936:30). Parry's colleagues in the Classics Department were equally effusive about his scholarship: "We have lost one of the most brilliant scholars we have

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[39] The following three major works, for example, all of which wrestle with the problems of sources and composition of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey,* could have benefited greatly from the light of Parry's discoveries: Schadewaldt 1938; Merkelbach 1951; Reinhardt 1961.

[40] For their direct criticism of Parry: Bassett 1938:14-19; Wade-Gery 1952:38-39; Stanford 1971:36-51.

[41] For their direct acclaim of Parry: Chantraine 1929:293-300; Nilsson 1933:179-82; Carpenter 1946:6-9; Page 1955:139.

ever had here," said Charles Gulick, Eliot Professor of Greek Literature, in the December 4th, 1935, issue of *The Harvard Crimson*. "One of the most brilliant and promising younger scholars in America," said Edward Rand, Pope Professor of Latin, in the same issue. "One of the most promising classical scholars in the country," said William Greene in the December 4th, 1935, issue of *The New York Times*. "His premature death has inflicted a great loss upon the study of Homer in America," said Joshua Whatmough in the 1936 issue of the periodical *Language* (Whatmough 1936:151). Appropriately, the 1936 issue of *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* was dedicated to Parry's memory.

Harvard rewarded Parry for his efforts by granting him a full-year leave to conduct his fieldwork in Yugoslavia during the 1934-35 academic year. This was an exceptional privilege, as it was very unusual at Harvard at this time for a non-tenured faculty member to receive a full-year leave. Moreover, Harvard provided Parry generous funding through the William F. Milton Fund and the Joseph H. Clarke Bequest.[42] Parry's work abroad was also funded by the Rockefeller Foundation and the American Council of Learned Societies.[43]

Those acquainted with Harvard's more recent practice of withholding tenure from its junior faculty and instead making its permanent appointments from outside the university might suspect that for this reason Parry's prospects for a permanent appointment at Harvard were dim, for Parry had come to Harvard as an instructor just a year out of graduate school. But the fact that he was working his way up from the bottom would not necessarily have been something held against him at that time. On the contrary, in the Harvard Classics Department of the 1930s almost all the senior members had worked their way over many years through the ranks into permanent positions as full professors, and four of the junior members whose terms intersected with Parry's—William Greene, Mason Hammond, John Finley, and (almost) Sterling Dow—would eventually work their way through the ranks over the course of many years to become full professors. So Parry should not have regarded his failure to gain a permanent position after only six years at Harvard as the death knell of his career there: most of his colleagues had taken, or would take, much longer to work their way through the ranks.

On the other hand, it is likely that Parry, who could be impetuous at times, was disappointed that Harvard was not moving more quickly to promote him to a permanent position. He had come to Harvard with his Ph.D. in hand, unlike several of his colleagues, and he had taught at Harvard for three years as an instructor and three more as an assistant professor. It appears that Parry was hoping for a promotion to a tenured position sometime during his year of fieldwork in Yugoslavia (1934-35). He had addressed the Board of Overseers of Harvard College on May 15, 1934, shortly before he departed for Yugoslavia, in what David Bynum (1979:242)

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[42] So the April 7, 1935, issue of *The New York Times*: "Milman Parry, Assistant Professor of Greek and Latin—To transcribe oral poetry of the southern Slavs." This is confirmed by Albert Lord (1954:xiii). The Joseph H. Clarke Bequest amounted to $929.93 according to the *Statement of the Treasurer of Harvard College for the Fiscal Year 1934-35* (*Official Register of Harvard University* 33, no. 47, December 14, 1935:142).

[43] G. L. Hendrickson (1935:xxiv): "Members of our Association will read with much interest of many important undertakings in various fields of inquiry assisted in some degree by the A.C.L.S., and some of these touch our studies so closely that attention may be called to them, though they were not presented for the first time within the past year and do not therefore belong strictly to this report. A special and melancholy interest attaches to the notice on page 7 of the study of 'Oral Poetry of the Southern Slavs,' by reason of the tragic death of Professor Milman Parry, whose work was proceeding so successfully."

describes as part of a consideration for his "professional advancement." In his presentation to the Board of Overseers, "Parry elected to explain himself, his work, and its place in the intellectual life of the University by discussing 'The Historical Method in Literary Criticism.'"[44] His presentation was later published as "The Historical Method in Literary Criticism" in the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* (M. Parry 1936:778-82). In his address, Parry appears to express some criticism both of Harvard University generally and of the Classics Department specifically. He alerts his audience of Harvard Overseers to the dangers posed by those who, instead of embracing the historical method, create a fictional past for political purposes, most recently for nationalistic purposes that exploit race and class. Parry's statement could very well describe the deep-seated anti-Semitism at Harvard in the early 1930s, when it catered primarily to white, male Protestants of the Boston Brahmin class and the New York elite. As an antidote Parry offers his audience a scenario of a study of the past that has at its center a search for truth through the historical method. He suggests that teachers must teach about the past not just to a few students but to a much wider cross-section of society so that many people will gain an understanding of how to conduct themselves nobly and effectively on behalf of human welfare. Parry laments that those who currently teach Greek and Latin literature have lost the sense of the importance of the discipline for humanity, and that their philological isolation has led to the decline of the discipline. Parry here is more or less describing the senior faculty of the Harvard Classics Department at the time: a group of austere, detached, conservative scholars who spent much of their time studying ancient commentaries and scholia, practicing textual criticism, and compiling word indices. It almost goes without saying that Parry's address to the Board of Overseers did not have its desired effect. He did not receive a permanent appointment, or even a promotion. Instead, as he was to learn the following summer, his current status as untenured assistant professor would be extended for three more years. Perhaps, the administrators reasoned, Parry's infatuation with peasant folk-songs might yield some useful results someday, but they were not going to place too large a bet on that outcome—especially in a time of financial constraints for the college brought about by the Great Depression.

Sterling Dow, who was a faculty member in the Classics and History Departments at Harvard from 1936-70, and who even served as the University Archivist, was in a good position to know the details about Parry's status at Harvard. Yet he admits that he was never sure about the reasoning behind Harvard's refusal to offer Parry a permanent appointment. He surmises that Parry was simply too unconventional (Dow 1979:33-34):

> Rhys Carpenter knew of Parry's work and was quick to encourage it. This was happy, because Parry needed it. Harvard refused Parry a permanent appointment. Judgment about that decision is easy now: we say it was deplorable. But although I was in Greece the whole time, and was too junior to hold any appointment but only fellowships, it is easy also to surmise that Parry himself, who fitted no conventional mould, may have helped to make the decision natural. I have never known. But later I did arrange to have his portrait hung in the Smyth Classical Library at Harvard alongside those of the other deceased ("permanent") members of the Department. Later, in

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[44] D. E. Bynum (1979:242): "Addressing the Board of Overseers of Harvard College on 15 May, 1934, when he was being considered for a professional advancement, Milman Parry elected to explain himself, his work, and its place in the intellectual life of the University by discussing 'The Historical Method in Literary Criticism.'"

Berkeley, I found in the University Library his graduate school essay, the first statement of his doctrine, unknown even to his son; I studied his background and life, and did my something to promote his doctrines.[45]

Having been turned down once for a permanent appointment in 1935, it is possible that Parry had become doubtful about his prospects for a permanent position at Harvard altogether. The Classics Department during Parry's tenure was composed of a very insular group of faculty: all but one of the faculty members with permanent positions, as well as all of those who would eventually gain permanent positions, had Harvard undergraduate degrees, and most had their graduate degrees from Harvard as well. Parry was clearly an "outsider." Moreover, it was probably becoming apparent to Parry that his main competition for a permanent post was his slightly younger colleague John Finley, the quintessential Harvard man, also a Homerist, who was working his way up the ranks in tandem with Parry. Parry probably realized that the department was too small for two Homerists who were less than two years apart in age. Indeed, after Parry's death Finley took over many of the courses that Parry had been teaching, and he would go on to become Master of Eliot House and Eliot Professor of Greek Literature. He would also play a major role in establishing the general educational requirements for undergraduates at Harvard, and he would, in 1953, even become a finalist for the position of President of Harvard.[46] John Finley, Mason Hammond, and Sterling Dow, all members of the Harvard undergraduate class of 1925, would go on to lead the Classics Department at Harvard for an entire generation.[47]

Parry, for his part, was becoming an increasingly "unconventional" classicist. As a result of his fieldwork in Yugoslavia he had become more interested in comparative studies. According to three of his Harvard colleagues, Parry wished to establish a new program in oral poetry in the Department of Comparative Literature (Gulick, Greene, and Finley 1936:93):

He himself, however, had for sometime ceased to be exclusively concerned with Homer. . . . He returned at the beginning of this college year hoping that on the publication of his Serbian material he might establish the study of oral poetry in the Department of Comparative Literature—a study in which he foresaw fruitful results for Anthropology, History, and Music, as well as for European literature in general.

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[45] Sterling Dow had never actually met Parry (Dow 1979:4). He had received bachelor's (1925) and master's (1928) degrees at Harvard immediately before Parry arrived, and he received his Ph.D. (1936) at Harvard after Parry's death. He was in Athens (1931-36) doing fieldwork and writing his dissertation during most of Parry's time at Harvard (1929-35). Dow came back to Harvard as an instructor in 1936 and stayed until his retirement as John E. Hudson Professor of Archaeology in 1970.

[46] See the informative memorials for John Finley in *The New York Times* (Thomas 1995:B9) and *The Harvard Gazette* (Nagy et al. 2000).

[47] On the Classics Department's "hermetic" character, see M. Keller and P. Keller (2001:136-37): "John H. Finley, a member of the faculty from 1933 to 1976 and Master of Eliot House from 1941 to 1968, was 'the embodiment of Harvard' to generations of undergraduates who took his courses in Greek history. Finley, Roman historian Mason Hammond, and Greek historian Sterling Dow—all members of the Harvard class of 1925, all intensely conscious of the fact that Hammond was a summa graduate, Finley a magna, Dow a cum laude— dominated the department through the Conant years."

Parry had begun a new book-length project on comparative oral traditions titled *The Singer of Tales*, a project that his student Albert Lord would take on after Parry's death.[48] He was planning to commit himself to the intensive study of the material on South Slavic heroic and lyric song that he had collected with a view to answering a wide range of questions of a comparative nature: What are the key differences between oral and written poetry? How does an oral poem pass from one singer to another? What changes does it undergo in the course of that exchange? How alike or different are the various performances by a single singer of the same song? How is a singer affected by his audience? What is the effect of the introduction of literacy upon an oral tradition? Parry conceived of the primary audience of his work as Slavists, folklorists, and anthropologists, who were primarily interested in what Parry called "the song of unlettered peoples," but, of course, he also kept in mind how all this new knowledge could, by working backwards, be useful for the study of what he called "the early poetry," such as the *Iliad, Odyssey*, the *chansons de geste*, and *Beowulf* (Lord 1948:37).

In sum, in contemplating the early and unexpected death of one of the shining stars of their discipline, many classicists have wanted to see Milman Parry as a tragic Ajax rather than an unfortunate Elpenor. If those are the only two options, Parry is probably better identified as an Elpenor. But it appears that Parry himself had moved on by this point in his career. In what was to become the last surviving document that he wrote—a short letter to his sister in November of 1935—he mentions his desire to spend the following summer extending his fieldwork in the Balkans to Albania. Perhaps, rather than Ajax or Elpenor, Parry would have preferred a comparison with one of the great Slavic heroes that he devoted his later years to studying: a Smailagić Meho or a Kraljević Marko.

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[48] Parry had actually typed out seven pages of the introductory chapter: these are documented in Albert Lord's article "Homer, Parry, and Huso" (Lord 1948:37-40). Lord followed up on his mentor's research agenda during his graduate studies and beyond, publishing his own *Singer of Tales* in 1960.

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